

THE BENEFITS

The codes significantly reduce greenhouse emissions produced by the buildings in Worcester, in line with the Green Worcester Plan.

These changes have numerous other benefits such as:

- Higher levels of comfort for building occupants due to consistent indoor temperatures & quieter acoustics
- Healthier homes, offices & schools due to cleaner indoor air quality



The City of
Worcester

RESOURCES

Trainings

No-cost trainings about the codes are available through Mass Save (masssave.com).

Rebates & Incentives

Mass Save offers rebates & incentives for new construction & major renovations (from single family houses up to large commercial buildings).

There are federal incentives including tax credits & rebates.

Planning Assistance

Mass Save offers technical assistance & scoping services for up to 50% off.

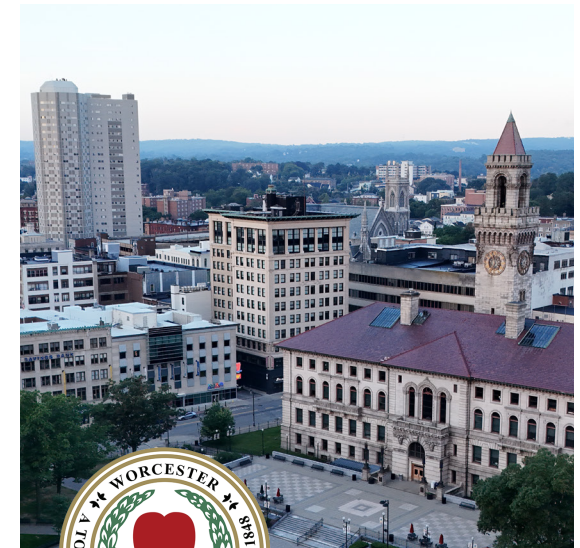
Technical Documents & FAQs

MA Department of Energy Resources (DOER) maintains detailed technical documents & an FAQs sheet. DOER updated the codes in response to building community feedback in Winter 2025

[mass.gov/info-details/
building-energy-code](http://mass.gov/info-details/building-energy-code)



Note: The 2021 International Energy Code was amended in February 2025.



Building Energy Codes

IN WORCESTER

**An overview of the Stretch
& Specialized Stretch Codes**

City of Worcester
Inspectional Services Department
WorcesterMA.gov/inspections
508-799-1198

Updated Fall 2025

What building types do the codes apply to?

The Stretch Code applies to both residential & commercial new construction, as well as some renovations & additions.

The **Specialized Stretch Code** applies only to new residential & new commercial construction.

What requirements are added with Specialized Stretch Code?

- Provides three paths for low rise residential compliance: zero energy, all-electric & mixed fuel
- Requires new homes over 4,000 sq ft to follow the all-electric or zero energy pathway
- Solar PV & pre-wiring for future electrification is required for any new construction utilizing fossil fuels for heating
- Net-zero (HERS 0 or PHIUS zero) certification for new homes over 4,000 sq ft with fossil fuel uses
- Requires Passive House for multi-family over 12,000 sq ft
- Pre-wiring & on-site solar required in some cases for schools, offices, multi-family & small commercial

Do I have to get a HERS rating?

Yes. It is required for new low-rise residential buildings constructed under the updated Stretch Code.

Working with a HERS rater during project development will ensure your building meets code requirements— saving you time & money.

Will it be more expensive to build?

All-electric homes are generally cheaper to build, since heat pumps replace both central air conditioning & a furnace. The costs for all-electric or net zero buildings, are projected to be from a 1% decrease to a 4.5% increase (average 1% increase), when not including Mass Save incentives & tax rebates & federal tax credits.

Are fossil fuels banned?

No. If a home uses fossil fuels such as gas or oil, there will be additional requirements & therefore costs (such as solar panels & pre-wiring for future electrification).



THE STRETCH CODE IN WORCESTER

Worcester adopted the Stretch Code, a building energy code, on May 4, 2010, as part of its designation as a Green Community. This code was updated in 2023 & again in 2024.

In 2023, Massachusetts developed a third code option, the Specialized Stretch Code (SSC), which municipalities could vote to adopt. The Worcester City Council voted to adopt it in September 2023.

The updated Stretch Code & the new SSC went into effect on July 1, 2024. The SSC will help our city meet our own commitments in the Green Worcester Plan, which has a goal of bringing our greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2045.