



March 2021

CLIMATE LEADERSHIP NEWSLETTER

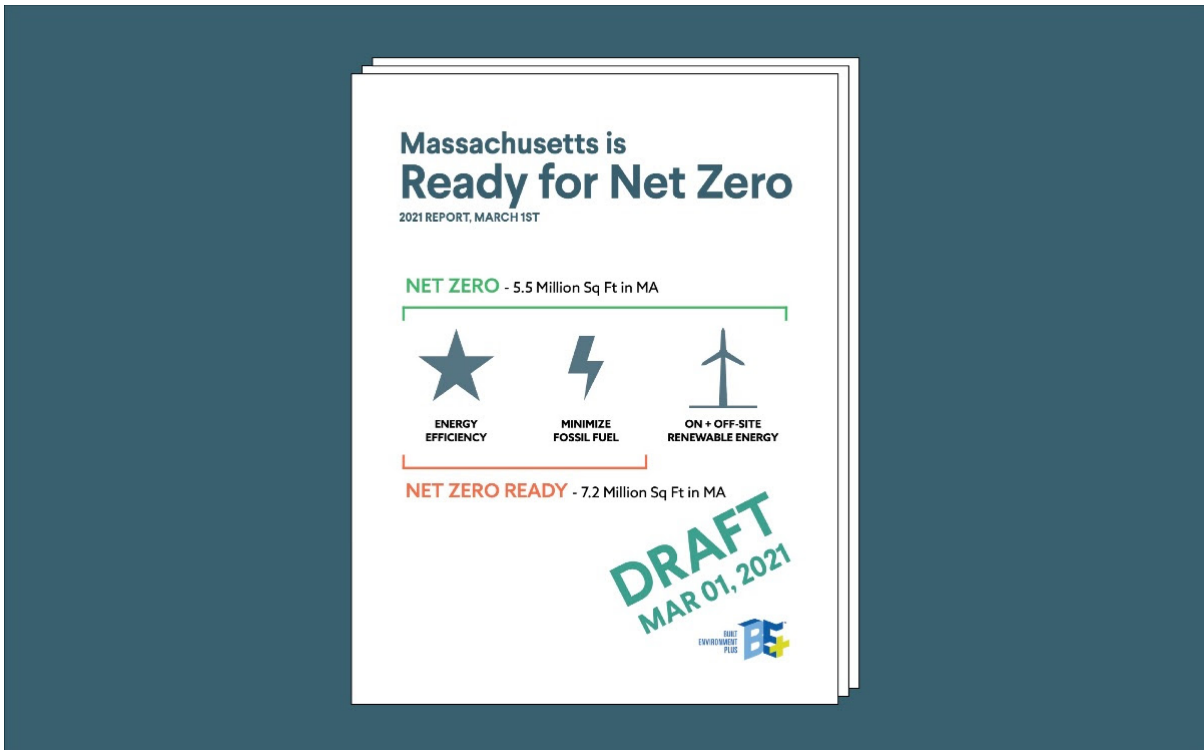
NOTES FROM MASSACHUSETTS CITIES AND TOWNS

Dear Emma,

The Climate Leadership Newsletter features stories of environmental and climate action in Massachusetts. It provides a platform to highlight work being done by municipalities, climate leaders, and local groups in communities across the Commonwealth. To share local climate actions in your community, email [Emma Brown](#).

Clean Energy and Climate

85% of MA Net Zero Projects Report <1% Premium



[Built Environment Plus](#) (BE+) sent a request out to the Massachusetts Building Community for data on what's happening around net zero buildings. The Building Community answered the call, and BE+ has [released a report of their findings](#).

Continued effort has increased the total of Net Zero Ready, or Net Zero Projects, collected in the analysis to 7.2 Million GSF in MA. These represent built or in-process projects, and we have since removed out-of-state projects. It's clear from this survey that Massachusetts is more than ready for net zero.

