

# Use Less and Green the Rest: Newton’s Climate Action Plan for 2026-2030

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# Introduction

We live in an era of dramatic transformation, as changes in climate impact communities around the world, across the United States, and here in Newton. From extreme weather events and rising sea levels to disruptions to agriculture and biodiversity, the effects of a changing climate are no longer a distant threat, but a present reality. The need for decisive action is urgent, and cities everywhere have an important role in addressing the challenge.

Here in Newton, we are experiencing the effects of these larger weather patterns. Over the last decades, we have experienced more frequent and intense storms, hotter summers, and shifts in seasonal weather, all of which are posing risks to our infrastructure, natural resources, public safety, and the health of our residents. While we have made progress in addressing our own carbon footprint and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the scale of the impacts requires us to accelerate our efforts and think ambitiously about our future actions.

This updated Climate Action Plan (following the City’s first ever 2020-2025 [Climate Action Plan](#), the [Newton Citizens Climate Action Plan](#) from 2019, and the 2018 [Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment](#)) builds on our past successes while striving to move even more rapidly towards a more resilient and sustainable future for everyone who lives and works in Newton. This Plan recognizes that effective climate action is both globally aware and locally focused, addressing the unique vulnerabilities of our community and accepting our responsibility to reduce our contribution to climate change. The Plan is a call to action for Newton to continue preparing for a sustainable future and to strengthen our actions in building that future.

Our overarching goal remains the realization of the target we set of a carbon neutral Newton by 2050, in alignment with the Commonwealth’s net zero target set in the [Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2050](#). A cross-cutting goal of this entire Plan is to collaborate with all City departments in establishing climate action targets and taking the necessary actions to support the realization of net zero emissions in Newton by 2050.

## Progress and On-Going Opportunities for City of Newton Influence

As of 2025, while we have made significant strides toward our 2050 goal, we still have substantial work ahead – in the next five years and the decades beyond.

Looking back at the past five years, the City of Newton’s climate achievements are worth listing, both to celebrate our progress and identify priority areas for further municipal influence.

[placeholder for timeline graphic]

### **Municipal Leverage — What Can the City of Newton Actually Do?**

There are many things the City can do (and some it cannot...) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within our borders. This section summarizes the City’s primary sources of leverage, most of which are discussed in greater detail in other sections of this Plan.

## **City of Newton Property — Leading by Example**

Newton is a leader in the Commonwealth when it comes to reducing emissions in municipal buildings. For example, all new City buildings and major renovations will continue to eliminate the use of fossil fuels for space heating and domestic hot water by using heat pump technology wherever possible, supplemented by other electric heating sources where necessary. This effort includes, for the first time in the City’s public buildings, ground-source heat pumps at Franklin and Countryside elementary schools.

Significant municipal projects that are fossil free include fully electrifying the home of the Newton Early Childhood Program, the Auburndale Branch Library, the Newton Free Library, four elementary schools, the Cooper Center for Active Living, Fire Station #2, and more projects are on the way, in addition to numerous building energy efficiency projects.

Notably, City buildings will be subject to the Specialized Building Code, and City buildings over 20,000 square feet, in addition to privately-owned large buildings, will be subject to the Buildings Energy Reduction and Disclosure Ordinance (BERDO). BERDO requires large buildings (over 20,000 square feet) to report annual energy use and comply with decreasing carbon emissions standards to reach net zero by 2050. A key part of the City’s strategy to achieve carbon neutrality, BERDO is designed to reduce emissions from our existing municipal building stock.

The City’s 19 solar arrays on City buildings and parking lots, the most municipal solar arrays of any community in the Commonwealth, generate over six million kWh of electricity annually. An additional seven solar projects will be completed in 2025. When these projects are complete, the City’s solar arrays will generate the equivalent of 37% of total municipal electricity use. We continue to plan for additional locations for solar arrays. These projects both help reduce our carbon footprint and generate savings for the City.

The City has installed 29 electric vehicle (EV) chargers on City property (25 of which are publicly accessible). We expect additional EV chargers to be installed as part of large capital projects such as the Lincoln-Eliot, Countryside, and Franklin elementary schools. The City had been awarded a \$145,000 federal Department of Energy grant for additional EV chargers, but it is increasingly clear that the federal funding will not be forthcoming. As a result, the City is exploring the possibility of funding for additional EV chargers through a Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection grant program.

Newton also maintains 20+ miles of bike lanes, cares for 20,000 street trees (increasing with annual plantings), and is home to numerous pollinator gardens and native landscapes across the City. These bike and natural infrastructures reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen our resilience to climate change. They simultaneously provide environmental, health, and cost-saving benefits.

## **City of Newton Ordinances**

In January 2025, the City of Newton enacted both the Building Energy Reduction and Disclosure Ordinance (BERDO) and the Fossil Fuel-Free ordinance requiring all new construction and substantial renovations to be all-electric. The latter ordinance has enabled Newton to be one of the ten municipalities in the State’s Fossil Fuel Free pilot project. The City also adopted the Specialized

Building Code in March 2023, the most advanced version of the State Building Code. Implementation of these ordinances is ongoing. As noted, City construction, like private construction, is subject to all these ordinances.

Additionally, Section 5.13 of the City's [Zoning Ordinance](#) includes sustainable development requirements for proposed developments totaling 20,000+ square feet of gross floor area that also require a special permit. These requirements include designing projects to green building standards, providing an embodied carbon (the total greenhouse gas emissions that are released throughout a product's entire life cycle) analysis, ensuring access to electric vehicle charging, and more.

In 2024, Newton passed the Village Center Overlay District (VCOD) zoning amendment. This amendment was the first zoning update to Newton's business/commercial zones since 1987. The VCOD was designed both to comply with the MBTA Communities Act (also known as Section 3A of the State's Zoning Act) and to promote sustainability by allowing for housing and commercial opportunities concentrated near transit, amenities, and gathering places by right.

### **City of Newton Projects**

Newton's municipal projects encompass a wide range of City actions, such as:

Newton Power Choice. Under a state law known as municipal aggregation, cities and towns are authorized to purchase electricity supply for their electricity customers. Since 2018, Newton's municipal aggregation program, Newton Power Choice, has provided electricity with the highest or close to the highest percentage of renewable power of any municipality in the State, while often saving customers money as compared to Eversource Basic Service. Given changes in federal law regarding renewables projects, it is unclear as of this writing how the next Newton Power Choice contract will be able to facilitate the future development of renewables.

"Climate in Everything." City of Newton Sustainability staff work closely with other City departments on sustainability opportunities such as materials management, including waste disposal, and alternative modes of transportation, such as electric vehicles and biking. The City is committed to avoiding "siloes" in its approach to energy and climate.

Integrated Energy Planning. The City is entering into a collaboration with our electric and gas utility companies, Eversource and National Grid, to plan for and manage the transition from a fossil fuel-based to an electric system. Over time, this will mean eliminating the leak-prone gas pipes under our City streets, while enabling buildings increasingly to be fueled by electricity, which is preferable as the New England electric grid becomes cleaner and greener.

Further Partnership with Eversource and National Grid. The City has a strong partnership with Eversource and National Grid, embodied in the recently updated Community Solutions Memorandum of Understanding, to help decarbonize City buildings and operations, and to support residents and businesses in Newton to make similar changes. We also work closely, and when necessary, advocate, with National Grid for the timely repair of gas leaks which impact greenhouse gas emissions.

