

Green Communities



Governor Deval Patrick at the commemoration of the 100th Green Community.
Photo courtesy of flickr user Deval Patrick

What are the objectives of the Green Communities Program?

The Green Communities Designation and Grant Program is the result of S. 2768, The Green Communities Act, which was passed in 2008. The Green Communities Division is part of the Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and is tasked with enhancing energy efficiency within the 351 cities and towns of Massachusetts. The Green Communities Division’s role is to help communities in the Commonwealth to find clean and renewable energy solutions to reduce their long-term energy costs and strengthen local economies. This is accomplished by providing technical assistance and financial support for municipal initiatives that improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy in public buildings, facilities and schools.

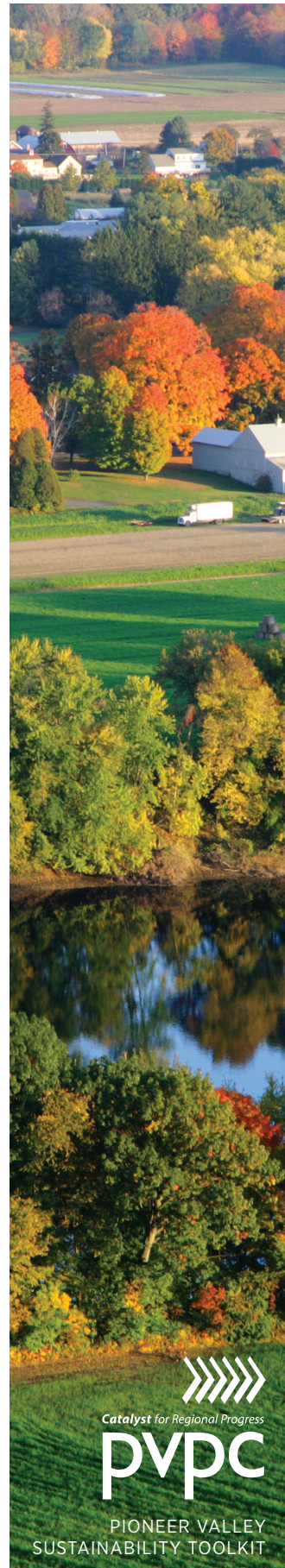
Why do we need to encourage Green Communities?

Cities and towns across the Commonwealth face both economic and climate-change related challenges in the coming years. The Green Communities Designation and Grant Program provides municipalities with the necessary financial and technical assistance to implement changes in the way that energy is consumed. By adopting clean and renewable energy in public buildings, facilities, and schools, municipalities can start moving forward in addressing climate change and save money in the process.

How does the Green Communities Act work?

The Green Communities Act increases energy efficiency in Massachusetts by expanding investments in energy efficient measures in order to reduce electricity demand. This is accomplished by the following measures:

- » **Efficiency First:** Requires that electric and gas utilities secure energy efficiency resources that are cost-effective or less expensive than supply as a first recourse, before more expensive generation resources can be purchased. This



also mandates that an efficiency plan is produced every three years and be approved and that a Energy Efficiency Advisory Council be created to review plans. Plans are approved by the Department of Public Utilities.

- » **Efficient Buildings:** Requires the adoption of the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) and updates within a year of any revision. This provision also provides for related training, implementation and compliance and requires the disclosure of information regarding the benefits of home energy audits to buyers of single-family dwellings or small multi-family dwellings at the time of closing.
- » **Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Implementation:** The act maximizes the benefits of Massachusetts' adoption of the regional power plant CO2 cap and trade program known as "RGGI". This requires the auction of all permits to emit pollution under the program rather than giving them away for free. Eighty percent or more of the auction proceeds go towards energy efficiency programs and the remainder goes to municipalities where power plants are situated, funding for community clean energy programs and voluntary green power development
- » **Renewable Energy:** The Act promotes renewable energy by strengthening the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS) by increasing requirements for new renewable every year with a target of 15% of electricity for Massachusetts consumers supplied by renewables by 2020. The act also promotes net-metering, long term contracts, and municipal/utility ownership of utilities.
- » **Renewable Energy Trust Fund:** The Act establishes a new governing board and requires the development of 5-year strategic plans for the existing Renewable Energy Trust Fund (RETF)
- » **Cleaner Vehicles:** The Act promotes hybrid or alternative fuel vehicles by calling for state government vehicles to be comprised of 50% of such vehicles by 2018.

How does the Green Communities Designation and Grant Program work?

The Green Communities Grant Program provides up to \$10 million per year statewide in technical and financial help to municipalities to promote energy efficiency and the financing, siting and construction of renewable and alternative energy facilities. In order for a community to qualify for technical and financial assistance and be designated a Green Community, they must adopt the following:

- » As-of-right siting for renewable or alternative energy generating, manufacturing or R&D facilities in designated locations
- » An expedited permitting process for approving such facilities within one year of the filing of an application
- » Energy use baseline and a program to reduce energy use by 20% within 5 years
- » Policy to purchase only fuel efficient vehicles; and

» A policy to minimize lifecycle energy and water costs for all new commercial, industrial and large-residential construction.

Funding is provided to communities through Cap and Trade programs (including RGGI), compliance payments pursuant to the Massachusetts Renewable Portfolio Standard, and the Renewable Energy Trust Fund.

DID YOU KNOW...

The Green Communities Designation and Grant Program is currently working with 123 cities and towns throughout the commonwealth that have earned Green Communities designation. There is currently more than \$28 million dollars from Green Community grants at work in these cities and towns.

EXAMPLES FROM THE PIONEER VALLEY

The Pioneer Valley is well represented thus far with Green Community designations in comparison to the rest of the State. However there are still a number of communities which have not been designated as Green Communities. Holyoke received \$321,221 for the conversion of exterior parking lot lighting to LEDs at all twelve schools, and to purchase BigBelly Solar Compactors for public parks and high traffic areas. Northampton received \$198,500 for a 51 kW solar power project on the Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School (SVAHS), and to purchase an energy auditor/building performance education kit for the SVAHS Home Building Program. Springfield received \$988,102 to replace inefficient boilers at the Deberry, Mary Lynch, and Freedman Elementary Schools and the Fire Repair Building; installation of vending machine misers at the Freedman and Brunton Elementary Schools and the Fire Repair Building; and for five energy management systems at the Deberry, Mary Lynch, Brunton, and Zanetti schools, the Fire Repair Building and the Sixteen Acres Branch Library.

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OR GO ONLINE TO:

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/energy-utilities-clean-tech/green-communities/>

A model bylaw or strategy is included in the Pioneer Valley Sustainability Toolkit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

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