



# TAKE ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE



*A guide to reduce your contribution to climate change and better prepare for it.*





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## WHY TAKE ACTION?

In Boston, a changing climate means extreme heat, stormwater flooding, coastal and riverine flooding and sea level rise. This warming and changing of our climate is a result of people all over the world releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere through the use of fossil fuels. Every country, city, and person has a critical role to play in reducing global emissions that cause climate change. International agreements like the Paris Accord are meant to make sure everyone does their part in reducing emissions globally. But cities make up approximately 70% of the world's total emissions which is why the hard work and big changes needs to happen at the local and individual level.

***Here's the thing: We can't wait.*** Recent studies have proven that if we don't accelerate our actions now, we won't successfully curb global warming's most dangerous, and potentially fatal, impacts.

***Here's the good news: You have the power to make a change.*** Like many cities, in Boston, our greenhouse gas emissions come from buildings, transportation, and waste. This means that the homes we live in, the places we work, and how we move between them hold great opportunity for all of us to take action on climate change.

Reducing our contribution to climate change while also preparing for the impacts is vital to the health and safety of Boston residents, particularly communities of color, people with limited english proficiency, and people with low to no income. We encourage you to find something in this guide that you haven't done before because every new action makes a difference. If you already recycle, great. Start biking. If you already recycle and bike, great. Weatherize your home. This guide is designed to help you make informed choices about which actions you can, and should, take next.

## ABOUT THE GUIDE

This guide is made for individuals in Boston who can play a critical role in helping the City meet its goals of carbon neutrality, zero waste, and climate resiliency. It is meant to get you started with resources that the city provides, but it's by no means comprehensive. Feel free to supplement with your own research or prior knowledge.

Many of the energy efficiency, waste reduction, and sustainable transportation actions laid out in this resource can be taken taken at home, at school, at work, and around town.

If at any point you have questions about the information in this guide, what the city is doing to address climate climate or you just have recommendations for improving this resource, please email Peyton Jones at [greenovate@boston.gov](mailto:greenovate@boston.gov).



# ENERGY EFFICIENCY AT HOME

To be carbon neutral, all Boston buildings and homes must do three things:

1. Increase efficiency.
2. Electrify everything.
3. Use clean energy.

About 20 percent of Boston's emissions come from small residential homes. This means that as a homeowner or renter, you have a unique opportunity to have an incredible impact on our city's carbon footprint by reducing energy use and increasing efficiency at your house.

## INCREASE EFFICIENCY

### *Sign up for a mass save energy assessment*

Through the Mass Save program, you are eligible for a no-cost consultation about your energy use. You can then use this information to save energy and money on your monthly bills. This program is available to everyone (renters, homeowners, and landlords). For more information, visit [boston.gov/energy-audit](https://www.boston.gov/energy-audit).

**Renters**, not sure if your landlord has already participated in Mass Save? Ask them! If bringing this topic up seems intimidating, email Greenovate. We will help think through how best to approach your landlord about this topic.

## INSULATE AND WEATHERIZE YOUR HOME

Massive amounts of energy are lost in your home daily through cracks and poor insulation. Mass Save provides 75-90 percent discounts on insulation for your home. This will dramatically reduce your energy bill while also doing a great deal to reduce the carbon footprint of your home.

## INSTALL LED LIGHT BULBS

You can significantly reduce your monthly energy bill by buying LED light bulbs. Bonus, they will last much longer!

## **WASH CLOTHES IN COLD WATER AND LINE DRY**

Washing your clothes in cold water is just as effective as cleaning them in hot water. Plus, it's one of the easiest energy efficiency measures.

## **USE A PROGRAMMABLE THERMOSTAT**

You can set a programmable thermostat to automatically lower the temperature in your home while you're at work or asleep, which makes reducing your energy use and saving money even easier. All you have to do is follow three simple steps:

1. Buy the programmable thermostat.
2. Install the thermostat.
3. Program the thermostat.

## **ELECTRIFY EVERYTHING**

### ***Install an electric air source heat pump***

Need to replace your gas or fuel oil heat and hot water system? Switch to an air source heat pump. They're quiet and improve your indoor air quality. Mass Save and the MassCEC provide rebates and financing assistance. Go to [masssave.com](http://masssave.com) for more details.