Green Community Grant Energy Projects and Utility Rebates. For nine years in a row, the City applied for and received Green Communities grants from 2013, ranging from \$100,000 to \$250,000 each year. The City has received a total of \$2.2 million in Green Community grants since 2010, while leveraging an additional \$1.4 million in utility rebates. These funds have enabled green energy projects, resulting in City savings of over \$350,000 per year in energy costs. The City plans to apply for the State’s Climate Leader Community Certification to access expanded grant opportunities for reducing City greenhouse gas emissions.

### **City of Newton Advocacy**

The City has played an active role in advocating for at the State level for sustainability legislation. Our advocacy has ranged widely, including bills to expand the Fossil Fuel Free Pilot program; efforts to improve the siting and permitting of clean energy infrastructure, including the transmission and distribution system; a bill to require electrification of new construction statewide; and bills related to Extended Producer Responsibility to facilitate the proper disposal of items such as paint and mattresses and reduce packaging materials. The City has also advocated to the State Department of Energy Resources (DOER) as part of the City’s participation in the Fossil Fuel Free Pilot and in comments on DOER’s building code development.

On the transportation front, the City successfully advocated for the Newton Highlands “Green Line” station project, which provides accessibility improvements, increased service frequency, and bus route retention as well as for a significant upgrade to the Newtonville commuter rail station to increase accessibility and frequency.

### **City of Newton Education, Support and Facilitation**

The City plays an important role in educating our residents and businesses about how they can take actions to address climate change. These educational efforts include hiring the State’s first Energy Coach; creating our campaign to encourage weatherization/insulation, heat pumps, solar panels, and green transportation; creating and managing the Energy Coach program; participating in community events like Village Days and the Harvest Fair with education; creating a website devoted to energy and climate issues; speaking in the schools and being actively involved in Newton Public School student and Green Captain activities; and collaboration with Green Newton, Mothers Out Front, 350 Mass Newton, and other Newton and greater Boston environmental organizations.

The City also works in partnership with staff in the Newton Public Schools through monthly School Sustainability Working Group meetings and efforts. Green Teams are now active at nearly all Newton schools, led by a Green Captain (often a teacher), working to advance sustainability in each building.

## Connected Efforts: Related City Plans

The City is committed to coordinating the many departments involved in activities that affect and are affected by development and climate change. The graphic below illustrates plans related to the goals and focus areas of the Climate Action Plan.

[placeholder for “Related City Plans” graphic]

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# Greenhouse Gas Inventory

In 2019, the first City of Newton Climate Action Plan, CAP 1.0, used a greenhouse gas emissions inventory prepared by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council based on 2013 data. In this iteration of the Climate Action Plan, CAP 2.0, we are updating the information using [the inventory](#) prepared by the Newton Energy Commission in 2021, based on 2019 data.

The Energy Commission 2021 emissions inventory shows that our residential sector is responsible for 61% of greenhouse gas emissions and our commercial sector, the next largest, at 28%, with the third largest, gas leaks, accounting for 8%. More detail is provided in the graphic shown below in Figure 1.

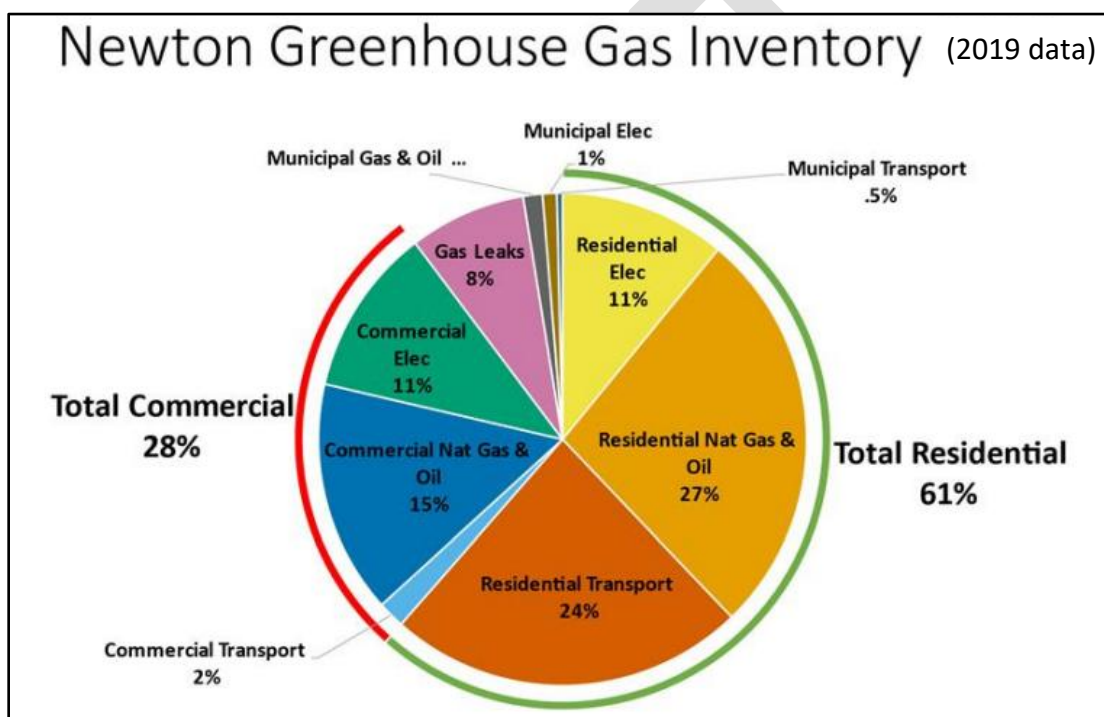


Figure 1. Newton greenhouse gas inventory, conducted by the Energy Commission in 2021 using 2019 data to prevent data distortions due to the COVID pandemic.

It's fair to ask why we aren't updating the greenhouse gas emissions inventory to 2025.

We have three reasons.

First, given how similar the 2013 and 2019 inventories are, it is unlikely that there has been significant change since 2019, especially one of a type or magnitude that would cause us to change our approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Second, to the extent there have been changes between 2019 and 2025, it would be hard to sort out what is COVID-related and, therefore, mostly uninformative for CAP 2.0 purposes.

Third, neither City staff nor the City’s Energy Commission has the personnel capacity to update the inventory given other priorities.

We intend to update the inventory in five years in the next iteration of the City’s Climate Action Plan, CAP 3.0.

## Consumption-Based Greenhouse Gas Emissions

In addition to the necessary purchases of life — the homes we live in, the food we eat — we purchase lots of other “stuff.” We buy furniture, clothing, toys, vehicles, appliances, books, and much else. Our consumption practices — what and how much we acquire — are a significant contributor to our carbon footprint. Although consumption-based emissions are inherently difficult to measure at the local level, they represent a significant area for immediate action and further analysis.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Protection in 2017 calculated statewide carbon emissions in two ways, documented in [this report](#).

The first method calculated ‘territorial emissions.’ These are specifically the emissions generated within the state, mostly from direct use of fuels and electricity. This calculation showed that Oregon seemed to be making good progress toward its climate goals.

