

FAQ's on the **Stretch** Code from the Montague Energy Committee

What is the "Stretch Code"?

It is an update to the building code which increases energy efficiency in *new* buildings. Usually building code changes are just announced. However this time towns are being asked to vote the code change in, to qualify as a Green Community under the new Green Communities Act.

What is the Green Communities Act, and why are we pursuing it?

By meeting the five requirements for becoming a Green Community, we qualify for grant money that we can use for energy improvements in the town. We also identify our town as actively pursuing the state's goal of improving energy efficiency and lowering energy use.

Why do we need to adopt the Stretch Code now?

As an early Green Community, we have the best opportunity to obtain a state grant from a pot of \$10 million because the number of towns eligible to apply will be smaller the first time around.

How could Montague use this grant money?

We could make improvements to town buildings which cut energy use, install money-saving energy systems like solar panels, start a revolving loan fund making money available to homeowners for energy improvements, or any other application that meets the state's goal of reducing energy use.

Will passing this code cost the town money?

No. Inspection costs would not change. The builder would still be responsible for submitting documentation of compliance for review, and the building inspector would still then conduct a site review.

What is the benefit to Montague?

Our biggest potential cash benefit lies in the savings from reduced energy usage which would result from using the grant money. Lowering energy costs frees money for other town needs and increases our ability to predict our utility costs, which will be stabilized by energy efficiency and renewables.

How many building permits are there in Montague each year?

Between 2005 and 2009, there have been between 4 and 19 new residential building permits in Montague. This code change does not apply to renovations unless the specific changes being made are covered under the energy code.

Additional points to consider about implementation of the Stretch Code:

- * The Stretch Code increases the ongoing affordability of homes because of lower utility costs.
- * Lower energy costs are attractive to buyers.
- * Because of energy savings that result from building to the Stretch Code, annual out-of-pocket expenses for energy and mortgage payments *combined* will be less than if you built to the standard code.
- * Franklin County energy committees, including ours, are working with banks to make available mortgages that account for improved energy efficiency.
- * Most new residential builders in Montague are already energy conscious.
- * Rebates and grants are available to offset much of the expected 3-5% increase in construction costs.