The bottom line is:

- The Net Zero and Net Zero Ready **building stock exceeds 7 million square feet** and is growing at an exponential rate in the Commonwealth today.
- The vast majority are doing this with little to no added cost. **85% reported <1% construction cost premium** to achieve Net Zero Ready.**
- Net Zero buildings span **a wide range of types**, with a high degree of representation from K-12, higher education, healthcare, laboratory, office, and multi-family.
- There are **dozens of builders, architects, engineers and owners** already bringing these projects to reality, some developers included.
- Net Zero Ready buildings are highly energy efficient: **82% are at least 35% more efficient than the current stretch code baseline** and all rely on heat pumps as the primary source of heat. *Net Zero buildings also procure on-site and/or off-site renewable energy to offset 100% of consumption on a net annual basis.

Green Worcester



Image credit: City of Worcester

Worcester has recently released its [“Green Worcester Plan”](#) to respond to the climate crisis. The plan aims to make Worcester one of the most [“sustainable and climate-resilient mid-size cities in America by 2050.”](#) However, the plan is not strictly climate policy – instead, city leaders hope to integrate the goals from the Green Worcester Plan with existing and upcoming municipal projects.

The plan is far-reaching, with 10 goals that cover a large breadth of municipal policy areas. First, the city aims to use 100% clean energy across all sectors by 2045 and has set incremental 5-year goals starting in 2030 to achieve this goal. The plan has also set goals for all buildings to consume net-zero energy and to improve sustainable transit options, including electric buses, bicycle options, and pedestrian spaces. Additionally,

the plan outlines goals for maintaining and creating open spaces, managing water systems, supporting culturally appropriate sustainably and locally grown food, and going zero waste by improving waste reduction and recycling/repurposing systems.

The Sunrise Worcester hub has praised the city's efforts but hopes the city will set a more ambitious timeline to meet their goals. For example, Sunrise Worcester would like the city to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030 and 100% by 2050, which the city says is not currently possible. They also hope to see more specific action items to help the city implement its plan, as well as an educational campaign both in schools and in the broader community.

The plan was created by the Green Worcester working group, which comprised of city staff, representatives from environmental organizations, residents, and a consultant. There was also a public comment period. The city says it is striving for transparency and equity in implementing the plan. The plan was presented to the city council in January and was presented in a public hearing meeting in February, and will soon go to the council for a vote.

Concord Building Committee leveraging MA-EZ Code to Ensure High Performance on New Middle School



The Concord Sustainability Subcommittee presented their recommendations earlier this month, which were later adopted by the full building committee. The subcommittee has six high-level sustainability goals for the Design and Construction teams:

1. Deliver a healthy indoor environment
2. Inspire a passion for learning
3. Achieve high performance energy efficiency¹ (EUI of 25 or better)
4. Reduce embodied carbon during construction
5. Be all-electric¹
6. Be solar¹ and storage ready*

*The Sustainability Subcommittee is committed to Net Zero Energy and is working with the CMLP to develop a Zero Energy Building Strategy with the CMS.

¹ Goal aligns with the Town Meeting Amendment to the funding article for the design of the new CMS.

[See the full presentation here.](#)

Clean Transportation

Main St. Northampton Street Re-Design



Main Street in Northampton. Courtesy of the City of Northampton.

