



The GREEN Act

Gateway Cities Renewable, Efficient, and Electrified Neighborhoods

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

H.3171, Rep. Natalie Higgins and Rep. Michael Kushmerek

S.2109, 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 These buildings often use energy inefficiently, due to a lack of insulation, old appliances, and outdated lighting fixtures.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 seen 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. Several obstacles can stand in the way of efficiency improvements, including language barriers, a lack of access to credit, and the need to make structural repairs before homes can be retrofitted. Additionally, many low-income families are renters and must rely on landlords to make any improvements to their homes.

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.

The GREEN Initiative builds on existing programs to improve the energy performance of low- and moderate-income housing. In December 2021, the Legislature approved \$6.5 million in funding for energy efficiency and electrification retrofits in Gateway Cities. In February 2023, the Healey-Driscoll administration announced the availability of \$50 million in grant funding to retrofit low- and moderate-income housing, using money appropriated by the Legislature and from other sources.

The GREEN Initiative will retrofit low- and moderate-income housing 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 programs.

The Department of Energy Resources (DOER) will collect data on the results of these retrofits and identify the most effective approaches to retrofit each housing type. DOER will also convene a task force with representatives from state agencies, nonprofits, and residents of Gateway Cities to advise the department on the implementation of the GREEN Initiative.