In 2017, the Newton City Council voted to pursue a municipal electricity aggregation program.\(^1\)

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.\(^2\) 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.\(^3\)

As part of Newton’s municipal aggregation program, local officials aimed to incorporate a significantly higher percentage of renewable energy than the minimum required by state law, which stands at 14% renewable electricity as of 2019. Newton Power Choice officially launched in March 2019 with a default level of 60% renewable electricity, higher than any other municipal aggregation program in Massachusetts.\(^4\)

Under state law, municipal aggregation programs must allow customers to switch back to the standard electricity package offered by Eversource. Newton residents can also choose to “opt up” into a 100% renewable electricity package.\(^5\) Activists in Newton and Brookline are competing to see which community can get the highest number of residents to choose 100% renewable electricity.\(^6\)

As part of the aggregation plan, the city chose to source its renewable electricity from wind and solar farms in New England, which are designated as Class I renewable energy sources under Massachusetts law.\(^7\)

At the time that the program was launched, Newton customers paid less for their electricity than the default rates offered by Eversource, even with a significantly higher level of renewable electricity.\(^8\) The relative cost of the electricity offered by Newton Power Choice in comparison to standard electric rates will vary over time, but a survey by the local organization Green Newton has shown that cost savings are not the only factor behind public support for the program, with 86% of respondents saying they were willing to pay more for electricity from renewable sources.\(^9\)