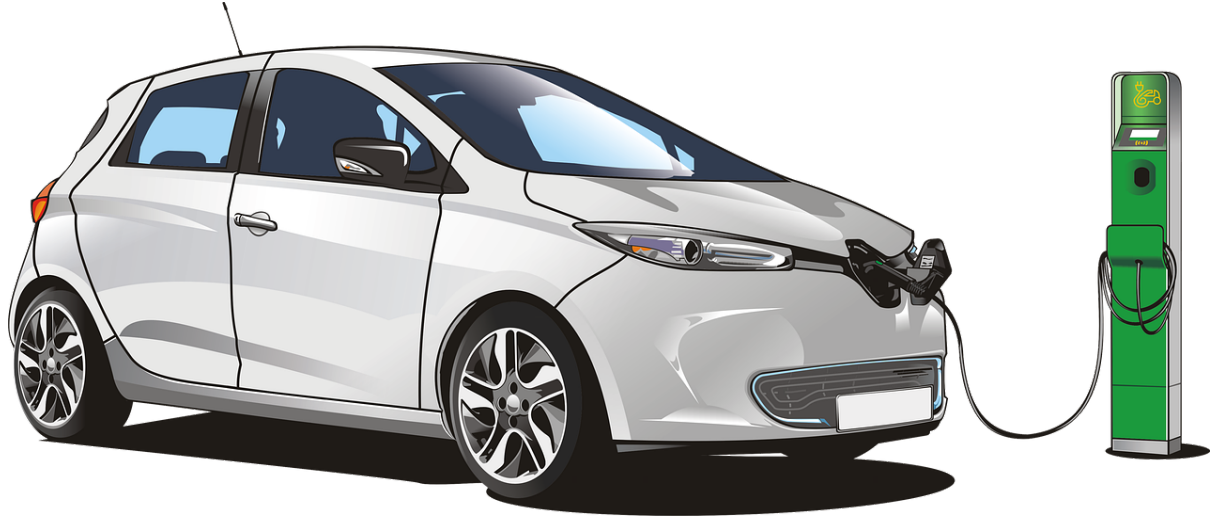
Northampton is beginning plans to reconstruct Main Street in 2025. The city is currently focusing on public outreach following backlash to temporary changes to Main Street last summer.

In summer 2020, Northampton used a Shared Streets and Spaces grant to install temporary bike lanes, expanded sidewalks, outdoor seating, and art displays on Main Street. However, the city ended the program after only a few weeks following public discontent. Some business owners were concerned that the new design was contributing to increased traffic congestion and less access to parking. In November 2020, the city hosted a public meeting to present new ideas for the 2025 reconstruction, and many public comments focused on the lack of transparency in the planning process.

In response, the city has launched a [website](#) where residents can learn about the history and current state of Main Street, see proposed designs (forthcoming), and submit feedback. Additionally, there will be more public comment sessions this spring.

The re-constructed Main Street is likely to include bike lanes, ADA-accessible sidewalks, and better pedestrian crosswalks, but will probably reduce the number of lanes for vehicle traffic. The project hopes to "[submit a 25% design concept to MassDOT by Dec 2021.](#)"

Norwood Electric's "Double Your Discount" EV Rebate Program



[Norwood Drives Electric](#) is an outreach program to inform their electric utility customers about the savings and benefits that come from choosing an electric car and charging it at home overnight.

For a limited time, when buying a new EV you can double the state [MOR-EV rebate](#) on a new electric vehicle purchase as a Norwood Electric customer! Even if you are purchasing a used EV, for which the state rebate does not qualify, Norwood Light will match the MOR-EV rebate amount for that vehicle. Mirroring the restrictions of the MOR-EV program, all EVs purchased must have a final sale price of under \$50,000, and any PHEV purchased must have an all electric range of over 25 miles to qualify. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Toxics and Pollution

New Regulations to Protect Pollinators



[Photo by Leonardo Jarro from Pexels](#)

The Massachusetts Pesticide Board Subcommittee has restricted the use of a class of pesticides called neonicotinoids, or “neonics”. This class of pesticides is particularly harmful to pollinators. The new regulations ban retail sale of neonics, and they can only be used by applicators with a license. The decision was applauded by many organizations, including MASSPIRG, the MA Beekeepers Association, the Northeast Organic Farming Association, and the MA Sierra Club. These organizations noted that while the regulations are an important step forward to protect pollinators, there is still much progress to be made. Advocates plan to fight for tighter regulations, including a ban on neonic-coated corn and soybean seeds.

Rep. Carolyn Dykema was instrumental in the development of the new regulations. In 2019, she introduced legislation that required the MA Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) to study the effects of neonics on pollinators. MDAR recently published a scientific literature review confirming that neonics harm pollinators, which was central to the Board’s decision to restrict their use. Rep. Dykema has also introduced legislation which would require consumers to have access to enough information to decide to opt out of neonic application performed by licensed users.

The restriction of neonics has widespread support throughout the state, not only from advocacy organizations, but also from local residents and Attorney General Maura Healy. The decision to restrict the use of neonics in MA follows a 2018 ban on outdoor neonics application in the EU and similar legislation passed recently in Connecticut, Maryland, and Vermont.

