

## Newton's Green Building Codes

The City Council this week voted to adopt the State's new "Specialized" building code to ensure that new construction and renovations in Newton are built to updated energy efficiency standards.

A bit of background...

Massachusetts has three levels of building codes: the Base code; the Stretch code, which is somewhat more stringent in terms of energy efficiency requirements than the Base code; and the Specialized code, sometimes referred to as the "Stretchier" code.

In 2009, Newton was the first community to adopt the first iteration of the Stretch code. Now 300 cities and towns have adopted the Stretch code. The State updated the Stretch Code last year, and all Stretch code communities are automatically subject to the new version of that code.

By contrast, communities that want to adopt the Specialized code have to take action to do so, which is what Newton did on March 6 with the City Council vote.

This is important as the updated building code ensures that new construction and renovations are built to increasingly higher energy efficiency standards. Building codes are a significant tool for helping communities lower their greenhouse gas emissions and construct healthier and more comfortable buildings.

While the new Stretch and Specialized codes are highly technical, in general they prioritize greater insulation, as well as electrification (e.g., air source heat pumps) to replace fossil fuels. They do not *require* electrification, but buildings that use fossil fuels have stricter energy efficiency requirements and, in some instances, require either pre-wiring for electrification and solar panels, or actual installation of solar panels.

Interested in more specifics and details about the new codes? Click to learn more about the [residential](#) Stretch and Specialized codes, the [commercial](#) Stretch and Specialized codes, and [review slides](#) from the Specialized code City Council public hearing.