The second method calculated ‘consumption-based emissions.’ This method included direct emissions and embodied carbon in products bought in-state but manufactured elsewhere (i.e., most of what people in Oregon bought, with similar patterns across the United States). Emissions from products and fuels produced in state and exported were then subtracted out of the equation.

This second method of looking at consumption-based emissions radically changed the analysis of Oregon’s progress toward its climate goals. In Oregon, this second analysis indicated that consumption of products made outside the state was a large and growing contributor to the state’s total carbon footprint.

Traditionally, greenhouse gas emissions inventories, including the one developed by the Newton Energy Commission in 2021, have covered only territorial emissions. If a product is imported from outside of a given area – whether from a neighboring town or China – its embodied carbon has been excluded from greenhouse gas calculations.

For small geographic areas such as Newton, calculating consumption-based emissions is complicated and unreliable. That said, we know that both territorial and consumption-based greenhouse gas emissions are proportionately larger from wealthier communities as compared to less wealthy communities (and countries). In short, Newton’s consumption-based greenhouse gas inventory would certainly be higher if it reflected the greenhouse gas emissions from our lifestyles and consumption patterns.

## Planning and Community Engagement

Beginning in March 2025, the City’s Climate and Sustainability team, in close partnership with other City staff, began developing the next iteration of Newton’s Climate Action Plan. This updated plan builds on the [first Climate Action Plan](#) and reflects our intent to create a more concise, highly focused plan that incorporates resilience (in other words, including elements of the [Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment](#)). We are also developing a publicly accessible dashboard to track our ongoing progress in a more comprehensive way than we have been able to thus far.

As part of this process, our team reviewed several other municipalities’ Climate Action Plans to gain a better sense of goals and formats used by our neighbors and by cities further afield.

The City’s Climate Action Coordinator conducted interviews with the leadership of most City departments to better understand their climate-related efforts and plans for the next five years, including Health and Human Services; Planning and Development; Inspectional Services; Public Buildings; Public Works; Parks, Recreation, and Culture; Public Schools, and Fire.

To engage stakeholders, the Climate Action Coordinator participated in an Energy Commission meeting in March and an Advocates meeting in April. The Sustainability team presented to City Council in May and spoke to community members at a library event in September.

The Climate Action Coordinator also attended numerous community events throughout spring, summer, and fall, bringing educational materials about the CAP and seeking residents’ input.

We’re now seeking public comments on this draft of the Climate Action Plan. Please review the updated draft Climate Action Plan and send us your input [here](#).

## CAP 2.0 Action Plan

This section outlines the City’s priority climate actions for the next five years, 2026-2030. While this section focuses on actions the City plans to take, the subsequent section on “What You Can Do” provides recommendations for residents, the sector that accounts for the largest greenhouse gas emissions, and the commercial sector. Collective climate action on a city-wide scale, fueled by the cumulative impact of individual choices, is essential for driving meaningful and lasting change.

We are organizing this action plan with a focus on a) the main categories of emissions and b) our strongest resources to prevent, adapt to, and recover from climate change impacts.

- Buildings and Energy
- Transportation and Mobility
- Consumption and Disposal
- Resilience: Health and Natural Resources

Within each category, our actions are further subdivided as follows:

- Continued programs and initiatives
- Exploration of new opportunities

Actions that are measurable are identified as such, with a “metric” identifying relevant variables. Our progress on these metrics will be publicly available in a dashboard, to be updated at least annually.

## Buildings and Energy (B+E)

In the context of City actions regarding energy efficiency and renewable energy, the most meaningful actions the City can take fall into three categories:

- Actions regarding our own facilities
- Actions mandating actions others take
- Encouraging residents and businesses to take actions that the City chooses not to mandate or does not have the legal authority to mandate.

With respect to the first category, actions the City has taken and will continue to take on our own municipal facilities, it's difficult not to sing our own praises, due largely to the tremendous work of Public Buildings Commissioner Josh Morse and his team with the encouragement, leadership and support of the Mayor as well as the City Council.

Additionally, with the encouragement, leadership and actions of the Mayor, staff and City Council, there are now City mandates that require others to take certain actions. (In some instances, these mandates also apply to the City itself.) These ordinances and actions include the Fossil Fuel Free Demonstration Project (a.k.a., the Ten Communities Program), the requirement that all new buildings and substantial renovations to be all-electric; and the adoption of advanced stretch building codes and the BERDO ordinance (both of which apply both to municipal and private buildings).

Finally, the City can encourage residents and businesses to take action and teach them how to do so. The Energy Coach Program and our residential 4 Our Future/Clean Energy Starts at Home activities fall into this category. The aim of municipal education and outreach, as well as our community partnerships, is to influence residents and businesses to decarbonize the approximately 33,500 buildings in Newton, the majority of which are heated by fossil fuels and are not nearly as energy efficient as they could be.

### Programs and Initiatives: Continue

#### *Electrify City of Newton buildings and increase their energy efficiency.*

- B+E 1.** Retrofit existing City buildings and construct new City buildings to support energy efficiency and electrification.

Metrics: Energy use intensity (EUI) scores for new City construction; total emissions from City buildings; number of electrification and decarbonization projects completed.

- B+E 2.** Minimize embodied carbon in City construction through use of reusable, low-carbon materials in new infrastructure and improved soil management.

- B+E 3.** Support and encourage residential and commercial decarbonization and climate resilience through [Clean Energy Starts at Home](#) (formerly 4 Our Future), the [Energy Coach](#) program, and the [Community First Partnership](#).

Metrics: Mass Save participation rate; number of weatherization projects completed; number of heat pumps installed; number and capacity of residential solar arrays; number of EVs registered in Newton.

- B+E 4.** Manage and track progress of the Energy Coach program.  
Metric: Number of Energy Coach consults completed.
- B+E 5.** Educate business owners in Newton about available Mass Save incentives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- B+E 6.** Promote energy efficiency and greenhouse gas emissions reductions through the existing Memorandum of Understanding with Eversource and National Grid.  
Metric: Municipal projects completed; residential decarbonization project data from the utilities.
- B+E 7.** Explore targeted neighborhood electrification projects and opportunities for Non-Pipeline Alternatives in Newton in partnership with the utilities.  
Metric: Number of participants in an electrification pilot conducted in Newton.
- B+E 8.** Reduce electricity demand during peak times in Newton by the City and encourage other electricity customers to do the same.  
Metric: kW of demand reduction from City buildings during peak events.

*Facilitate and encourage additional on-site renewables.*

- B+E 9.** Implement municipal solar projects (Complete solar phase 3 locations and begin and implement solar phase 4).  
Metric: Number of municipal solar projects; total kWh generated by municipal solar annually; total kW of municipal solar capacity.
- B+E 10.** Encourage residents and the commercial sector to install solar through education about available incentives and the Energy Coach program.  
Metric: Number of residential and commercial solar installations in Newton (SMART data, NewGov permit records).
- B+E 11.** Enable Newton residents and businesses to support clean energy through mechanisms in Newton Power Choice. If the City concludes that the purchase of Renewable Energy Credits no longer facilitates the development of renewable power, consider other mechanisms for facilitating renewable development through Newton Power Choice.  
Metric: Percent of residents in Newton Power Choice opting up to support larger amounts of renewable energy.

