



# MMA Climate Series: **Community Engagement in Climate Action**

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# Stakeholder Engagement

*Definition:* Stakeholder engagement is the process of identifying, developing, and maintaining relationships with people who are impacted by or have influence over an organization's goals.

Benefits of stakeholder engagement:

- Builds trust
- Increases credibility
- Develops buy-in
- Risk mitigation
- Improve decision-making
- Enhance reputation
- Foster Innovation
- Prevent costly mistakes
- Uncover unknown challenges



# Community Engagement Basics

With community outreach, it is helpful to utilize the marketing concept: know-like-trust. This requires honesty, transparency, valuable opportunities to participate in decision-making, and two-way conversations.

1. Show up
2. Demonstrate value
3. Listen / ask questions
4. Be flexible
5. Follow up

**Stories leave lasting  
impressions**



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# Water supply for Rural Agricultural Community

Project concept: provide clean drinking water for rural community of 4,000 people. Community area is approximately 5 mi<sup>2</sup>. Water is carried from source to homes.

Original proposed solution (grant application): one clean drinking water well near the health center in town.



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# Community Meetings

Held several community meetings; met with local leadership on possible solutions.

Challenge: a single well would be inaccessible to a large portion of the population; high installation and annual maintenance cost and limited economic systems to support long-term maintenance.



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# Finding solutions through observation, conversation

Through conversations, tours of community, talking with residents, we worked together to find a solution that would significantly improve water quality in a dispersed set of water sources, accessible throughout town.





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# Collaborative design / installation process

With community support, we sourced local materials and worked with resident experts to develop design criteria.

Once sources were improved, we installed new sites, trained more resident experts on design and groundwater theory.





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# Why Community Engagement?

Lived experience is higher quality data than anything you can observe or measure

If you are doing work that affects a community, you're going to **have to talk with that community**

The most impactful solutions can't be found behind a desk

Also, it can be fun!



# Approaching Community Engagement





# Stakeholder Engagement with Municipal Projects

Decision-making typically occurs either through community-driven action OR through procedural updates to planning mechanisms (such as Hazard Mitigation Plan, Master Plan, Housing Production Survey, etc.). When community-level decision-making occurs in this way:

- Groups include the same/similar voices
- Volunteers are often already committed to capacity
- This limits broader community perspective / relevance
- Less effective
- Less impact / benefit to the community as a whole
- Benefit: it's easier

With stakeholder engagement: develops buy-in (and trust), increases credibility (relevance), project goals can be adapted to broad community needs, fosters innovative solutions, identify unexpected challenges (save on cost / time)

# Examples

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# Inter-Departmental Workgroup on Feasibility of Electric School Buses

In 2022, Town of Weston received an MAPC technical assistance grant to support procurement of an Electric School Bus (ESB).

- Established an inter-departmental workgroup
- DPW, School Admin, Town staff, Facilities, Transportation Staff, Sustainability, School Committee
- Interviewed other towns on their experience, challenges, recommendations
- Technical questions, cost considerations, and procurement process
- Presented findings to School Committee ahead of grant application

Conclusion: School Committee is undergoing assessment of MS/HS campus, including bus depot. Ultimately decided not to apply for the grant, since the schools were not ready to follow through with infrastructure development until study is complete. Following that assessment, will develop ESB transition plan.

# Composting in School

In 2021, Weston Middle School students / PTO parents approached School Committee to assign budget for composting in all (5) schools. At each school we completed the following process:

- Met with school Cafeteria staff, Custodial staff, Principals, and lead Teachers
- Worked with student groups (green team, environmental groups), HS interns
- Data collection / observation
- Developed composting/waste disposal station design with staff
- Principals presented to students in all-grade assemblies before launching program

Result: students, teachers were prepared for the transition; in upper grades it was relatively simple. Long-term success depends on cafeteria/custodial/lunch monitor staff support. Stakeholder engagement made for smooth program implementation.



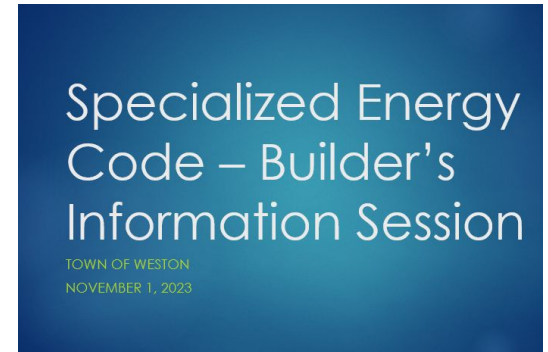


# Specialized Opt-in Code

In 2023, the Town Sustainability Committee decided to pursue adoption of the specialized Opt-in Stretch Code at Town Meeting. Votes to support changes to any bylaw can be challenging, which is why the committee took a comprehensive stakeholder outreach approach ahead of Town Meeting.

