

Town of Westwood
Commonwealth of Massachusetts



Department of Community and Economic Development

BUILDING DIVISION

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Additional Information Regarding the Stretch Energy Code

The Massachusetts Stretch Energy Code (Stretch Code) first became available for municipal adoption in 2009. The Stretch Code located in the 9th Edition of the Building Code (780 CMR) was in Appendix AA of 780 CMR 51 for one- and two-family homes, and 780 CMR 115 for other structures. Section 98A of Chapter 8 of the Acts of 2021 moved the authority to update future editions of the Stretch Code to the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) in consultation with the Board of Building Regulations and Standards (BBRS). On December 9, 2022, DOER promulgated updates to the Stretch Code as 225 CMR 22.00 and 23.00 which became effective January 1, 2023. Building Officials were advised of the changes on December 15, 2022. Unlike previous changes to the Building Codes, there is no overlap period during which a contractor could choose which code to adhere to while adjusting to the new requirements.

On May 7, 2012, Westwood residents voted to adopt the Stretch Code at Town Meeting. See Chapter 251 of the Town's General Bylaws for details. The approved language provided that any upgrades or changes to code would be automatically accepted by the Town without the need for additional voting. The code has been altered and added to approximately every three years since its inception. Previous changes have been to those sections that affected new residential construction of one and two family residences and commercial buildings. The most recent changes include remodeling and addition projects and can in many cases drastically increase the cost to comply.

The simplest description is that if you add 1000 sq. ft to your home (an addition is considered any increase in conditioned space including finishing a basement, attic, room over a garage or a physical addition to the structure) your entire house will need to comply with the newest stretch code. This will also apply if you remodel 50% of the existing house or double the size of the building even if the original house is less than 1000 sq. ft. If this is your proposed project, you will need to engage the services of a HERS rater ((Home Energy Rating System Rater) to evaluate your entire home and provide guidance as to what changes to the existing building will be required to meet the new Stretch Code. This could include upgraded insulation, replacing all windows, upgrading or changing out

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heating and hot water equipment, and the addition of solar panels in order to meet the new code.

On July 1, 2023 the changes to the code will become effective for multi-family, mixed use, and commercial buildings. On July 1, 2024, there will be additional changes that will be even more restrictive and expensive, dropping the compliance number from 52 to 42 in many cases.

Although, most Building Inspectors and HERS raters agree that the State and the Country need to address the continuing decline in the climate. The measures now in place are not cost effective. This new Stretch Code will increase the number of remodel jobs without permits and inspections that are required to ensure the safety of all residents and first responders.

Most Building Inspectors, HERS raters, and Builders expect that after the DOER is inundated with complaints that there will be some adjustment to the current requirements. If you are thinking about a major renovation or addition to your home, I highly recommend that you postpone the project until there is a response from the DOER. The following information, prepared by the Medway Building Commissioner, outlines the changes and the approximate increases in project costs. The numbers are estimates but agreed with by most Building Officials.

Residential Stretch Energy Code Updates **Effective January 1st, 2023**

The newly updated Stretch Energy Code now requires certain **home additions and/or alterations to comply** with the same code requirements of a new construction home, including a **HERS Index Score**. This means additional energy upgrades of the existing home above and beyond the immediate work area may be required.

*A **HERS** (Home Energy Rating System) Index is the industry standard by which a home's energy efficiency is measured, which must be completed by a third-party energy consultant.*

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The following alterations to existing homes will require the dwelling unit to meet the HERS Index listed in Table 1 below:

 **Additions** that are over 1,000 square feet or exceed 100% of the conditioned floor area of the existing home. An addition includes finishing a basement, attic, or a room over your garage in the existing structure.

 **Alterations** that are over 1,000 square feet, exceed 100% of the *conditioned floor area*, or exceed 50% of the total building area. (*Level 3 Alteration*)

Home Fuel Source	New Construction			Additions/ Alterations
	Previous Stretch Code	Updated Stretch Code	7/1/2024 Stretch Code	Updated Stretch Code
None (Fossil Fuels)	55	52	42	52
Solar	60	55		55
All-Electric	60	55	45	55
Solar & All Electric	65	58		58

For questions on the new 2023 Massachusetts Stretch Code, please contact Medway's Building Department at 508.533.3253

Potential Impacts on Existing Homes

 Contractor/residents must hire a HERS Rater to act as a third-

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party energy consultant for reporting, testing, and inspections.
Estimated cost: \$2000- \$3000.



The HERS Rater will need to work off detailed plans of the entire home for which additional design services may be needed.



A HERS Rater will determine the full range of energy upgrades to the existing home to achieve the required HERS Index score.

Additional upgrades may include some or ALL of the following:

- Demolish and re-insulate existing walls, ceilings, and/or floors
- Upgrade HVAC system and water heater
- Air seal home to new construction level of air tightness
- Replace windows/doors

Burdens in the form of delays may occur, such as:

- Additional time needed to hire contractors and complete work
- Inconvenience of invasive work
- Potentially having to temporary relocate during renovations

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Sample Stretch Code Project Comparison - Single Family Homes <i>(based on current projects in Medway)</i>				
Project Description	Project Cost	Existing Home Area	Year Built	Cost of Additional Stretch Code Upgrades
Two-Story Addition of 1,440 SF	\$250,000	1,872 SF	1998	\$50,000 +
Full Interior Alteration of 2,731 SF	\$250,000	1,713 SF	1950	\$20,000 - \$30,000
Finish Basement Alteration of 1,500 SF	\$42,000	2,644 SF	2001	\$50,000 +
Alteration of Detached Garage to Dwelling Unit of 1,200 SF	\$141,000	1,200 SF	2006	\$15,000 - \$25,000

2023 Stretch Energy Code Language

R502.1.1 Large Additions: Additions to a dwelling unit exceeding 1,000 sq ft or exceeding 100% of the existing conditioned floor area, shall require the dwelling unit to comply with the maximum HERS ratings for alterations, additions or change of use shown in TABLE R406.5.

R503.1.5 Level 3 Alterations or Change of Use: Alterations that meet the IEBC definition for Level 3 Alteration, exceeding 1,000 sq ft or exceeding 100% of the existing conditioned floor area, shall require the dwelling unit to comply with the maximum HERS ratings for alterations, additions or change of use shown in TABLE R406.5.

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TABLE R406.5 MAXIMUM ENERGY RATING INDEX

Clean Energy Application	Maximum HERS Index score^{a, b}		
	New construction until June 30, 2024	New construction permits after July 1, 2024	Major-alterations, additions, or Change of use^c
<i>Mixed-Fuel Building</i>	52	42	52
Solar Electric Generation	55	42	55
<i>All-Electric Building</i>	55	45	55
Solar Electric & <i>All-Electric Building</i>	58	45	58

^a Maximum HERS rating prior to onsite renewable electric generation in accordance with Section R406.5

^b The building shall meet the mandatory requirements of Section R406.2, and the building thermal envelope shall be greater than or equal to the levels of efficiency and SHGC in Table R402.1.2 or Table R402.1.4 of the 2015 International Energy Conservation Code.

^c Alterations, Additions or Change of use covered by Section R502.1.1 or R503.1.5 are subject to this maximum HERS rating.

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