*Implement building codes and standards.*

- B+E 12.** Implement the [Building Emissions Reduction and Disclosure Ordinance](#) (BERDO): Convene BERDO Advisory Commission, create and publish reporting guidance and regulations, and assist building owners with compliance by compiling resources for building owners and providing training.  
Metrics: Total emissions per year from buildings subject to BERDO; percent of square footage in compliance; emissions intensity of BERDO buildings per year.
- B+E 13.** Implement the [Electrification Ordinance](#), requiring all new construction and major renovation projects to use electricity instead of fossil fuels for heating, cooling, cooking, and clothes drying and either electricity or thermal solar for hot water.

Metrics: Number of all-electric new construction and major renovations, to be collected from the City’s NewGov permit system for state required reporting to the extent possible; average HERS ratings for new construction and major renovations.

- B+E 14.** Implement the [Stretch and Specialized Codes](#), which increase energy efficiency requirements for all new buildings and new construction in Newton.
- B+E 15.** Implement, provide guidance on, and develop regulations for reserved sections of Section 5.13 of the [Zoning Ordinance](#) (Sustainable Development Design) which requires a project over 20,000 square feet that also requires a special permit to meet the standards of a green building rating system, provide a minimum percentage of electric vehicle charging stations, and provide an analysis that estimates the embodied carbon of a project.
- B+E 16.** Through zoning, allow for more multi-family housing and make it easier to preserve existing homes and convert to multiple units.

#### New Opportunities: Explore

- B+E a.** Develop plans for the next phase of municipal solar projects (solar Phase 5).  
Metric: Number and capacity of planned and completed municipal solar installations.
- B+E b.** Amend BERDO to include a requirement for large (over 20,000 sf) residential buildings to meet an emissions standard in the near future, in addition to the current reporting requirement. We have received feedback recommending BERDO-type requirements for buildings between 10,000 sf and 20,000 sf, both residential and commercial. Note that we appreciate the feedback but feel that we should get experience with BERDO as it applies to buildings over 20,000 square feet before seeking to expand it to smaller buildings.
- B+E c.** Conduct strategic outreach to residents to encourage and support decarbonization. For example, conduct outreach about heat pumps to homes on oil, propane, or older electric heating systems.  
Metric: Number of strategic campaigns conducted.
- B+E d.** Create materials for residents and other property owners using a “decision tree” format to illustrate options for low-carbon retrofits and identify steps needed to implement these technologies.  
Metric: Educational materials created.
- B+E e.** Become a [Climate Leader Community](#) — a State program that requires creation of a municipal decarbonization roadmap and provides access to State decarbonization accelerator grant funds.  
Metric: Climate Leader Community certification.
- B+E f.** Explore opportunities to convert Newton’s natural gas infrastructure to electricity in partnership with our utilities, through Integrated Energy Planning.
- B+E g.** Educate City employees how to adopt sustainable behaviors in the workplace, such as turning off the lights, keeping windows closed when heat or air conditioning is on, and reducing idling.

**B+E h.** Develop an updated, holistic greenhouse gas inventory, including future modeling, by 2030 for inclusion in the next Climate Action Plan update, CAP 3.0.

Metric: An updated greenhouse gas inventory.

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## Transportation and Mobility (T+M)

Sustainable transportation involves walking, biking, use of public transit, and increased use of electric vehicles. Newton's first ever [Walk, Roll & Bike Network Plan](#) created in the fall of 2025 provides a roadmap to make Newton more safe, enjoyable, and accessible for as many people as possible to take part in sustainable transportation. This Plan, together with the work of the Planning and Public Works Departments in conjunction with community groups, will advance actions for low-emission and emissions-free movement.

Transportation contributes approximately 28% of Newton's greenhouse gas emissions and is impacted heavily by the fact that 80.67% of vehicles driven in Newton are powered entirely by fossil fuels. According to the [American Community Survey](#) (U.S. Census Bureau), 12.4% of Newton households owned 3 or more vehicles in 2024. Reducing fossil fuel powered cars as well as vehicle miles traveled (VMTs) are key aspects of creating a carbon neutral Newton. According to the [Mass Vehicle Census](#), 57,967 vehicles are registered in Newton, and a total of 1,438,776 miles are driven daily (an average of 24.8 miles daily per vehicle).

The role of the City of Newton in decreasing vehicle miles traveled and increasing the number of electric vehicles is somewhat limited but still important. For example, the cost and range of electric vehicles and the frequency, reliability, affordability and accessibility of public transit are outside the direct control of the City. That said, the City of Newton can help reduce VMTs by increasing sustainable transportation infrastructure in the City while also guiding land use patterns to reduce car dependency by locating new housing near public transit, bicycle infrastructure, and village centers.

With leadership, electric vehicles and electric charging stations have gained a lot of ground in Newton. The City's non-emergency sedan fleet became all-electric in 2019. The City has installed 24 publicly available EV chargers.

Residents are also adopting green vehicles. Of vehicles currently registered in Newton, 6.3% are all-electric (up from 1.3% in 2020), 2.9% are plug-in hybrid, and 10% are hybrid electric vehicles. Fifty-three EV chargers have been installed on private property in Newton (excluding private residences).

In Newton, 5.7% of occupied housing units have no access to a vehicle and 35.2% have access to one vehicle. Approximately 20% of Newton's residents walk, bike, take transit, or use another means of travel to commute to work. Another 20% of residents typically work from home (*Source: American Community Survey 5 Year survey (2017-2021) A10030 and A10054B; Census 2020 T015*). As the City improves access to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and public transit allows residents to decrease their dependence on personal vehicles, more progress can be made.

### Programs and Initiatives: Continue

**T+M 1.** Allow for and facilitate the construction of housing in village centers and near transit.

Metrics: The number of homes constructed utilizing the Village Center Overlay District Zoning.

- T+M 2.** Work toward zoning that allows for diverse and complementary uses within walking distance of homes to reduce car dependency.
- T+M 3.** Install additional EV charging stations in village centers, school facilities, and other priority municipal sites, utilizing grant opportunities such as the [state Electric Vehicle Incentive Program](#) (EVIP).  
Metric: Number of publicly accessible chargers installed in Newton.
- T+M 4.** Initiate small, medium, and large Green Infrastructure and Complete Streets projects specifically aimed at supporting bike and pedestrian travel, and increased tree and shrub installations.  
Metric: Number of Complete Streets projects completed.
- T+M 5.** Prioritize support and infrastructure for accessible, sustainable transportation to reduce vehicle miles traveled in Newton.
- a. Add and improve existing bicycle facilities.  
Metric: Miles of bicycle facilities added.  
Metric: Bicycle parking added.
- b. Add and improve the sidewalk network.  
Metric: Miles of sidewalks added.  
Metric: Miles of sidewalk at “good” or “excellent” condition.
- c. Add and improve the curb ramps.  
Metric: Number of curb ramps added or improved.
- T+M 6.** Support efforts to increase the number of electric vehicles registered in Newton, in partnership with community groups such as the EV Task Force.  
Metric: Number and percentage of total electric and hybrid vehicles registered in Newton.
- T+M 7.** Support [Safe Routes to School](#) (SRTS) programs, such as bike buses, walking school buses, and bicycle and pedestrian education. All Newton schools (15 K-12, 4 middle, and 3 high schools) are SRTS partner schools.  
Metric: Results of SRTS annual survey on how students are getting to school.
- T+M 8.** Increase access to and use of bike share through expanded operations, system expansion, education efforts, and communication channels.  
Metrics: Number of BlueBikes trips starting or ending in Newton; number of BlueBikes docking stations; number of BlueBikes dock months per year.
- T+M 9.** Work with MBTA to improve bus, subway, and commuter rail access and service with a goal to increase frequency, accessibility and ridership.  
Metrics: Number of accessible bus stops and subway and commuter rail stations, ridership.
- T+M 10.** Work with the Newton Public Schools as they pursue using electric school buses.  
Metric: Number of electric buses used by NPS.

