



FAQ: Municipal Fossil Fuel-Free Building Demonstration Program & Arlington's Fossil Fuel-Free Bylaw

What is the Fossil Fuel-Free Building Demonstration Program and how does it relate to the Fossil Fuel-Free Bylaw?

The Municipal Fossil Fuel-Free Building Demonstration Program (Demonstration Program) was created in 2022 by the MA legislature. It allows up to 10 municipalities to adopt local legislation requiring new building construction or major renovation projects to be fossil fuel-free. This Demonstration Program responds to the efforts of several communities, including Arlington, to pass such local legislation. DOER officially accepted Arlington into the Demonstration Program in February 2024. At Fall 2023 Special Town Meeting, 89% of Town Meeting Members voted to adopt an updated Fossil Fuel-Free Bylaw, which takes effect on May 21, 2024.

What projects does the Fossil Fuel-Free Bylaw apply to?

The Fossil Fuel-Free Bylaw prohibits the installation of fossil fuel infrastructure and equipment in new construction (including accessory buildings) and major renovations where more than half of the building is renovated in Arlington. At 2024 Annual Town Meeting, Warrant Article 11 was approved to include residential additions or changes of use over 1,000 square feet, commercial additions or changes of use over 20,000 square feet, and commercial and residential additions over 100% of the conditioned area of the existing building.

Are there exemptions? What about waivers?

Yes. The Bylaw does not apply to research and medical facilities; hot water for multifamily buildings over 12,000 sq ft with permits filed prior to Jan 1, 2027; utility-side connections; backup generators and portable propane appliances; extension or modification of existing fossil fuel heating systems; and repair of existing, unsafe piping. The Director of Inspectional Services may grant a waiver if compliance with the bylaw makes a project financially infeasible or impractical to implement. All waiver requests must be supported by a detailed cost comparison, including available rebate and credits. More information on requirements for the waiver application process will be available soon.

What resources exist to support compliance?

There are many programs and financial incentives at the federal, state, and local level that can help developers and homeowners comply with the Fossil Fuel-Free Bylaw. The Towns of Lexington, Acton, and Arlington collaborated on an [Energy Efficient and Fossil Fuel-Free Building Requirements website](https://www.energyefficiency.com/energy-efficient-and-fossil-fuel-free-building-requirements) (bit.ly/fffenergy) that provides more details on what is available. The [Rebates & Incentives](#) page on this site covers the available resources to support compliance.

Didn't we just pass a building code that bans fossil fuels? How does the Fossil Fuel-Free Bylaw relate to the code?

In the spring of 2023, Town Meeting approved by a wide margin the Specialized Stretch Energy Code, which strongly favors all-electric new construction but does not prohibit fossil fuel use and does not apply to major renovations. Only participation in the Demonstration Program allows Arlington to make new construction and major renovations fossil fuel-free. The Fossil Fuel-Free Bylaw eliminates the Mixed-Fuel and Zero Energy Pathways in the Specialized Code that allow fossil fuels in new residential and new commercial construction, leaving only the All-Electric Pathway.