## **USE CLEAN ENERGY**

### ***Install solar panels***

Did you know that you can earn direct payments from your utility for every kWh of electricity you produce? You'll save significantly by not buying electricity from the grid. Learn more by visiting [masmartsolar.com](http://masmartsolar.com).





# CLIMATE READY HOME

Preparing for the impacts of climate change happens at many scales - harbor wide, neighborhood level, specific parks, etc. - but it happens also at the individual building and person scale. As a result, you are a key player as the City takes bold and creative Climate Resilience actions that will support Boston's future.

Here are climate ready actions you can take at home:

**1. Elevate your mechanicals and install a backflow preventer.**

This helps ensure your home is prepared for flooding and sea-level rise. While you're at it, clean out your basement so that harmful chemicals don't enter the ecosystems during a flooding event. It's also important to make sure important documents and irreplaceable items are kept secure or clear from water damage. Remember, adapting buildings is one of the many ways that we are building a climate ready city.

**2. Create an emergency preparedness kit.**

This kit would be used during a serious flooding event if the City were to order shelter in place. Learn what needs to be in your kit by visiting [boston.gov/natural-disasters](https://www.boston.gov/natural-disasters).

**3. Talk to your neighbors about climate change.**

Part of preparing for climate changes means making sure that everyone knows what these changes mean for them, their family, and their home.

## WASTE REDUCTION

The City has already begun implementing our Zero Waste Boston plan, but we can't do it without you. This vision centers around residents of Boston taking important steps to eliminate waste by reducing, reusing, and recycling.

### DON'T BUY IT

The number one best thing we can do to build a zero waste city is to reduce buying excess stuff.

### BRING YOUR OWN — BAG, MUG, CUP, ETC.

The best way to help Boston meet the goals laid out in our zero waste plan is to reduce consumption upfront. Boston's plastic bag ordinance supports residents to bring their own bag but taking your own mug, cups, silverware, and more will reduce your overall consumption and therefore waste in the city as a whole.

### ATTEND A FIX-IT CLINIC

In the classic waste reduction catch phrase “reduce, reuse, recycle,” the reuse part can be hard. Perhaps it's a lack of information about the options for using a certain object or maybe it's simply not having the right tools at your disposal. Regardless of the reason, attending a “fix-it clinic” is a fantastic way to learn new Do-It-Yourself tips and tricks to reuse items, borrow tools, and get to know other creative and sustainability minded people in Boston. Visit the City's calendar for the upcoming fix-it clinic schedule at [boston.gov/events](https://www.boston.gov/events).

### COMPOST YOUR FOOD SCRAPS

Approximately 36% of the materials that are currently discarded in Boston are potentially compostable. When items are composted correctly in Boston however, it is used in many community gardens and parks across the city. There are four ways to compost in Boston:

- Take your compost to a Project Oscar location: Project Oscar gives community members a place to drop-off residential food scraps for composting. Use our mapping tool on [boston.gov/project-oscar](https://www.boston.gov/project-oscar) for locations to find the closest bin to you.
- Compost in your backyard: If you have a backyard space, you can take your indoor compost out yourself and use the nutrient rich soil to build a garden.

- Turn your yard waste into compost: Boston's excess yard material is composted at a site off of American Legion Highway. Go to the Public Works page on [boston.gov](http://boston.gov) to check out the 2019 yard waste calendar.

- Sign up for curbside composting: There are several private companies based in Boston that charge a small fee to come and pick up your food scraps for your front door.

Interested in composting but don't know where to begin? Reach out to [greenovate@boston.gov](mailto:greenovate@boston.gov) for help. The City is exploring new ways to encourage and help residents compost, which helps us achieve zero waste!

### **ATTEND A HAZARDOUS AND ELECTRONIC WASTE PICKUP**

The Public Works Dept. holds drop-off days for household hazardous waste throughout the year. Bringing your hazardous waste to an official pick-up event ensures that it's safely disposed of. Search for upcoming events on [boston.gov/public-works](http://boston.gov/public-works).

