

# What is a Green Community and why would Leyden want to be one?

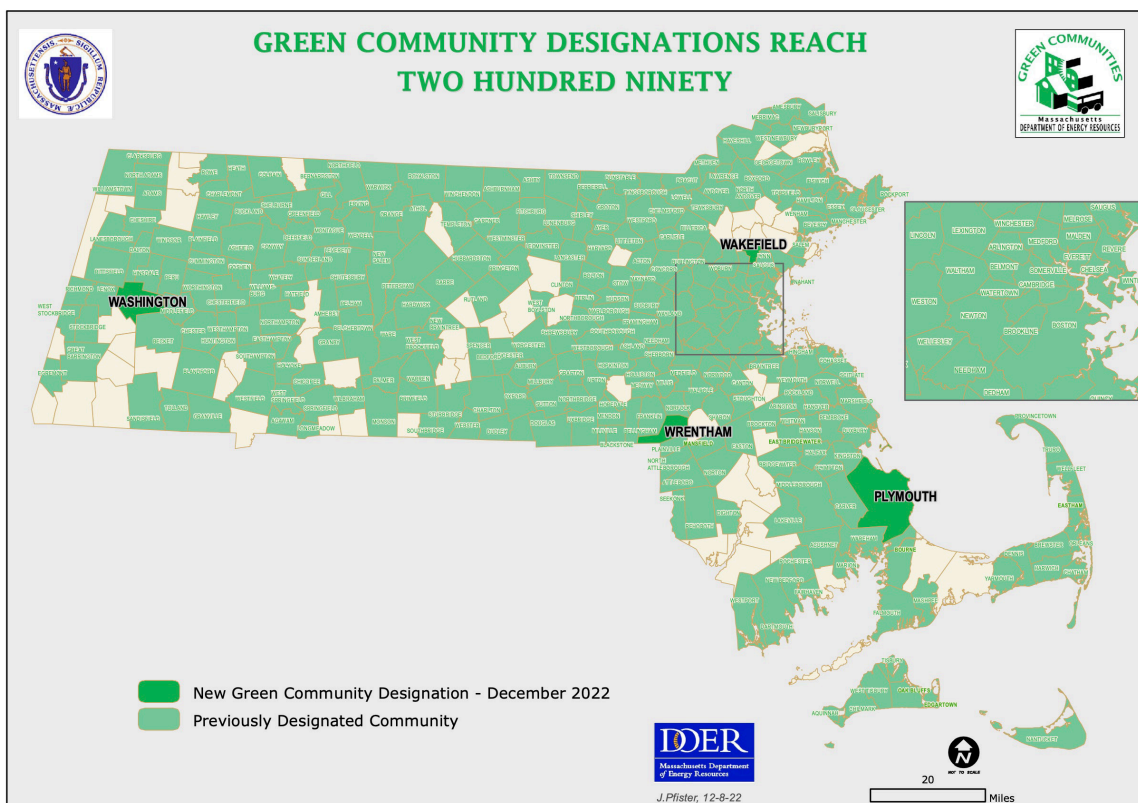
The Green Community Designation and Grant Program is a division of the Massachusetts Dept. of Energy (DOER) that helps towns and cities to **find clean energy solutions that reduce long-term energy costs and strengthen local economies**. To date, 300 cities and towns in the state are designated as Green Communities and have accessed designation grants of more than \$52.5 million for energy projects.

## Benefits of Being a Green Community

- Access grants for clean affordable and resilient energy projects; economic development benefits for the Town
- Cut municipal energy costs and strengthen the local economies
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Promote energy-efficient building construction that drives the market for better built and lower cost homes

Leyden's **Building Needs Study Committee** is working hard to identify and prioritize Town needs including energy use and conservation. Access to these grants would allow Leyden to seek state funding for our most critical projects, stabilizing our energy costs and reducing our impact on the climate.

*Leyden runs solely on property taxes and government grants. Utility costs are ballooning and Leyden will not be able to pay utility costs without raising property taxes unless we make substantial upgrades to increase energy efficiency.*



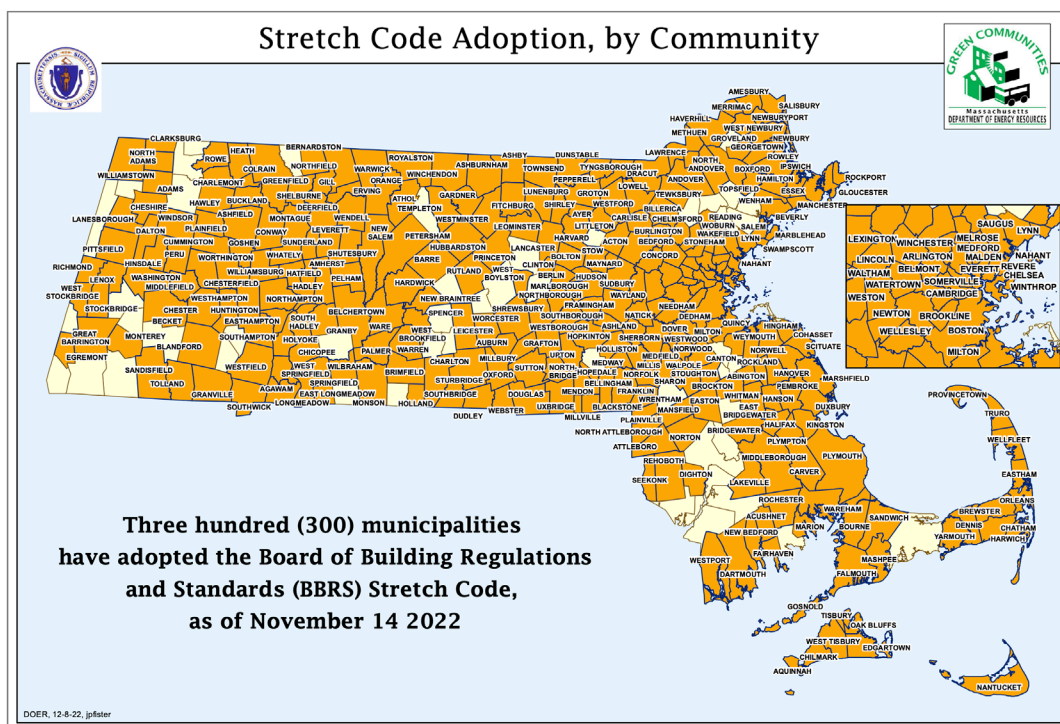
# How does Leyden become a Green Community?