Reading Biomass Decision



[Photo by Dominika Roseclay from Pexels](#)

The Citizens' Advisory board and the Board of Commissioners in Reading, MA [recently voted](#) to update their policy for renewable power sourcing to exclude wood-burning biomass as an acceptable renewable energy source. This policy differs from the recently signed *Next Generation Climate Roadmap Bill (S.9)*, which will continue to allow wood-burning biomass to be classified as a renewable energy or greenhouse gas-reducing energy source. Reading is also planning to implement a new “renewable choice program”, which will allow residents to purchase energy from a larger share of renewables than required by Reading’s existing policy. Details regarding this plan are forthcoming.

Grants and Webinars

American Rescue Plan: Five Guiding Principles

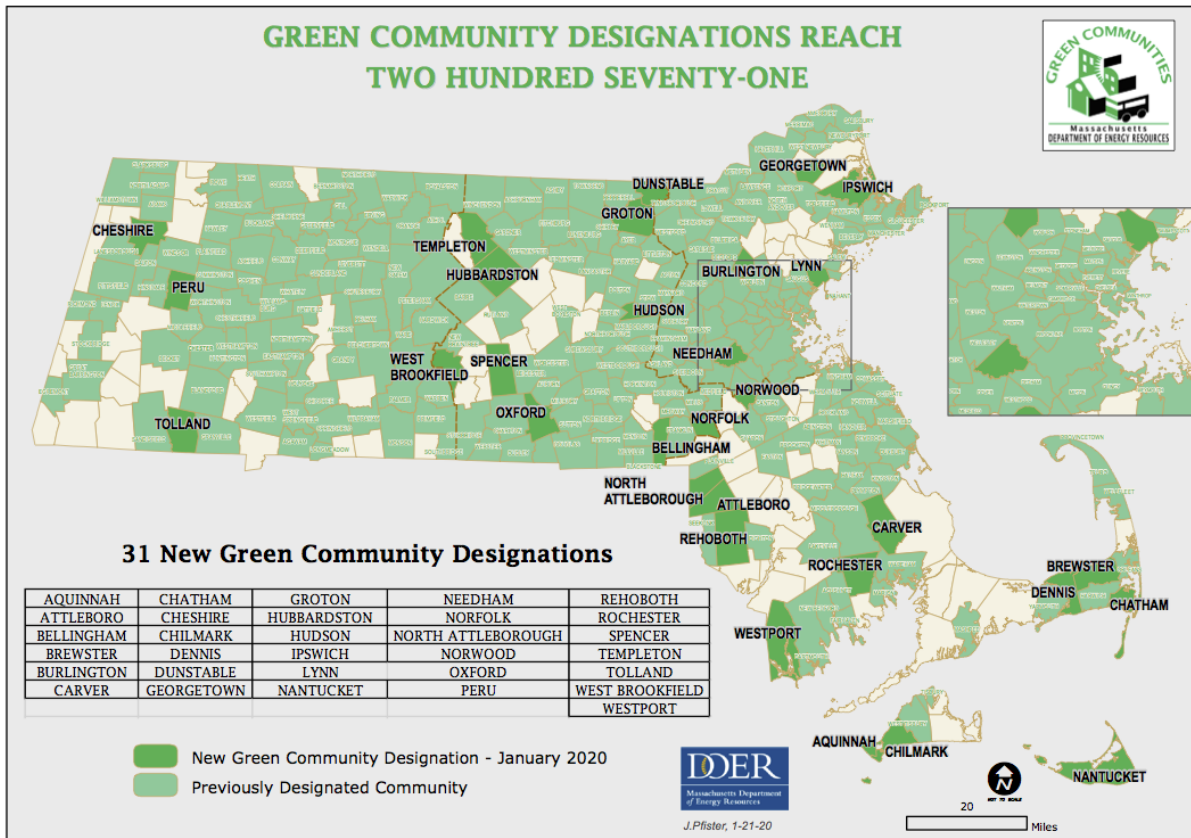


[Photo by Max Fischer from Pexels](#)

With the passage of the American Rescues Plan Act, the Federal government has now approved \$176 billion for K-12 schools in the last 4 months. A broad array of facilities investments are among the allowable uses. The funding heading (by formula) to schools represents an enormous opportunity to address and support student needs during the ongoing pandemic and to address persistent inequities. What's more, the one-time nature of these funds makes them an excellent fit for durable investments in facilities that will provide long-term health benefits and financial savings.

