



February 3, 2021

Governor Charlie Baker
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon St. Room 280,
Boston, MA 02133

Re: **S. 9 – An Act Creating a Next-Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy**

Dear Governor Baker:

We are writing to you as the President of the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA MA) and the leaders of each of the state's three local chapters, the Boston Society for Architecture, and the Central and Western Massachusetts chapters to express our continued support for S. 9 including the one-year deadline to develop and adopt, as an appendix to the state building code, a municipal opt-in net zero code.

We understand from your letter to the legislature of January 14 that you have several concerns about the bill. The letter expresses concerns that a net zero stretch energy code employs “*undefined terms like ‘net zero building,’ will ‘work against . . . Housing Choice legislation,’ ‘raise costs for Massachusetts families,’ ‘result in construction slowing or outright stopping,’ and ‘result in a multitude of building codes across the Commonwealth.’*”

We would like to offer our resources to help assist you in your consideration of these concerns. Based on our professional membership's expertise with net zero buildings, our extensive experience shows that a net zero code will not lead to the negative impacts described in your letter, and instead will:

1. Result in a single, clear standard for net zero buildings across the Commonwealth.
2. Make housing and commercial buildings more affordable in Massachusetts by reducing total cost of ownership.
3. Be easily met by the market and benefit the economy of Massachusetts.

This letter provides a summary of these topics and offers evidence to support our position on each. We would be more than happy to meet with you or your staff to communicate this information in more detail, including sharing successful examples of net zero buildings of all types and scales.



A net zero code will result in a single, clear standard for net zero buildings across the Commonwealth. Currently, Boston^{1,2}, Cambridge^{3,4} and Somerville⁵ are creating a patchwork of different zoning standards, driving toward net zero. Additional towns and cities are now in the process of developing their own net zero zoning standards. A net zero code will provide a single net zero building standard that towns can adopt. This will diffuse the pressure to implement net zero zoning, helping to bring unity and clarity to building regulations.

Net zero buildings have lower total cost of ownership. Ten years ago, many people thought that net zero buildings would result in construction cost premiums. Multiple studies^{6,7,8} now demonstrate that net zero ready buildings carry a negligible construction cost premium and result in significantly lower operating costs. In addition, renewable energy has also been proven to be cost effective and can be financed through various means, including options with no up-front cost.

When mortgage payments and operating costs are combined, net zero housing results in lower costs for Massachusetts families. That is why Boston and other municipalities mandate that subsidized housing must meet net zero standards; those who are financially vulnerable stand to benefit the most from net zero buildings.

A net zero code will be easily met by the market and will benefit the economy of Massachusetts. In 2009, when the first Massachusetts stretch energy code was adopted, opponents feared that it would bring the building industry to a screeching halt in the midst of the Great Recession. The exact opposite proved true. Green buildings with exemplary energy efficiency quickly proved practical, affordable, and in high demand. Building industry professionals developed expertise and skills sought in the marketplace and created new jobs and a knowledge export industry.

In similar fashion, practical, affordable net zero buildings will sustain the building industry and propel the clean energy economy. The advantages of achieving net zero are why the

¹ Boston Article 80 <http://www.bostonplans.org/projects/development-review/what-is-article-80>

² Boston Zero Net Carbon Building Zoning Initiative <http://www.bostonplans.org/planning/planning-initiatives/zero-net-carbon-building-zoning-initiative>

³ Cambridge Article 22

https://library.municode.com/ma/cambridge/codes/zoning_ordinance?nodeId=ZONING_ORDINANCE_ART22.000SUDEDE

⁴ Cambridge Article 22 Amendment: electrification feasibility assessment required

https://cambridgema.igq2.com/Citizens/Detail_LegiFile.aspx?MeetingID=2688&ID=12093

⁵ Somerville Zoning <https://www.somervillezoning.com/>

⁶ The Economics of Zero-Energy Homes (Rocky Mountain Institute) <https://rmi.org/insight/economics-of-zero-energy-homes/>

⁷ Zero Energy Buildings in Massachusetts: Saving Money from the Start (USGBC MA)

<https://usgbcma.org/zero-energy-buildings/>

⁸ Boston Department of Neighborhood Development, Guidebook for Zero Emissions Buildings

https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/file/2020/03/200306_DND%20book_FOR%20WEB.pdf



number of net zero buildings of all types and sizes is growing exponentially.^[9] It is also why other locations in the US are implementing net zero codes. Lastly, it is why progressive developers are already building multifamily and commercial buildings to net zero standards.

In addition, by providing for a municipal opt-in to a net zero code, the climate bill promises gradual adoption of this enhanced standard. The climate bill leaves it up to individual communities as to whether and when to adopt this standard. A number of Massachusetts communities have written a joint letter to your office, voicing their support for the climate bill and specifically the net zero code provision(s). These municipalities may be the first to adopt a net zero code, once it is available. Other communities may take a wait and see approach. This will allow the overall market to adjust at a reasonable pace.

In short, AIA MA and all our local chapters enthusiastically support this legislation, including a municipal opt-in to a net zero code. We urge you to strengthen this landmark climate bill so that we can recapture the Commonwealth's environmental leadership and to propel a just transition to a thriving clean energy economy and sustainable healthy environment for future generations.

Established in 1963, AIA Massachusetts represents over 5,000 architects, design professionals and allied members statewide. We are the state chapter of our national organization, the American Institute of Architects, which consists of over 90,000 members representing more than 200,000 U.S. jobs.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to call or write AIA Executive Director John Nunnari at (617) 901-4685 jnunnari@architects.org.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

Russel Feldman, AIA
President
Massachusetts Chapter of the AIA

⁹ New Buildings Institute Getting to Zero List <https://newbuildings.org/resource/2020-getting-to-zero-project-list/>

NOTE: the NBI list has historically followed the strictest definition of net zero buildings (only allowing buildings with sufficient on-site or on-campus renewable energy to meet the NBI definition for net zero). Conversely, all net zero code proposals under consideration in MA and in effect in other major U.S. locations allow off-site renewable energy. Therefore, when the number of net zero buildings is expanded to include buildings using off-site renewable energy, the actual number of net zero buildings is significantly greater.



Greg Minott, AIA
President
Boston Society for Architecture

Mariana O'Brien, PhD, Associate AIA
President
American Institute of Architects, Central Massachusetts Chapter

J. Kristian Whitsett, AIA
President
American Institute of Architects, Western Massachusetts Chapter

cc EOHED Secretary Mike Kennealy
 OCABR Undersecretary Edward Palleschi
 DPL Commissioner Layla D'Emilia