

Green housing: It's good for families and the environment.

As a tenant, you can take steps to create green homes that:

- Let off less carbon dioxide (CO₂ emissions)
- Are easy to maintain
- Lower the costs of energy and water

You can do this by making sure your home meets these key standards:

1. A community planning process with community goals and vision

- Make sure key people in the community are involved during the whole planning process.
- When the design process begins before construction, advocate to involve: maintenance workers, mechanical engineers, civil engineers, and commissioning agents.
- Make sure the developer has hired a commissioning agent. This person or company is a third party that protects the owner and community by seeing that original goals are met. If you want your home to be certified as "green," the commissioning agent is required.

Resource:

Go to http://www.cityofboston.gov/dnd/D_10_Community_Process_and_Notification.asp to learn about the City of Boston's Department of Neighborhood Development's community participation policies and procedures.

2. Water conservation through good plumbing and rain water reuse

- Ask your landlord to fix leaking water faucets right away.
- Install low-flow shower heads, faucets, and toilets to save energy and water.
- Use cold water whenever you can, and never run hot water if you don't need it.
- Collect and re-use rain water by using rainwater barrels.

Resource:

Call the Boston Water & Sewer Commission at 617-989-7000 or go to http://www.bwsc.org/tab_menus/6frameset3.htm to order a free water conservation kit (a low-flow showerhead, faucet aerator, and toilet tank dam).

3. Energy-efficient homes (homes that use low energy)

- Ask your landlord to install a thermostat you can program. Set the thermostat to 60 degrees F (Fahrenheit) at night and when no one is home.
- Clean and tune your oil heating system once a year and your gas system every 2 years.
- Replace furnace filters every month, especially if you have pets.

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- Set refrigerator temperature between 37 and 40 degrees F.
- Use Compact Fluorescent Light bulbs (CFLs) instead of incandescent (uses 75% less energy).
- Use Energy Star appliances like refrigerators and air conditioners that use less electricity.
- Use alternative energy sources, like solar power.
- Make sure your home has good insulation and ventilation, such as exhaust fans in bathrooms and kitchens to vent toxins.

Resources:

Go to <http://www.bostonabcd.org/programs/crisis/energy-conservation/energy-saving.html> for more energy saving tips.

Call or email Michael York at 617-357-6012 or york@bostonabcd.org to learn more about ABCD's energy conservation programs. ABCD looks at electricity use in low-income homes, provides low-energy light bulbs, and gives advice on how to use less energy.

Tell your landlord how they can get information about rebates for installation of solar electric photovoltaic (PV) systems from Commonwealth Solar at <http://www.masstech.org/SOLAR/>.

4. Non-toxic, recycled, and regional materials

- Inside your house, use non-toxic and recycled materials for flooring, finishes, wood products, and paints.
- On the outside of your house, use non-toxic materials for adhesives and sealants.
- Ask your landlord to use non-toxic and recycled materials during repairs and renovations, including wood that is certified by the Forestry Stewardship Council.

Resources:

Go to <http://www.fsc.org/en/> to learn more about wood that is certified by the Forestry Stewardship Council.

Go to <http://www.greenseal.org/about/index.cfm> and <http://www.aisdrg.org/sdrg.aspx?Page=26> to learn more about non-toxic cleaning supplies and materials, and recycled products.

5. A good location helps people to be more healthy

- When planning for housing, make sure the community picks a site that has open space, allows for walking and biking, and has access to public transportation. This can help to reduce traffic and air pollution.

Resource: Go to <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/> to learn more about planning.