[UndauntedK12](#) and [Center for Green Schools](#) has published “ [Five Guiding Principles: How Schools Can Use American Rescue Plan Funding to Ensure Healthy, Resilient Facilities for Students and Reduce Energy Costs and Emissions.](#)” This new guidance provides useful, actionable information for school districts as they consider how to use these relief funds to meet local needs. The resource identifies examples of school facility improvements as well as curriculum and training that both align with allowed uses and provide long-term benefits.

Green Communities 2021 Competitive Grant Program



The Green Communities 2021 Competitive Grant Application is [currently available](#). To be eligible, Green Communities must have:

- Expended all prior Green Communities designation and competitive grant funds by February 12, 2021;
- Submitted their final grant report no later than 5 PM February 12, 2021; and satisfied all outstanding questions no later than 5 PM March 19, 2021; and
- Submitted their FY 2020 Green Communities Annual Report by November 5, 2020 and satisfied all outstanding questions no later than 5 PM February 12, 2021.

Applications must be submitted online by **5pm on April 9, 2021**. For more information, visit the [Green Communities website](#).

MassCEC Announces Winners of the Triple Decker Design Challenge!



Triple Decker Design Challenge



The winner of the Triple Decker Retrofit Design went to **TDC Retrofit Toolkit** by [Zephyr Architects](#). This Triple Decker Retrofit Design provides a series of tools to help homeowners and contractors decide the most effective ways to renovate their buildings, balancing immediate costs and lifetime performance.

The winner of the 3+ Retrofit Design went to **The Back Stack** by [MERGE Architects Inc.](#) This 3+ Retrofit Design adds an additional 3 story unit (of 1,100 sq. ft.) and additional outdoor spaces for existing tenants at the rear of the building.

[See all the winners here!](#)

Webinar: Strategies to Reduce Fuel Use in Municipal Fleets

Get the latest information on program offerings from [MassDEP's Electric Vehicle Incentive Program](#) (EVIP), the Clean Cities Coalition, and how your community can adopt an "Electric First" vehicle purchasing policy. The webinar will be held from **1 to 2 PM on Wednesday, March 31**. Presenters include John Liriano, MA Clean Cities Coordinator, Erin Bostwick, MassEVIP Program, and Kate Hanley, Sustainability Director, Concord, MA. [Register here.](#)

Webinar: Planning and Building High-Performing Buildings

Hear from representatives from National Grid and Eversource on how municipalities and school districts can use resources from the [Mass Save](#) New Construction Program in their public building projects. Presentation will also include a community case study. The webinar will be held from **10 to 11 AM on Thursday, April 15th**. [Click here to register.](#)

Resources and Reading List

- [After a veto, Baker signs landmark climate bill](#) (Boston Globe)
- [Could An Infrastructure Stimulus Fund High-Speed Rail for New England?](#) (StreetsBlog Mass)
- [Braintree to contribute \\$20,000 for air quality monitoring system](#) (Patriot Ledger)

- [Arlington Sets 30-Year Plan To Reduce Greenhouse Gases To Zero](#) (Arlington Patch)
- [Select Board approves climate emergency declaration](#) (Arlington Advocate)
- [Cambridge is considering a commercial composting pilot program](#) (Cambridge Chronicle-Tab)
- [FinCom, city administrators spar again over solar panel contract](#) (MetroWest Daily)
- [A Daily Ray of Hope](#). The Sierra Club has been offering a “Daily Ray of Hope” email for years, and we could all use a bit of that right now. Subscribers get a beautiful picture from the natural world along with some words of wisdom every morning. [Sign up today and bring some joy to your inbox](#).

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Corrin Moss contributed to this newsletter.



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