- Began with talking with staff, getting training on the code, and received internal support to move forward
- Comprehensive outreach included attending every relevant committee meeting, giving short presentation, providing Q&A, adapting presentation as needed
- Reached out to parent groups, local publications
- Held two community-wide presentations with local experts
- Worked with Weston Media to record and share presentation online

Result: article passed almost unanimously at fall Town Meeting.



LEARN ABOUT THE PROPOSED SPECIALIZED ENERGY BY-LAW – NOV 15

Posted on 8th November 2023 | by WestonOwl | Leave a comment



Image credit: ehop.org

So the Owl just received a request to publicize a webinar/public information session on zoom that will explain a proposed bylaw which is coming to Special Town Meeting on November 28. There is lots going on for this November's Special Town Meeting, making it the special-ist one we've seen in a long time. The Owl is debating if she will attend-there is nothing that makes this town so louco (Portuguese, not Spanish) as the word "By-law." The Owl has low tolerance for drama even off the soccer field.

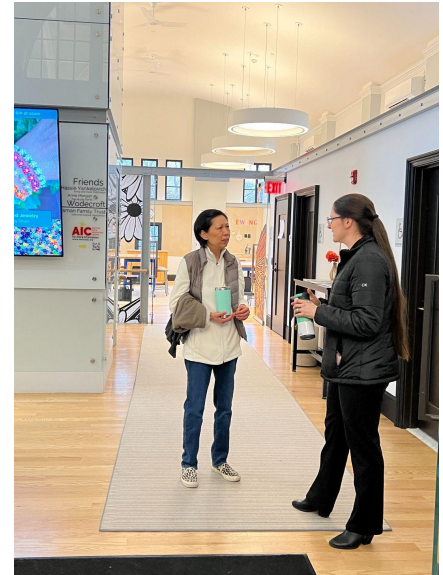
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# ACRE: Accelerating Climate Resilience for Elders

Town of Weston, Wayland, Natick, Framingham, Ashland partnering on a climate resilience program focused on education and outreach for aging population. Seniors are among the most vulnerable to climate change in many communities, often facing social isolation and living in aging homes with less access to air cooling, air filtration.

- Partnering with local COAs, health departments, libraries, emergency responders to provide a series of outreach events
- Increase visibility around climate change, sustainability topics
- Increase awareness / preparedness around climate/weather-related emergencies
- Increase participation in sustainability programming across town

Result: goal of this program is to create a local climate corps, similar to the emergency reserve corps that is run through our local health department; fills a gap between community-level action and municipal services.



# Why it Matters + Getting Started

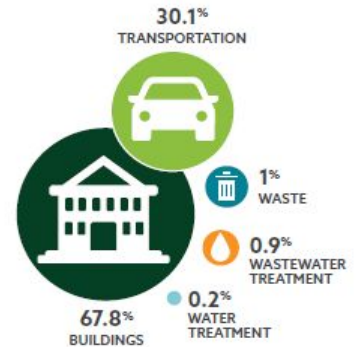



# Weston's Emissions are primarily Residential

Emissions, water use, waste production in Weston is primarily residential. In order for us to achieve the goals set in our Climate Action & Resilience Plan, supporting residents is critical.

- These are big decisions and transitions for many people
- Resources, guidance is needed
- It is important to have (KLT) trusted sources
- Not everyone is tech-savvy (or wants to be)
- Making it easy saves time/ energy, increases participation

Weston Community GHG Emissions by Sector



 68% RESIDENTIAL  
 32% COMMERCIAL, MUNICIPAL, INSTITUTIONAL

## Where to start: Movie Series

Outreach event co-sponsored by the Weston Public Library included four daytime movie showings on climate change, sustainable practices, and environment.

- Libraries are often looking for additional programming
- Easy to organize
- Nearly free (provided coffee and light snacks)
- Educational opportunity with discussion
- Large selection of movies are free to show through online library resources

Result: This was positively received in Weston. The movies were thought-provoking and interesting to watch in a group setting. Conversation was great. And it was an opportunity to promote engagement in upcoming sustainability programming.





## Where to start: MVP 2.0

Provides a community-driven climate action planning process with \$50k to fund a demonstration project. All MVP communities are eligible (and encouraged) to go through the program.

- Brings new faces to community-level planning
- Action-based planning
- Thoughtful equity training
- Led by a skilled vendor/ facilitators

Result: the initial pilot round is still in Phase 1. Our experience has been positive and we were able to bring people into conversation that we would never typically have a chance to interact with or find outside of this program.



# MVP

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness

### THE MVP 2.0 PROCESS







# Conclusion

Community engagement can be fun!

- Keep it simple
- Start with existing community programs like COAs, Libraries
- Ask questions, meet people
- Provide opportunities for people to engage further

With practice, it is easy to organize and can be a really positive experience

Benefits of stakeholder engagement:

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**Thank you!**

