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Boston's solar and green initiatives

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As of mid-December 2010, the City of Boston now allows applicants for building permits to off-set the filing fee by up to 60% if they agree to implement solar technologies, including solar photovoltaic rooftop technologies. By eliminating the need to factor in traditional costs from the calculations, the overall application fee is reduced.

Additionally, the City of Boston recently released a Solar Permitting Guide, which along with an on-line map, enables prospective solar users to assess a building's solar potential. In November 2010, Boston also adopted the Stretch Energy Code, which requires new residential and commercial buildings to achieve approximately 20% better energy efficiency than is required by Massachusetts' base energy code.

Since 2007, the Boston Zoning Code has included in its Article 37 the requirement that any project that is subject to or elects to be included in large project review (Article 80B) must be LEED Certifiable under the most appropriate LEED building rating system. Compliance is certified by the Boston Redevelopment Authority, prior to issuance of a building permit. Categories for Boston Green Building Credits, which are specified by building use, consist of: (1) Modern Grid, providing "congestion relief" for electricity distribution loads; (2) Historic Preservation, providing an historic renovation of an existing structure; (3) Groundwater Recharge, where a project must not only meet but exceed by 50% the recharge requirements for applicable properties (Article 32); and (4) Modern Mobility, meeting all of the City's Transportation Demand Management ("TDM") Prerequisites and implementing TDM options, which include on-site transportation coordination, access to public transit through information shuttle and subsidy, on-site external bike racks, and several others.

These initiatives along with those in other communities throughout the state provide a myriad of incentives to promote energy efficiencies and to revise the regulatory landscape. As of the end of 2010, 53 communities in Massachusetts have met the designation of a "Green Community"; and 64 communities have adopted the Stretch Code.

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