### **RECYCLE RIGHT**

Reducing contamination in recycling is one of the best things you can do to help the City meet our zero waste goals. Learn what you can and can't recycle below, or by using the City's trash app.

### **REDUCE UNWANTED MAIL**

While there is no "do not mail" equivalent to the "do not call" list, here are two tips for reducing unwanted mail, and in so doing, reducing your carbon footprint and helping the city meet its zero waste goals:

#### **1. Switch magazine subscriptions and bills to electronic delivery:**

On most magazine or bank websites, you'll be able to login and change your account preferences to paperless. This will allow you receive notices by email instead of snail mail.

#### **2. Unsubscribe from catalogs, credit offers and other unsolicited mail:**

There are several useful tools that allow you to remove your name and address from a number of mail category lists - like catalogs and advertisements. Google search "unsubscribe from unsolicited mail" and you can research the option that is best for you.

# SUSTAINABLE COMMUTING IN BOSTON

Almost 30 percent of Boston's emissions come from people getting around Boston. One of the best ways to reduce your carbon footprint is to avoid using fossil fuels when getting around Boston, especially to and from work. Here are low (and no) carbon commuting options:

## **WALK OR BIKE**

Walking or biking has so many benefits, not only for the environment, but also for your health and finances. If you are physically able, walking or biking are excellent alternatives to driving. Like any behavior change however, making the shift can be challenging. Here are some tips for shifting your mode of transportation to bike!

### ***Don't know how to ride?***

The Boston Transportation Department leads the Women Bike program, where they encourage more women and gender-nonconforming people to travel by bike.

### ***Don't have a bike?***

You can sign up and use any of the 2,500 Blue Bikes at more than 260 stations throughout the greater Boston area. Income-eligible people can use Bluebikes at discounted prices. Speak with your employer about getting a corporate account to encourage all of your coworkers to participate and save money.

### ***Have a bike, but it doesn't work?***

There are bike fix it clinics all over the City. Check out [boston.gov/bikes](https://www.boston.gov/bikes) to get more details.

For more information in general about biking in Boston, visit [boston.gov/bikes](https://www.boston.gov/bikes)!

## **TAKE THE BUS OR THE T**

Taking the bus or the T into Boston for work can be faster, cheaper, and better for our air. Learn more about discounted passes offered by your school or employer to make the switch from private vehicles to public transportation a bit easier.

## **DRIVING IN BOSTON**

- If you need to take a car, share your ride by carpooling. Sharing your ride is a great way to save money and gas.
- Rather than own a car, there are short-term rental options all over the City for you to use when needed.
- If you're buying a car, check out fuel-efficient and electric vehicles. Once you have an electric vehicle, you'll need to know where to charge it. ([plugshare.com](https://www.plugshare.com))
- Turn off the motor when you pull over. Idling your car not only negatively impacts the air around you, but it's also against the law. So remember to turn the key, and be idle free! Learn more by visiting the Air Pollution Control Commission's website on [boston.gov](https://www.boston.gov).

# **WORKPLACE TIPS AND TRICKS**

## **IS YOUR LEASE ALMOST UP?**

### **REQUEST TO SIGN A GREEN LEASE**

Green Leases are an agreement between landlords and tenants to increase the efficiency of a building. They can be very useful in reducing energy demands in the workplace.

### **TURN IT OFF**

When you leave work for the night, make sure your computer, lights, and other electronics are turned off. You'll save a lot of energy by not having electronics running at night. Turning off lights and using natural daylight is also a great way to reduce building energy consumption.

### **GO PAPERLESS**

Think about how you can digitize your work. Adapting a digital application system, reading documents online, and paperless payroll are all great ways to reduce waste in the workplace.

### **GREEN PRINTING**

If you're not ready to completely digitize your work, setting your printers to double-sided printing, you can cut your paper usage in half. Buy recycled paper for your printer. Buying at least 30 percent post-consumer recycled office paper gives us yet another reason to recycle.