#### New Opportunities: Explore

- T+M a.** Enact a [zero-emissions-first vehicle policy](#) so that when the City needs a new vehicle, zero-emission options are prioritized. This is a required component of becoming a Climate Leaders Community.

Metric: Adoption of a zero-emissions-first vehicle policy; number and percent of EVs purchased in City's fleet.

**T+M b.** Working with the City Council, minimize, reduce or eliminate minimum parking requirements in the Zoning Ordinance and, instead, explore using a maximum on parking allotment (a zoning regulation that sets an upper limit on the number of off-street parking spaces that a new development or redevelopment project is allowed to provide).

Metric: Zoning Ordinance changes that minimize, reduce or remove parking minimums and create parking caps.

**T+M c.** Increase the utility and visibility of the City's public electric vehicle (EV) charging network by implementing a consistent, highly visible signage program at all existing and new charging locations.

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## Consumption and Disposal (C+D)

Consumption-related emissions are a sizable portion of the world’s total greenhouse gas emissions, and communities like Newton that have are likely to have above average rates of consumption due to our higher median income are likely to contribute an outsized share. A complete greenhouse gas inventory for Newton would include the emissions associated with housing materials, furniture, medical supplies and services, transportation (transit modalities and infrastructure), travel (transit modalities and accommodations), food, clothing, and all other consumer goods and services. These emissions include those that stem from production and delivery, primarily the extraction, manufacturing, and transportation of materials and goods.

In addition to understanding the emissions associated with everything we purchase, we can also address the emissions associated with the disposal of those materials. According to our 2019 Climate Action Plan, the waste sector represents less than 2% of the City’s emissions inventory. However, this statistic does not include emissions from collection of “waste,” or the emissions associated with the destruction or recycling of those materials (since those services occur outside Newton). Amplifying our efforts around sustainable materials management — including waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and organics recovery — is another component of realizing a carbon-neutral Newton in 2050.

With specific objectives and actions identified for reducing consumption and waste-related emissions by the City itself as well as by our residents and businesses — such as a procurement policy to reduce and reuse goods and to prioritize lower embodied carbon materials across the City — we can continue programs and initiate new ones that lead our community towards more sustainable consumption.

### Programs and Initiatives: Continue

**C+D 1.** Educate the community about the greenhouse gas impacts of different consumption habits in order to further the understanding of the relationship between consumption and climate change and encourage ecofriendly behavior. Provide educational materials about consumption/waste reduction strategies and reuse programs.

**Metric:** Educational materials developed.

**C+D 2.** Implement and further develop programs that promote practices that change consumption patterns such as renting, loaning, sharing, fixing, and reusing goods, as well as choosing products with lower emissions across their entire lifecycle. Current programs include the 16 Helpsy textile recycling bins, the Library of Things at the Newton Free Library, the Swap Shop and the Book Shed at the Rumford Recovery Center, the Little Libraries across the City, and Fix-It Clinics offered by the Newton Recycling Committee (with the Newton Free Library, Newton DPW Sustainable Materials Management Division, and funds from a MassDEP grant).

**Metrics:** Develop participation tracking in reuse programs and aim maintain or increase participation.

**C+D 3.** More actively promote commercial recycling. A recycling mandate was passed in Newton in March 2023. (See [Chapter 11, Section 11-5 of Newton Ordinances](#).) This mandate requires all properties — residential and commercial — in Newton to separate

and recycle all recyclable materials (plastic/metal/glass containers, mixed paper, and cardboard). In addition, waste haulers that have permits to collect trash must also provide recycling services unless the property owner can provide proof to the hauler that separate recycling services are provided by another permitted hauler.

Metrics: Commercial recycling contamination periodic checks; Health and Human Services inspections.

**C+D 4.** Promote the [Sustainable Food and Beverage Serviceware, Packaging, and Single-Use Items Ordinance](#) (one aspect of which is known as “Skip the Stuff”), which aims to reduce the use of single-use takeout containers that cannot be reused, composted, or recycled. This City of Newton ordinance requires non-container items such as plastic utensils only to be offered at the customer’s request.

**C+D 5.** Promote extended producer responsibility (EPR) policies in Massachusetts by advocating at the state level. EPR programs have been proven to increase material recovery and waste diversion. Leverage Newton's existing resolution to support state efforts to pass new EPR legislation.

**C+D 6.** Encourage increased participation in Black Earth’s curbside compost service and City compost drop-off bins; encourage backyard composting.

Metrics: Number of residents participating in each program; tons of waste composted annually.

**C+D 7.** Educate employees and provide the infrastructure to improve recycling in all municipal buildings and explore potential to add organics collection particularly at those sites with active kitchens, e.g., the Cooper Center for Active Living.

Metrics: Recycling tonnage; tons of waste composted annually; addition of organics collection in City buildings.

**C+D 8.** Support NPS staff, teachers, students, families and caregivers to improve recycling and organics collection in Newton Public Schools in back-of-house (school kitchens) and front-of-house (school cafeteria) operations.

Metrics: Recycling tonnage; tons of waste composted annually.

**C+D 9.** In the long term, work toward the use of reusable food service ware in Newton Public Schools. In the short term, continue work toward composting compostable service ware.

Metric: Compostable or reusable food service ware in use.

**C+D 10.** Incorporate greenhouse gas emissions from residential collection services into our next greenhouse gas inventory and evaluate existing collection route maps to optimize for reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

#### New Opportunities: Explore

**C+D a.** Develop a long-term Materials Management Plan for the City to increase waste reduction and waste diversion.

Metric: Waste tonnage reduced over time; plan developed.

**C+D b.** Implement an environmentally preferred purchasing policy for the City – part of a grant eligibility requirement for MassDEP – by summer 2026.

Metric: Environmentally preferred purchasing policy adopted and implemented.

## Resilience: Health and Natural Resources (R+H)

[in text box- Resilience is defined as: “The capacity of a community, business, or natural environment to prevent, withstand, respond to, and recover from a disruption” (U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit).]

The greater Boston region is already experiencing warmer temperatures, increased precipitation, increasingly extreme weather events, and rising seas. According to the [Northeast Climate Adaptation Science Center](#), mean annual temperatures in MA will rise 2.8-6.2°F by 2050 relative to the 1971-2000 average. Precipitation in the Boston area has increased by 10% in the past 50 years, and precipitation in the Northeast from extreme storms has increased by 70% since 1958. Over the next century, average annual precipitation and the frequency of heavy downpours are likely to increase ([EPA](#)). Risks associated with increased frequency and severity of extreme weather are numerous. For example, climate change impacts in Newton are likely to include physical threats like infrastructure damage, public health challenges such as heat-related illnesses and vector-borne diseases, and long-term environmental stresses like ecosystem degradation.

