

## **Green Communities Designation Overview for Upton**

The Green Communities Act of 2008 established the Green Communities Program. Under the act, communities that meet the five criteria qualify as Green Communities and are eligible for technical and financial assistance, which can be used to finance the costs of "studying, designing, constructing and implementing energy efficiency activities." The Green Communities Division of the Department of Energy Resources administers the program.

If designated a Green Community, the Town will be awarded a designation grant of about \$145,000, which can be used to pay for energy efficiency measures. It will also be eligible for competitive grants available under the program.

Mendon, a nearby community, was designated a Green Community in July 2011 and was awarded a designation grant of \$145,925. Mendon estimates that it has reduced its energy expense by \$26,000/year as a result of the energy efficiency measures implemented under the designation grant.

As of the end of 2013, 123 communities had been designated Green Communities and over \$20 million in grants had been awarded.

The next deadline for submitting an application for designation is October 30, 2014 and the Town is on track to meet this deadline. Two of the Green Community designation criteria require Town Meeting votes and both of these are on the warrant for May 8 Annual Town Meeting. The Town has contracted with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Council under a grant program for help with the most time-consuming of the five criteria, creating a baseline energy use inventory and crafting a plan to reduce energy use by 20% over 5 years.

If designated in late 2014, the Town should receive its designation grant in early 2015, and can then begin implementing its 20%/5-year energy reduction plan.

The Green Communities Designation Study Committee recommended to the Selectmen that the town pursue Green Communities designation as it concluded the quantifiable benefits, the grants available under the program and cost savings from energy efficiency measures funded with the grants, outweigh the quantifiable costs, legal and administrative expenses. The Committee also believes the town will benefit from participating in the state's effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

More information on the Green Communities program can be found at the DOER website:  
<http://www.mass.gov/eea/energy-utilities-clean-tech/green-communities/>

The five criteria for qualifying as a Green Community and the actions the Town must take to meet the criteria are listed on the following page.

## Green Communities Designation Criteria

#	Criterion	Action Needed by Town to Meet Criterion
1	<p>Provide for as-of-right siting in designated locations for <u>one</u> of the following: renewable or alternative energy generating facilities, renewable or alternative energy research and development facilities, or renewable or alternative energy manufacturing facilities.</p> <p>The Town has opted to provide for as-of-right siting in a designated location for solar generating facilities.</p>	<p>Adopt the Large-Scale Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations zoning bylaw at the May 8 Annual Town Meeting. The bylaw provides for as-of-right siting in the Commercial and Industrial District for large-scale ground-mounted solar photovoltaic installations with generating capacity of 250 kW – 500 kW DC.</p>
2	<p>Adopt an expedited application and permitting process under which the facilities that meet Criterion 1 may be sited within the Town and which shall not exceed 1 year from the date of initial application to the date of final approval.</p>	<p>Since the Town's Upton's existing application and permitting process is already less than one year, the Town must have Town Counsel prepare a letter confirming that the Town's existing bylaws do not prevent a renewable or alternative energy project from being permitted within 1 year.</p>
3	<p>Establish a baseline energy use inventory for municipal buildings, vehicles and street and traffic lighting, and put in place a comprehensive program to reduce energy use by 20% within 5 years.</p>	<p>Determine baseline energy use and prepare a 5-year/20% energy reduction plan.</p> <p>The Town has contracted with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Council under a grant program for assistance in completing the baseline energy use inventory and in creating the 5-year/20% energy use reduction program.</p>
4	<p>Purchase only fuel-efficient vehicles for municipal use whenever such vehicles are commercially available and practicable.</p>	<p>The Board of Selectmen must adopt a Fuel Efficient Vehicle Policy for the Town.</p> <p>Note: Police cruisers and heavy-duty vehicles (over 8,500 pounds gross vehicle weight) are exempted.</p>
5	<p>Adopt the Stretch Energy Code.</p> <p>The Stretch Energy Code provides a more energy efficient alternative to the state's base energy code. It applies to new residential buildings, most new commercial buildings, and residential renovations and additions.</p>	<p>Adopt the Stretch Energy Code as a general bylaw at the May 8 Annual Town Meeting.</p> <p>Under the proposed bylaw, the Stretch Energy Code will be adopted as of January 1, 2015. Per the rules governing adopting the Stretch Energy Code, there will a six-month concurrency period from January 1 through June 30, 2015, during which code users can use either the base energy code or the Stretch Energy Code. On July 1, 2015, the Stretch Energy Code will become the only effective energy code.</p>