### **RECYCLE**

Does your office have a recycling program? Talk with your manager about options for your office if you don't. If you do, make sure you and your colleagues are recycling right. Visit [boston.gov/recycling](http://boston.gov/recycling) for tips.

## COMPOST

About one third of Boston's waste can be composted instead of going into the trash. Most of that waste comes from the commercial sector. Talk with your manager about subscribing to a curbside composting service.

## ON YOUR LUNCH BREAK? EAT MORE VEGETABLES AND LESS MEAT.

Local vegetables have the lowest carbon footprint of all food types, and they're healthy for you. Go to [boston.gov/farmers-markets](http://boston.gov/farmers-markets) for more details.



# CLIMATE ACTIONS AT SCHOOL

## CREATE A GREEN TEAM

Recruit interested and supportive school community members to form a school Green Team. Agree to a shared purpose, develop goals, and create a climate action plan for your school. Once you start the team, register your school as a Green Team school, sponsored by MassDEP. Green Team schools receive educational tools, such as classroom and campaign posters, lesson plans, and recycling equipment. They are also eligible for grants and prizes. Check out [thegreenteam.org](http://thegreenteam.org) for more information.

## CLIMATE EDUCATION

Improve sustainability literacy by incorporating climate change into your curriculum. Climate Curriculum: K-12 Science Lessons on Climate Change ([Climatecurriculum.com](http://Climatecurriculum.com)) was developed by a Boston Public Schools teacher and the Boston Student Advisory Council. Learning Lab ([learninglab.usgbc.org/home](http://learninglab.usgbc.org/home)) is USGBC's online education platform for K-12 teachers.

## PLANT A GARDEN

Plant or adopt a street tree near your school. You can also use your school's outdoor classroom or garden for outdoor teaching, learning, and play. Don't have one? Connect with Friends of the Boston Schoolyards, the Boston Schoolyard Initiative legacy nonprofit. Visit [friendsofthebostonschoolyards.org](http://friendsofthebostonschoolyards.org) for more information.

## TURN IT OFF

When you leave school for the day, make sure your computer, lights, and other electronics are turned off. You'll save a lot of energy by not having electronics running at night. Turning off lights and using natural daylight is also a great way to reduce building energy consumption.

## RECYCLE

Does your school have a recycling program? Talk with your teacher about options for your class if you don't. If you do, make sure you and your peers are recycling right. Visit [boston.gov/recycling](http://boston.gov/recycling) for tips.





## VOLUNTEER WITH GREENOVATE

Sometimes sustainable actions can feel isolating because they are things you need to do at your house, or on your commute. That's why getting out and volunteering with Greenovate, or with a local climate organization of your choosing, is a great way to take collective action on climate.

Here are some ways to get involved:

- Joining an urban wild cleanup is one way to get involved and volunteer with the City of Boston. It's a great way to clean up our conservation areas while also connecting with your neighbors! ***[boston.gov/urban-wild-cleanups](https://boston.gov/urban-wild-cleanups)***
- Love Your Block Neighborhood cleanups unite neighbors and communities through physical service, engagement, and youth development. These cleanups are hosted by the City's Office of Neighborhood Services.
- Do you have an idea for a sustainability project in your neighborhood? Love Your Block Mini-grants are available to all residents who want to initiate project to improve public community spaces. ***[Boston.gov/love-your-block](https://boston.gov/love-your-block)***
- Become a Greenovate Leader. Are you passionate about your community and concerned about climate change? We have exciting opportunities coming up through the Greenovate Boston Community Leaders program for you to learn about how climate change is impacting Boston, and what actions you can take to prepare for it. ***[Boston.gov/greenovate-leaders](https://boston.gov/greenovate-leaders)***



## VOTE

We need more climate leaders who will work with Mayor Walsh to make our city, our state, and our country, carbon-neutral and climate-ready. We encourage every Bostonian to register to vote and show up on election day. Learn more through the Elections Department at [boston.gov/elections](https://boston.gov/elections).

## NOW...

...it's your turn! Good luck.

Email Peyton Jones at [greenovate@boston.gov](mailto:greenovate@boston.gov) if you have any questions about where to start.