We can take steps to increase Newton’s resilience and limit future damage from extreme weather. Continued and accelerated action is needed to equip our community for climate-related emergencies, including extreme heat, harmful air quality, flooding, power outages, and other effects of severe storms. Through natural resource management, stormwater management, emergency planning, and community education, the strategies outlined below can help Newton reduce risk and expedite future recovery.

A key component of climate resilience is leveraging our natural environment. Forested areas provide multiple, crucial climate services simultaneously: they offer natural cooling for surrounding areas, their root systems and canopy mitigate intense rainfall events by intercepting precipitation, absorbing water and slowing runoff, and they sequester carbon from the atmosphere. By protecting and expanding these critical green spaces, and green infrastructure more broadly, we can maximize their proven effectiveness for stormwater control and long-term community resilience.

### Programs and Initiatives: Continue

**R+H 1.** Improve City MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) maintenance operations, including annual catch basin cleaning and street sweeping programs. These non-structural controls help mitigate stress on our drainage system and prevent pollutants from entering the Charles River.

Metric: Number of catch basins cleaned annually.

**R+H 2.** Execute capital improvement projects within the [SIIP](#) (Stormwater Infrastructure Improvement Plan), as well as continue with site feasibility assessments for MS4 retrofits and structural control measures.

Metric: Capital improvement projects implemented.

**R+H 3.** Continue rollout of the City’s Stormwater Management Ordinance for new and redevelopment projects on private properties.

**R+H 4.** Continue successful implementation of the [Tree Preservation Ordinance](#), which requires permitting for tree removal on private property. Engagement with an arborist is also required.

Metrics associated with tree ordinance permitting:

- a. DBH removed (DBH - diameter at breast height, a forestry-industry measurement);
- b. Caliper inches (caliper measurement at base of tree) of replacement trees;
- c. Amount paid to the City in lieu of planting replacement trees.

**R+H 5.** Plant additional trees on City property, prioritizing the selection of native species and species that will adapt to a changing climate.

Metric: Number of trees planted by the City annually. The City is currently planting 400-600 street trees/year in addition to the 200 trees planted annually in partnership with the Newton Tree Conservancy. To better address the 50% street tree loss of the last several decades, the number of annual tree plantings should increase to 1,200 until the street tree population meets or exceeds 32,000.

**R+H 6.** Prioritize actions to protect healthy native forests on Conservation and Park land to maximize carbon sequestration – i.e., protect forested areas from development and manage invasive plants to protect mature trees, native saplings, and native shrubs in Newton’s forests.

Metrics: Completion of annual reviews of threats to forest health and available mitigation and funding options; creation of municipal program to address invasives and scourges.

**R+H 7.** Utilize parks, open spaces, and public buildings projects to install or expand green infrastructure and water quality features and plant pollinator gardens and native species.

Metric: Green infrastructure projects completed; area of impervious surfaces upgraded to more pervious surfaces.

**R+H 8.** As part of capital projects, select drought resistant plants to reduce the need for waterings.

**R+H 9.** Continue site feasibility studies and implementation of Newton’s [interim phosphorus control plan](#) to pursue compliance with the established federal TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) for phosphorus into the Charles River.

**R+H 10.** Increase shade incorporated within capital projects, whether through trees or shade structures.

Metrics: Number of high-canopy shade trees planted annually; number of shade structures added to new capital projects.

**R+H 11.** Support updates to the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) and Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) to ensure that critical municipal infrastructure is protected from heat, flooding, and wind.

Metric: Updated CEMP and HMP.

**R+H 12.** Continue working with residents in need of residential cooling systems, especially those in older homes and those who may be vulnerable to extreme heat; provide information on resources such as financial assistance.

Metrics: Educational materials created.

## New Opportunities: Explore

- R+H a.** Establish a Biodiversity Working Group to assess the health of the City’s forested lands and open spaces, set clear targets for preservation and restoration efforts on municipal lands, initiate and coordinate preservation and restoration efforts across municipal departments, and track progress.
- R+H b.** Initiate conversations with the City’s golf courses to discuss opportunities for enhanced resilience projects to help address stormwater and flooding.
- R+H c.** Educate residents on the benefits of replacing trees and tree care to reduce the number of trees lost on private property.  
Metric: Percentage of trees cut on private property; educational materials developed about pruning and other tree care methods.
- R+H d.** Educate residents about health hazards that are exacerbated by climate change, such as vector-borne diseases and air quality concerns, and steps they can take to protect themselves.  
Metric: Educational materials created.
- R+H e.** Provide additional public education about steps to take in the event of extreme weather, flooding, and power outages.  
Metric: Educational materials created.
- R+H f.** Provide additional public education to support residents and businesses in efforts to make their property more resilient in the face of such climate-related events.  
Metric: Educational materials created.

## What You Can Do

This updated Plan is purposefully titled, “Use Less and Green the Rest: Newton’s Climate Action Plan for 2026-2030.” The recommendations offered below for residents and the commercial sector track the advice contained in that title. The advice in this section is also focused on the highest-leverage actions that individuals can take to address climate change.

### Buildings: At Home and Work (Use Less, Electrify, Solarize)

#### **Recommendation #1. Get a Mass Save Home Energy Assessment; Insulate and Air Seal.**

In the “at home” category, our most important advice is to get a [Mass Save assessment](#) and implement its findings. We know it can be challenging to miss work for a few hours to stay home to get a Mass Save audit, but it’s worth it!

The audit may recommend improvements such as insulation and air sealing, which reduce your heating and cooling costs and make your home more comfortable (and quieter!). A well-sealed and insulated home acts like a thermos, keeping heat out in the summer and in during the winter. You’re already paying for this service through your utility bills. Use it!

[Home energy assessments](#) are also available and recommended for small businesses, nonprofits, houses of worship, and multi-family buildings.

#### **Recommendation #2. Electrify.**

Electricity can be generated using renewable resources instead of fossil fuels. While it is true that the New England electric grid is currently powered in part by fossil fuels, that is decreasingly the case. Avoiding natural gas in your home prevents significant indoor air pollution, and removing the natural gas infrastructure under our streets avoids methane leaking into the atmosphere.

Use [heat pumps](#) instead of conventional electric and gas-fired appliances. Heat pump technology has improved dramatically and now powers whole-house heating, cooling, dehumidification, and domestic hot water. And it’s a myth that heat pumps don’t work in New England’s cold climate. Heat pumps run on electricity as opposed to fossil fuels and are much more efficient than other appliances that provide heating and cooling. Similarly, electric induction stoves and convection ovens are state-of-the-art and are increasingly embraced by professional chefs as well as everyday homeowners. Electric dryers are also quite efficient.

Planning for electrification is the smartest approach for both our climate and your wallet. Your furnace, water heater, or gas stove may fail without warning, creating the need for expensive emergency action. However, the moment of failure represents a good opportunity to stop investing in outdated, high-emissions systems. We encourage Newton residents and businesses to proactively plan for the end-of-life of fossil-fuel systems and appliances now by researching high-efficiency electric alternatives. Switching from combustion to electric appliances at the point of failure means you invest in cleaner technology with long-term savings, potentially increase your home’s or business’ long-term value, and align your replacement with a clean energy future.

