



# Receive Green Communities Designation

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The [Green Communities Designation and Grant Program](#), is an initiative of the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) that supports and rewards communities that meet certain clean energy goal established by DOER. In addition to receiving the title of "Green Community," a city or town that receives this designation is qualified for special energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives and incentives offered by DOER. Municipalities must meet 5 criteria in order to receive Green Communities designation:

- Provide **as-of-right siting** in designated locations for renewable/alternative energy generation, research and development, or manufacturing facilities.
- Adopt an **expedited application and permit process** for as-of-right energy facilities.
- Establish an **energy use baseline** and **develop a plan** to reduce energy use by 20% within 5 years.
- Purchase only **fuel-efficient vehicles**.
- Set requirements to minimize life-cycle energy costs for new construction; one way to meet these requirements is to adopt the new Board of Building Regulations and Standards (BRS) **Stretch Code**.

This strategy outlines how to receive a Green Community designation for the opportunity to obtain grant funding, as well as publically demonstrate commitment to "green" efforts at the local level.

## Program Implementation Steps

### 1. Contact Green Communities Regional Coordinator at DOER.

- Municipalities just starting out on the path to Green Communities designation should first contact their regional coordinator at DOER to learn more about program requirements and make their interest known. [Click here to find your regional coordinator.](#)

## **2. Adopt as-of-right zoning bylaw.**

- As-of-right siting for Green Communities refers to the allowance of particular types of development – facilities that conduct renewable or alternative energy R&D or manufacturing – without the need for a special permit or any other discretionary permit. An as-of-right zoning bylaw must apply to locations that are feasible and practical for such facilities. These conditions must be demonstrated in a letter from municipal counsel. [See EOEEA's guidance for criteria 1.](#)

## **3. Create expedited application and permit process.**

- The permit process for as-of-right siting facilities must allow no more than one year from date of initial application to date of final approval. Alternatively, municipalities can apply MGL Chapter 43D priority development siting to the zoning district, which allows no more than 180 days. This condition should be demonstrated in a letter from municipal counsel. Approved Green Communities will also demonstrate it by reporting annually on permitting of clean energy projects. See [EOEEA's guidance for criteria 2](#) and the [Chapter 43D website](#).

## **4. Establish energy use baseline.**

- The baseline year should be the most recent year of complete data. The data should be in MMBtus (Million British Thermal Units) and include all divisions and departments, including municipal buildings, school buildings, municipal and school vehicles, street and traffic lighting, water and wastewater treatment plants, pumping stations, and open space owned by the municipality. This can be done with the DOER's [MassEnergyInsight](#) program, Energy Star Portfolio manager, ICLEI software, or other tools approved by the DOER. [See EOEEA's guidance for criteria 3.](#)

## **5. Create an energy reduction plan.**

- This plan should provide for a reduction of 20% over the following five-year period. It should include involvement by all departments in the municipality and will likely take at least three months. Identify a team or an individual to take the lead in this process. Municipalities will be required to report annually on their progress toward their goals. [See EOEEA's guidance for criteria 3.](#)

## **6. Purchase only fuel-efficient vehicles.**

- Adopt a fuel-efficient vehicle policy that reflects the most recent MPG criteria from DOER. Heavy-duty vehicles (e.g., fire engines, ambulances, some public works trucks) are exempt from this policy.

- Develop and maintain a vehicle inventory, including both exempt and non-exempt vehicles.
- Develop a replacement plan for non-exempt vehicles. Grants are available from MassDEP to help communities purchase electric or plug-in hybrid passenger vehicles.
- Implement a monitoring system to record miles driven and fuel consumption. See EOEEA's guidance for criteria 4.

## **7. Adopt stretch code.**

- New residential construction over 3,000 sq. ft. and new commercial and industrial construction must reduce life-cycle energy costs. For the Green Community Program, communities are required to support such efforts by adopting the the Board of Building Regulations and Standards (BFRS) Stretch Code (780 CMR 115.AA). A stretch code is a progressive alternative to the base construction code for new and existing buildings, with the intent of encouraging energy-efficient construction. A community must adopt the stretch code without amendments or conditions. See EOEEA's guidance for criteria 5.

MAPC staff can provide Green Communities technical assistance on a contract basis, based on staff availability, including help with grant applications, municipal energy baselining, and energy reduction plans.

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## **References**

- “Green Communities Designation and Grant Program.” Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. (2013)  
<http://www.mass.gov/eea/energy-utilities-clean-tech/green-communities/gc-grant-program>
- MassEnergyInsight  
<http://massenergyinsight.net>
- Massachusetts Stretch Code  
<http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/doer/green-communities/grant-program/780-cmr-115-aa-stretch-energy-code-pg-5-24.pdf>
- MGL Chapter 43D  
<http://www.mass.gov/hed/business/licensing/43d/>