## 5 criteria must be met to receive Green Communities designation:

1. Provide as-of-right siting in designated locations for renewable/alternative energy generation, research and development, or manufacturing facilities (this is where the Solar Bylaw comes in).
  2. Adopt an expedited application and permit process for as-of-right energy facilities.
  3. Establish an energy use baseline and develop an Energy Reduction Plan to reduce energy use by 20% within 5 years.
  4. Requires all departments within a Green Community to purchase fuel-efficient vehicles for municipal use, whenever such vehicles are commercially available and practicable. Large vehicles (police, fire, highway) are currently exempt.
  5. Requires that municipalities minimize the life-cycle cost of all newly constructed homes and buildings.
- DOER recommends communities do this by adopting the Stretch Code.

Massachusetts was one of the first states to adopt a stretch code in 2009. The Stretch Code **is designed to result in cost-effective construction that is more energy efficient than that built to the "base" energy code.** It is unique in that it's based more on energy performance than prescriptive measures. In other words, if a building's energy performance was high enough, it met the code requirements regardless of how it was constructed, although certain common sense construction practices were required such as proper insulation, sealing & ventilation, lighting, etc. **The Stretch Code is designed to help the state reach its ambitious greenhouse gas emissions goals of a 50 percent reduction by 2030, and net-zero emissions by 2050.**

*All kinds of homes can be built to meet the Stretch Code. For example, you can build a log cabin as long as it adheres to energy efficiency standards as defined by the Stretch Code. Many builders and log cabin building and kit companies have adjusted their building methods to meet the Stretch Code already.*



# *How much money would be available to Leyden if it was a Green Community?*

## **Examples of what grants could be used for in Leyden's municipal buildings:**

- Fund energy conservation to offset rising utility costs
- Weatherization - weather stripping, air sealing, insulation, doors and windows
- Mold remediation
- HVAC analysis, upgrades, fuel conversion, pipe insulation, boiler upgrade, programmable thermostats
- LED lighting, lighting upgrades
- Solar PV systems to power municipal buildings
- Hybrid vehicles or electric vehicles and charging stations for small municipal vehicles

GREEN COMMUNITY GRANTS AWARDED		As of the end of 2022
Town	Population	Total grants received
Bernardston	2,102	\$145,095
Buckland	1,816	\$276,050
Colrain	1,606	\$129,880
Charlemont	1,185	\$129,074
Cummington	829	\$127,245
Gill	1,551	\$304,245
Hawley	353	\$136,920
Heath	723	\$129,582
Northfield	2,866	\$542,113
Rowe	424	\$290,501
Shelburne	1,884	\$252,458
Warwick	780	\$567,840

**\*\* Note that the grants awarded are not based on population size.**

# What is the Solar Bylaw and how does it protect the beauty & rural character of Leyden?

The Solar Bylaw proposes changes to our zoning bylaw that provides clarity on what solar development is appropriate and gives the planning board more tools to regulate proposed large projects.

**This bylaw update does not change residential solar projects like those already installed by 44 Leyden households.** It defines requirements for larger systems intended to balance solar development with protection of agricultural, environmental, cultural, and scenic qualities Leyden residents cherish.

## What can I do at my house without a special permit?

There is no Planning Board action required for “residential” solar, either on a roof or on the ground.

**10KW of solar is the maximum allowed by simple building permit.**

## What if I want some income from my solar?

A system that’s **larger than residential size** (up to one acre) requires a site plan review by the Planning Board before a building permit will be issued.

## When do I need a special permit from the Planning Board?

Installations (residential exempted) up to 1 acre are allowed with a site plan review by the planning board if they meet strict standards described in the bylaw in detail. **Projects between 1 and 5 acres must seek and be granted a Special Permit** from the planning board, in addition to meeting the site review standards.

## What are the limits on building a large scale commercial solar farm?

Here are some highlights from the bylaw (for more details, please read it in full - it’s posted on the Town website):

- **Projects greater than 5 acres are not allowed**
- **100 foot setbacks on all 4 sides are required**
- No structures higher than 20 feet
- Forest removal shall be limited to a **maximum cumulative total of 3 acres**
- The system must be designed to minimize visual impacts including preserving natural vegetation, using deer-resistant **evergreen vegetative buffers** (not fences) to provide an effective visual barrier from any public roads within 1/2 mile and to **visually screen abutting residential properties**, whether developed or not.