### **Recommendation #3: Install Solar Panels or Consider Subscribing to Community Solar.**

Investing in solar panels yields financial savings — often free electricity after a 5-8-year payback period — a reduced carbon footprint, and energy security and independence. Solar power is more affordable than ever, with residential and commercial solar system costs having decreased by 64% and 69% respectively over the past decade ([NREL](#)). For homeowners or businesses prioritizing resilience, pairing solar with a battery storage system ensures you maintain power for essential needs during a grid outage. (Read more [here](#) about solar and resilience.)

For those interested in renewable energy without installing rooftop panels, [community solar](#) offers an alternative way to benefit from solar panels while saving 5-15% on your annual electricity bill.

## **Transportation: On the Road (Walk, Ride, Electrify)**

### **Recommendation #1: Walk, Bike and Use Public Transit More; Drive Less.**

“Use Less and Green the Rest” in transportation translates into limiting driving when possible, and walking, biking, and taking public transportation when that’s an option. Electric bikes are a boon and can work for ferrying small children and hauling groceries ([learn more about electric cargo bikes from this article](#)).

### **Recommendation #2: Use an Electric Vehicle.**

When it comes time to buy your next car, consider purchasing an electric vehicle. Electric vehicles have numerous benefits, both environmental and financial. Electric vehicles produce zero tailpipe emissions, reducing local air pollution, and they have a lower lifetime carbon footprint than a comparable gasoline car. The long-term operational savings — namely fuel savings and lower maintenance costs — are also compelling. Through the [MOR-EV rebate](#), buying or leasing an EV is more affordable for Massachusetts residents, businesses, and non-profit organizations.

### **Recommendation #3: Think Deeply about Flying.**

We recognize that flying can’t always be avoided, but recognize as well that aviation is responsible for 3.5% of anthropogenic climate changing emissions, according to a study led by [UK’s Manchester Metropolitan University](#). Reducing airplane flights is an impactful way you can reduce your climate-related emissions.

## **Consumption: With Intention (Use Less, Buy Mindfully, Limit Waste)**

### **Food Consumption**

Global food production accounts for more than a quarter of human-caused GHG emissions. A lot of these emissions are attributable to farming practices that are not directly relevant to people living in Newton. That said, Newton residents can take steps to reduce their dietary climate footprint.

Our recommendations on food are more detailed than our other recommendations, in part because diet advice from a climate perspective can be confusing. Note that although we are

focused here on the environmental rather than nutritional implications of diet, there are significant synergies.

### **Recommendation #1: Minimize Food Waste and Save Money.**

About a third of the country's food is wasted, according to the [USDA](#). Wasted food incurs unnecessary costs, including in emissions from farming and the transportation of food. Here are some strategies for avoiding food waste:

- Plan meals and shop mindfully (at the very least, not when ravenously hungry).
- Store food properly.
- Use common sense regarding expiration and “best by” dates (but take these dates seriously for infant formula): If the food looks, smells, and seems fresh, it is probably okay to eat.
- Serve meals on smaller plates.
- Consider buying from sources like [Imperfect Foods](#) and [Misfits Market](#).
- If you have food waste, compost it to reduce the carbon footprint associated with waste hauling and disposal. Compost can also be used to build soil health and supply nutrients to plants.

### **Recommendation #2: Consider being a Part-Time Vegetarian or Vegan.**

Meat, especially beef and lamb, as well as dairy products, have the biggest diet-related greenhouse gas emissions.

Plant-based foods — including fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans, peas, nuts, and lentils — have much smaller climate footprints (learn more from [the UN](#)). Plant-based “meats” made from soy, wheat, and legumes — are produced entirely from plants. The greenhouse gas emissions of plant-based “meat” are generally 30-90% lower than conventional meat, since livestock produce a lot of methane and manure and rely on feed, the production of which causes a lot of emissions ([Good Food Institute](#)). According to the [Good Food Institute](#), plant-based meat production, on average, uses 95% less water and 79% less land than conventional meat, while also contributing 93% less water pollution.

A vegan diet — avoiding all animal products — is the gold standard of environmentally sensitive eating. We understand that for many, if not most, people adopting a full-time vegan diet is too challenging. But the perfect need not be the enemy of the good. Take small steps. Forego, or limit consumption of beef and lamb. Three meals with meat per week is better than four!

Food writer and author Michael Pollan coined the aphorism: “Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.” Food writer and chef Mark Bittman suggests part-time veganism: “VB6” (“vegan before six p.m.”). Cutting back on eating meat may mean eating more dairy products for protein. While the environmental impact of dairy farming is significant, it's generally not considered as significant as that of meat production, particularly beef. The resources used to tend dairy cows are spread across a much larger total output, making the environmental cost per kilogram of food significantly lower.

There is more to say about meat production that we are not addressing here, including the treatment of farm animals, the overuse of antibiotics, biodiversity loss, and massive air and water pollution.

### **Recommendation #3. Eat Seafood Thoughtfully.**

Seafood is a good protein source, has many health benefits, and avoids many of the climate impacts of land-based agriculture. From a greenhouse gas perspective, seafood is a better choice than beef or lamb, and often — but not under all circumstances — a better choice than chicken.

Seafood, however, is not always a perfect choice from a greenhouse gas emissions perspective. Overfishing degrades habitats and undermines the ocean’s ability to store carbon, which is important for climate change mitigation. Further, the impacts of fish consumption are highly species-specific, and depend on where the fish is sourced and how it is caught or farmed.

One way to navigate your choice of seafood is to look for certifications from organizations such as the [Marine Stewardship Council \(MSC\)](#) or [Seafood Watch](#), which indicate sustainable fishing practices. Another good starting place is [seafoodwatch.org](#), established by the Monterey Bay Aquarium. In 2024, Seafood Watch compiled [a list of 10 seafood “no-brainers”](#) — good for you and the environment. They provide detailed information on why these options scored top marks.

### **Recommendation #4: Eat Seasonally and Buy Locally.**

It’s generally believed that eating locally reduces greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the transport of food. However, recent research establishes that the carbon footprint of transporting food is relatively small. Without question, the best way to reduce the carbon footprint of your diet is to eat less meat and dairy and more plants.

That said, there are other benefits to eating locally, such as encouraging farmers’ markets and the local economy, and preserving open space. Newton is blessed with resources for shopping from nearby farms. Check out Newton’s very own Community Farm and Newton’s two farmers’ markets and farmers’ markets in neighboring towns.

## **Consumption of other stuff**

### **Recommendation #1. Buy Less Stuff.**

While many purchases are necessary, such as clothing and household goods, buying less reduces all the emissions associated with the production, transportation, and disposal of the “stuff.” In fact, buying less is one of the most straightforward (and inexpensive) ways to live more sustainably.

When you're tempted by a new item, practice pausing to ask yourself if you truly need it. One effective strategy to minimize impulse buying is creating shopping lists and strictly adhering to them. When you do need or want something, prioritize sustainable choices: invest in durable, high-quality goods; share, rent, borrow, or buy secondhand; choose options with minimal packaging; and shop locally.

### **Recommendation #2. Buy Less New Stuff; If Possible, Fix What You’ve Got.**

There are many ways to [buy items second hand](#), and even to rent certain items (for example, explore options like [Rent the Runway](#)). Check out local [reuse programs](#) like Newton’s Library of Things, the Swap Shop, and the Book Shed.

There are also opportunities to fix some items that have the potential for a longer life, through [Fix-it Clinics](#) held a few times a year at the Newton Free Library.

