



Green Communities Designation for Your Municipality: An Intro Guide

The Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources' (DOER) Green Communities Designation and Grant Program helps municipalities navigate and meet the five criteria required to become a Green Community, in turn qualifying them for grants that finance additional energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in municipal facilities.

The Green Communities Designation and Grant Program has helped 280 cities and towns earn Green Community designation. As energy leaders in Massachusetts, Green Communities are eligible for state grants.

A city or town must meet these five criteria to become a Designated Green Community:

Status	Criteria	Description
AWAITING DOER APPROVAL	Criterion 1	Provide as-of-right siting in designated locations for renewable/alternative energy generation, research & development, or manufacturing facilities;
AWAITING DOER APPROVAL	Criterion 2	Adopt an expedited application and permit process for as-of-right energy facilities;
IN PROGRESS	Criterion 3	Establish an energy use baseline and develop a plan to reduce energy use by 20% within five years;
IN PROGRESS	Criterion 4	Purchase only fuel-efficient vehicles; and
Effective as of April 1, 2021	Criterion 5	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 (BBRS) Stretch Code.
LEGISLATION PENDING	Renewable Energy Trust Opt-In	Communities served by a municipal electric utility must meet a “6 th ” criterion of contributing to the state’s Renewable Energy Trust (RET). To fulfill this criterion, RMLD needs to adopt a Renewable Energy Charge that would apply to all four towns served by RMLD. State legislation has been filed to allow municipalities served by multi-community municipal utilities to opt-in to the RET separately.

Select Board Actions – June 1st and June 15th

Criterion 4 requires coordination among Department Heads and votes by the Select Board and School Committee. MAPC met with Department Heads on October 8, 2020, and again on April 8, 2021. Concerns were expressed and addressed; heavy duty and emergency response vehicles are exempt, and a majority of non-exempt vehicles already comply with DOER’s fuel efficiency standards. RMLD is able to maintain their own separate vehicle policy as it meets or exceeds DOER standards. The request herein is for the Select Board to discuss the policy on June 1st and then vote to adopt the policy on June 15th.

ONGOING

Criterion 3 requires the most coordination among various municipal departments and the school district, in particular when developing the Energy-Use Baseline Inventory and the Energy Reduction Plan (ERP). With the help of MAPC, your municipality has outlined a plan to reduce the identified baseline by 20% within the 5 year period following the Baseline Year. Thereafter, your municipality will report to DOER on the ERP and assess progress towards the 20% energy reduction annually.

Below are actions that MAPC and your municipality will need to take in order to meet requirements of **Criterion 3** (Establish an energy use baseline and develop a plan to reduce energy use by 20% within five years):

STEP 1: Develop an Energy-Use Baseline

- Connect with your municipality's electric and gas providers, to let your utility companies know of your interest in getting no-cost preliminary energy audits in your municipal facilities.
- Coordinate among the municipal and school district's facilities departments and the selected energy auditor(s) to schedule audit walk-throughs.

STEP 2: Develop an Energy Reduction Plan (ERP)

- After the municipality receives electric and gas audit reports, the municipality will decide on which proposed Energy Conservation Measures (ECMs) to include in the Energy Reduction Plan, to get the municipality to 20% reductions over 5 years.
- Create an ERP that complies with DOER's requirements (as noted in DOER's Criterion 3 Guidance Doc). **Important note:** *the municipality is not bound to implementing all selected ECMs. After becoming a Designated Green Community, the municipality has flexibility to change its pursued ECMs, especially after doing deeper audits with a selected vendor. This ERP is really meant to serve as a guide.*

STEP 3: Adopt Energy Reduction Plan

- The ERP must be adopted by the Board of Selectmen (BOS), as well as the School District, typically during an October or November meeting. The adoption action must be put on the BOS and School District meeting agenda ahead of time, as to ensure adequate time for adoption prior to the Green Communities deadline. **Important note:** *the ERP will serve as a guide for the municipality, but the details, such as which projects the City/Town pursues, can change with time.*
- Once both bodies have adopted the ERP, the City or Town's Chief Executive and the Superintendent will need to verify adoption by signing a letter based on DOER's sample letter template (Found in DOER's Criterion 3 Guidance Doc).

STEP 4: Finalize and Submit

- Once all materials are prepared, MAPC will work with your municipality to submit the form via Green Communities submission platform.
- Following Designation by DOER, your municipality will go through a simpler process to apply for Green Communities Designation Grant Funds. Follow up with your DOER Regional Coordinator to discuss those steps.