



The GREEN Act

Gateway Cities Renewable, Efficient, and Electrified Neighborhoods

An Act establishing the GREEN Initiative

H.3320, Rep. Natalie Higgins and Rep. Michael Kushmerek

An Act establishing the gateway cities renewable, efficient, and electrified neighborhoods initiative

S.2152, Sen. Brendan Crighton

Gateway Cities are home to Massachusetts' industrial past and present, lifelong residents and recent immigrants, major institutions and small businesses, and a long track record of innovation. While the history of these diverse communities is an asset, it also presents a big challenge in the form of aging infrastructure.

Many houses and apartments in Gateway Cities were built more than a century ago. These buildings often use energy inefficiently, due to a lack of insulation, old appliances, and outdated lighting fixtures. Most homes burn oil or gas for heating, and residents — particularly low- and moderate-income families — may lack the opportunity to switch to cleaner alternatives.

Inefficient homes, heated with fossil fuels, are harmful to the people who live in them and to the broader community:

- Burning oil and gas releases air pollution linked to asthma, heart attack, and other diseases. A growing body of research connects gas stoves with poor indoor air quality and health problems.
- Climate change, caused by pollution from fossil fuels, is increasing the frequency and severity of damaging storms and heat waves.
- Residents face high utility bills, and many find it too expensive to heat their homes to a comfortable temperature during the winter months.
- Our reliance on dangerous fossil fuels can lead to tragedy, as experienced in the 2018 gas explosions in Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover.

While utilities and state agencies offer energy efficiency programs, these programs don't always serve the residents of Gateway Cities adequately. Many obstacles can stand in the way of efficiency improvements, including language barriers, a lack of access to credit, split incentives between landlords and tenants, and the need to make structural repairs before homes can be retrofitted. These obstacles are especially significant for private rental housing occupied by low-income tenants.

These challenges are real, but they are solvable. **With the right support and incentives, houses and apartments can be retrofitted to be efficient, fossil-fuel-free, and powered with renewable electricity.** The result will be cleaner, healthier, and safer communities for all.

Gateway Cities, as well as smaller communities with similar demographics, have an important role to play in the statewide transition to 100% renewable energy. The GREEN Act will bring together residents, building owners, community organizations, and municipal and state officials to create solutions for energy-efficient, pollution-free homes. Through innovative action at the local level, these communities can lead the Commonwealth toward a greener future.

What does the GREEN Act do?

The GREEN Act will establish a new program — the Gateway Cities Renewable, Efficient, and Electrified Neighborhoods Initiative, or GREEN Initiative — to retrofit low- and moderate-income housing in Gateway Cities and in smaller communities with similar demographics.

Phase 1 of the GREEN Initiative will fund at least one project in each Gateway City and 10 projects in smaller communities each year, focusing on naturally occurring affordable housing units. Each project will retrofit at least 10 housing units to be highly efficient, use clean heating and cooking technologies, and, where possible, be powered with energy from rooftop solar panels. Local governments and nonprofit organizations will oversee the projects and share the results with the broader community. The GREEN Initiative will provide additional incentives and technical support to assist with retrofits, in coordination with existing state and utility programs.

After two years, the Department of Energy Resources will collect data on the results of Phase 1 and identify the most effective retrofit approaches for each housing type. DOER will convene an interagency task force to design and oversee Phase 2 of the GREEN Initiative, which will continue for at least eight more years.

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