



# Renewable Communities

Massachusetts cities and towns  
leading the way to 100% renewable energy

## Northampton, Amherst, and Pelham: Community Choice Energy PLUS

Communities in the Pioneer Valley have made some of the most ambitious commitments to clean energy in the Commonwealth, with Amherst and Northampton both pledging to achieve 100% renewable energy.<sup>1</sup> Officials and activists in Amherst and Northampton, along with nearby Pelham, have joined forces to explore a municipal electricity aggregation program as a way to bring their communities closer to 100% renewable energy.

Through municipal aggregation, a city or town can choose to purchase electricity from a competitive supplier on behalf of its residents and businesses. More than 100 cities and towns across the Commonwealth have adopted a municipal aggregation program.<sup>2</sup> Although local governments often pursue aggregation with the goal of reducing energy costs, an increasing number of cities and towns are using municipal aggregation to increase the amount of renewable electricity provided to community members.<sup>3</sup>

While the municipal aggregation program pursued by Amherst, Northampton, and Pelham is still in the planning stages, the communities are considering a “Community Choice Energy PLUS” model for their aggregation program. In addition to providing residents and businesses with a higher percentage of renewable electricity, a CCE Plus program would invest in local projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase renewable electricity generation. These projects could include solar installations and battery storage in the participating communities, as well as incentives for

customers to reduce their energy consumption at times of peak demand.<sup>4</sup>

In December 2018, Northampton received a \$75,000 grant from the Urban Sustainability Directors Network to evaluate the potential for a CCE Plus program. The feasibility study funded by the grant is expected to take a year to complete.<sup>5</sup> Local activists in Northampton, Amherst, and Pelham are asking municipal officials to adopt an aggregation program that includes as much renewable electricity as possible, adds local solar and wind generation to the grid, and provides targeted energy efficiency services.<sup>6</sup>

1. “Northampton officials show support for local goal of achieving 100 percent renewable energy,” Lucas Ropek, MassLive, 19 January 2018, <[https://www.masslive.com/news/2018/01/northampton\\_officials\\_show\\_sup.html](https://www.masslive.com/news/2018/01/northampton_officials_show_sup.html)>.

2. “Municipal aggregation,” Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities, 20 May 2019, <<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/municipal-aggregation#overview->>.

3. “New Report On Green Municipal Aggregation (GMA) In Massachusetts,” Indiana Reid-Shaw, 14 March 2018, <<https://blog.greenenergyconsumers.org/blog/new-report-green-municipal-aggregation-ma>>.

4. “This Massachusetts city hopes to reinvest energy savings into more energy savings,” Sarah Shemkus, Energy News Network, 24 January 2019, <<https://energynews.us/2019/01/24/northeast/massachusetts-city-hopes-to-reinvest-energy-savings-into-more-energy-savings/>>.

5. “Northampton wins \$75K grant to explore community-choice energy programs,” Bera Dunau, Daily Hampshire Gazette, <[https://www.gazettenet.com/Northampton-is-awarded-\\$75-000-grant-to-explore-Community-Choice-Energy-PLUS-22248190](https://www.gazettenet.com/Northampton-is-awarded-$75-000-grant-to-explore-Community-Choice-Energy-PLUS-22248190)>.

6. “Western Mass Community Choice Energy,” <<https://wmacce.wordpress.com/>>.