

Energy

Goal 1: Acton's electricity is fossil-fuel free, renewable, reliable, and affordable.

Goal 2: Acton's residents, businesses, and municipal government use local and locally owned renewable energy from New England whenever possible.

Provide residents with clean energy through Acton Power Choice

E1: Make 100% renewable energy default option in Acton Power Choice.

Acton Power Choice (APC) is the town's green municipal aggregation program. Green municipal aggregation allows a town to determine where its electricity comes from and to include more electricity from high-quality renewable sources in New England than is required by state law, Class I Renewable Energy Credits (RECS). Acton will develop a policy for phasing up the amount of renewable energy in APC to 100% by 2030 and include a subsidy or other options to ensure affordability for lower-income households. Acton's next opportunity to change its APC options comes in September 2022, for the next contract period. The next two opportunities will likely be in 2025 and 2028, for the two subsequent contract periods.

Increase local clean energy access and adoption for all Acton residents

E2: Partner with solar developers to create community solar program options for Acton residents and provide a participation pathway for low-income residents.

Acton residents who rent or do not have rooftops appropriate for solar energy can participate in community solar. Community solar uses virtual net metering to allow multiple energy users to subscribe to an offsite solar project and receive credits for a portion of the energy generated on their bill. The town will evaluate options for hosting community solar on town-owned properties or privately owned sites and to create models for participation that require no upfront cost for Acton residents.

E3: Run a Solarize+ campaign to help residents procure solar, storage, air source heat pumps, electric vehicle charging stations, and other clean energy technologies.

Solarize+ programs identify and vet qualified vendor installers and offer residents and businesses access to bulk purchasing discounts on those technologies. The Town will include an income-tiered pricing model or explore other incentives for lower-income residents to encourage participation.

E4: Create an Energy Advocate position within the sustainability office or develop a program to provide energy advocacy support services for residents.

The Town will create a staff position or program that focuses on providing greater access to clean energy solutions, energy efficiency upgrades, and electric heating and cooling upgrades for residents. The position or program will focus especially on outreach to increase clean energy access via state programs and incentives for those who have faced historic barriers to participation, including renters, low-income residents, English-isolated households, residents of multifamily buildings, small businesses, and historical or aging buildings. The Town will explore options for partnering with a nonprofit organization or with neighboring communities to support this position.

E5: Create a pilot program for solar energy on multifamily buildings that benefits residents.

The Town will research and pursue development of a pilot program to help bring solar energy to more multifamily buildings in Acton. This may include issuing a Request for Information to identify potential developers to pursue these projects and outreach to landlords and multifamily building residents to raise awareness about the opportunity solar provides. Wherever possible, the Town will encourage and provide support to projects that share the benefits of solar with renters in multifamily buildings.

Increase local clean energy access and adoption for all Acton residents

E6: Maximize the installation of renewable energy and energy storage systems wherever feasible on all municipal buildings and Acton-Boxborough Regional School District buildings.

As part of its effort to pursue triple electrification of municipal buildings, the Town will review the potential for onsite renewable energy paired with energy storage at all municipal buildings and Acton-Boxborough Regional School District buildings. This work will also include investigating the potential of microgrids. The Town will pursue these installations wherever feasible.

E7: Move the town's electricity supply to 100% renewable energy.

The Town will review its competitive energy supply contracts for its municipal buildings and update its energy sourcing to be 100% renewable energy from Class I New England RECs.

Advocate for policy changes and infrastructure investments that more rapidly move the state to a 100% clean energy supply.

E8: Advocate for greater clean energy investments at the state level.

Acton will become an active voice advocating for needed state policy change to support the transition to 100% clean energy. This will include supporting a stronger Renewable Portfolio Standard coupled with greater amounts of utility-scale energy storage, increased procurement of offshore wind, and needed upgrades to the regional grid infrastructure to support increased transmission and distribution needs anticipated with the transition of building and transportation electrification. The Town will join relevant coalitions to stay up-to-date on policy opportunities and advocacy and to amplify its voice alongside other aligned municipalities and organizations. Acton will also explore options to exclude electricity supplied from incinerators as part of the RPS.

Spotlight Corner

The City of Newton hired an Energy Coach to work with city residents, builders, and contractors to encourage reductions in greenhouse gases in homes and buildings via weatherization and electrification. This position also organizes and supports volunteer Citizen Energy Coaches who assist with this outreach and education:

<https://newtonenergycoach.org/meet-the-coaches/>

E9: Support the development of state or federal incentives to promote investments in renewable energy.