### **Recommendation #3. Optimize Material Utilization and Minimize Trash.**

While throwing materials into the trash cannot be completely avoided, it can be minimized. This goal is central to achieving a circular economy, a system designed to keep resources in use for as long as possible and eliminate waste by design.

One way to start is by aiming to get the highest and best use of materials before they end up as trash. Instead of following a linear "take-make-dispose" model, a circular approach emphasizes the actions laid out in [this waste hierarchy diagram](#), including reducing, reusing, recycling, and composting.

With leadership and sustained efforts, the City of Newton has many recycling and composting options for residents, starting with single-stream curbside recycling. The Newton Resource Recovery Center collects over 25 types of materials, including excess single stream recycling and cardboard (in the event your green bin is full), old electronics, scrap metal items, household hazardous waste (pesticides, fertilizer, cleaning products, etc.), batteries, light bulbs, and more. You can deposit used clothing, footwear, bedding, and towels in any condition in the [“Helpsy” bins](#) located at most public schools and at the Rumford Avenue Resource Recovery Center. For businesses and institutions, [sector-specific recycling guidance](#) is available from RecyclingWorks. You can compost food waste (see this [list of acceptable materials](#)) in your [backyard](#), by using Newton’s [Black Earth curbside service](#), or by using for free the City’s drop-off bins ([learn more about this no-cost program here](#) ,and [register here to get the lock combination](#) for the drop-off bins).

### **Recommendation #4. Limit Waste from Take-Out Meals.**

Take-out beverages and meals are a great convenience, but usually come with significant waste, much of it plastic. To the extent restaurants accommodate this, consider bringing your own reusable containers when ordering a takeaway beverage or packaging leftovers (see the [FAQs](#) on this page for more information).

Newton has a plastics reduction [ordinance](#) that aims to reduce the use of single-use takeout containers that cannot be reused, composted, or recycled, and requires non-container items such as plastic utensils only be offered at the customer’s request. Don’t request these items when you don’t need them.

## **Resilience: Be Ready (Prepare, Plant, and Connect with Neighbors)**

Climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of extreme weather events everywhere, particularly intense heat waves and flooding in low areas. Increasing your resilience to climate

change is important for enhanced safety, prevention of costly damage, improved home health and comfort, and in many cases, a reduced carbon footprint.

### **Recommendation #1: Prepare for Increased Rainfall, Intense Storms, and Inland Flooding.**

To prepare your home for potential flooding, start with preventive measures in the basement. You can [waterproof your basement](#) by sealing foundation cracks and installing a sump pump, ideally with a backup power supply. To protect vital building systems from water damage, you can elevate or relocate appliances such as your air conditioner, hot water heater, and furnace. Similarly, all electrical components — including the main electrical panel, outlets, switches, and wiring — should be moved to a minimum of one foot above the projected flood elevation. Finally, when heavy rain is forecast, elevate valuables to a higher level in your home.

Improve drainage around your home’s foundation by [grading away from your foundation](#) and cleaning gutters and downspouts regularly. Replace impervious surfaces with [permeable pavers](#), gravel, or vegetated areas in order to allow for rainwater infiltration.

Lastly, but equally important, consider installing [green infrastructure](#) to soak up rainwater: canopy trees, rain gardens, rain barrels, and [pollinator gardens](#) can help capture rainwater, reduce erosion, and, in the case of pollinator gardens, support biodiversity.

Understand what your homeowner’s insurance covers; a standard homeowner’s insurance policy does not cover losses from flooding. Losses related to wind damage are usually covered, but your policy may require payment of a separate wind deductible. Consider whether you want or need a flood insurance policy, and learn more about purchasing flood insurance from [Mass.gov](#) and [FEMA](#) (Federal Emergency Management Agency).

### **Recommendation #2: Protect and Plant Trees.**

As essential green infrastructure, trees provide critical public services, including managing stormwater, cooling urban areas, improving air quality, and storing carbon. Crucially, mature trees sequester disproportionately more carbon from the atmosphere than younger trees. Therefore, protecting existing trees and forests maintains these benefits while simultaneously preventing the immediate release of stored carbon that occurs when they are cut or burned. To preserve this healthy canopy and increase its longevity, practices like regular pruning of unhealthy branches are highly recommended.

Importantly, trees also help reduce energy consumption, as their shade reduces demand for air conditioning. [Strategically planting high-canopy, deciduous trees](#) on the south and west sides of your home is a highly effective way to save energy: they block the summer sun while allowing passive solar warming in the winter. When selecting locations for new trees, however, always consider potential future solar panel placement to avoid shade interference.

### **Recommendation #3: Practice Ecological Landscaping.**

Ecological landscaping is an approach to landscaping that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity. Some landscaping practices that have become standard nowadays are actually doing long term damage to our soils, air, and water. For this reason, many eco-landscaping tips are about doing less. For example, the ‘leave the leaves’

campaign encourages home landscapers to let fall leaves break down naturally, covering bare soils and rebalancing soil biology.

Other main concepts:

Save and capture rainwater. Replace impervious surfaces with [permeable hardscaping](#) or vegetated areas to allow for rainwater infiltration. Green infrastructure features like rain gardens and bioswales can capture rainwater, reduce soil erosion, and support biodiversity all at the same time.

Reduce or eliminate harmful chemicals such as synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides.

Reduce lawn areas in favor of biodiverse planting beds. Strategically placed planting beds can greatly reduce the need for mowing. (A mowing regime can be time-consuming and expensive, and chemical inputs are often used.) Diverse native plantings from trees to shrubs to perennial flowers and herbaceous plants support other forms of life like birds, mammals, and microbes. This [climate-smart planting guide](#) from the Boston Globe offers a useful resource for planting meadow, pollinator, rain, and shady gardens with resilient species; additionally, the [Massachusetts Native Plant Palette](#) provides a web application to explore native plants.

Finally, join groups that are already practicing this new land ethos. In Newton, there are many groups and organizations that cultivate and protect open space, community gardens, trees, and pollinators.

#### **Recommendation #4: Use Less during Peak Demand.**

By reducing electricity consumption during peak hours, you lessen “peak demand” for power generated by older, less-efficient fossil fuel plants, and strengthen the grid’s resilience to extreme weather events.

Using appliances such as washers, dryers and dishwashers later at night or earlier in the day reduces the need for the additional fossil fuel-generated electricity that comes online during times of high demand. Try pre-cooling your home in the morning with AC and then using fans in the afternoon, charging your EV overnight, and having cold meals on hot days.

[Sign up for peak alerts](#) so you can plan ahead and reduce your electricity use (and avoid high demand charges!). If you have a home battery storage system, consider enrolling in Eversource’s [ConnectedSolutions Demand Response program](#), which offers incentives for allowing Eversource to use the energy stored in your battery during periods of high demand.

#### **Recommendation #5: Strengthen Our Social Resilience.**

Social resilience refers to strong social connections, access to resources, and community preparedness, all of which are essential in the event of natural disasters, social crises, and other emergencies. One way to strengthen our community’s resilience is to learn who in your neighborhood (or religious organization, club, class, or other group) is especially vulnerable to extreme heat, has a flood-prone basement, doesn’t have access to backup power, or may otherwise need assistance during an extreme weather event. Then, help connect them to resources if possible, and importantly, check on them during climate disruptions.