The Town will advocate incentives that support renewable energy development and that make it easier for local governments and residents to access the full benefits of renewable energy. Current incentive programs for renewable energy projects at the state level (e.g., the SMART program) require that Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) generated be retained by the utilities and do not allow project off-takers to retain a project's RECs if they want to access the program incentives. Federal solar incentives, such as the Investment Tax Credit (ITC), do not encourage direct community investment or ownership of renewable energy and advocating for a change to a direct pay model for the ITC would enable greater investment and project development. The town would join relevant policy advocacy coalitions to encourage state and federal policy change that enables greater renewable energy development, community ownership, and local benefits.

E10: Build stronger utility relationships and monitor and advocate for policy changes needed to the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) discussions.

Advocate for regulatory changes in utility electric rate structures that allow for and incentivize clean energy technologies such as electric vehicles and air source heat pumps and encourage vehicle to grid integration. Work with Eversource to ensure sufficient distribution capacity to fully electrify Acton, and to interconnect all feasible solar, storage, and other clean generation, and approval of microgrid (islanding) projects.

Spotlight Corner

The Town of Natick is exploring a policy to phase their green municipal aggregation program to 100% renewable energy by 2030 in tandem with state increases to the Renewable Portfolio Standard.

The City of Boulder, CO has developed a community solar project provide lower cost energy to cost-burdened residents in a manufactured housing community in the city:

<https://bouldercolorado.gov/news/solar-garden-reducing-energy-costs-ponderosa-residents>

Energy

Short = 1-2 years
 Medium = 3-5 years
 Long = 6-10 years

ID	Action	Co-Benefits	Action Type	Implementation Timeline	Municipal Lead Implementers	Potential Community Partners
E1	Make 100% renewable energy default option in Acton Power Choice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produces local energy • Centers equity and environmental justice • Supports "green" workforce developments 	Policy /Regulations/ Standards	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • Green Advisory Board • Select Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Acton • Resource Force • Acton Climate Coalition
E2	Partner with solar developers to create community solar program options for Acton residents and provide a participation pathway for low-income residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers equity and environmental justice • Supports "green" workforce developments • Improves local resilience 	Feasibility assessment/ Pilot program	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • AHA • ACHC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solar developers • Mass Save • MassCEC • Committee for Action on Housing and Climate Change
E3	Run a Solarize+ campaign to help residents procure solar, storage, air source heat pumps, electric vehicle charging stations, and other clean energy technologies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produces local energy • Improves local resilience • Centers equity and environmental justice 	Financing	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA DOER • MassCEC • Energize Acton
E4	Create an Energy Advocate position within the sustainability office or develop a program to provide energy advocacy support services for residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers equity and environmental justice • Improves local resilience • Improves public health 	Advocacy	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • Select Board • Green Advisory Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acton Climate Coalition • Committee for Action on Housing and Climate Change
E5	Create a pilot program for solar energy on multifamily buildings that benefits residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produces local energy • Centers equity and environmental justice • Scalable or transferable to other neighborhoods • Improves local resilience 	Feasibility assessment/ Pilot program	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • AHA • ACHC • Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solar developers • MassCEC • Mass Save • Committee for Action on Housing and Climate Change
E6	Maximize the installation of renewable energy and energy storage systems wherever feasible on all municipal and Acton-Boxborough School District buildings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produces local energy • Improves local resilience • Scalable or transferable to other neighborhoods 	Capital Improvement	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • ABRSD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA DOER • MassCEC • Resource Force

Energy (cont.)

ID	Action	Co-Benefits	Action Type	Implementation Timeline	Municipal Lead Implementers	Potential Community Partners
E7	Move the town's electricity supply to 100% renewable energy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produces local energy 	Policy /Regulations/ Standards	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • Municipal Properties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Acton
E8	Advocate for greater clean energy investments at the state level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produces local energy • Supports "green" workforce developments • Improves local resilience 	Advocacy	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • Green Advisory Board • Select Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA DOER • MassCEC • Communities in the MAGIC subregion/ MAPC region
E9	Support the development of state or federal incentives to promote investments in renewable energy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produces local energy • Supports "green" workforce developments • Improves local resilience 	Advocacy	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • Green Advisory Board • Select Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA DOER • MassCEC • Communities in the MAGIC subregion/ MAPC region
E10	Build stronger utility relationships and monitor and advocate for policy changes needed to the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) discussions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produces local energy • Improves local resilience 	Advocacy	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA DOER • MassCEC • Eversource