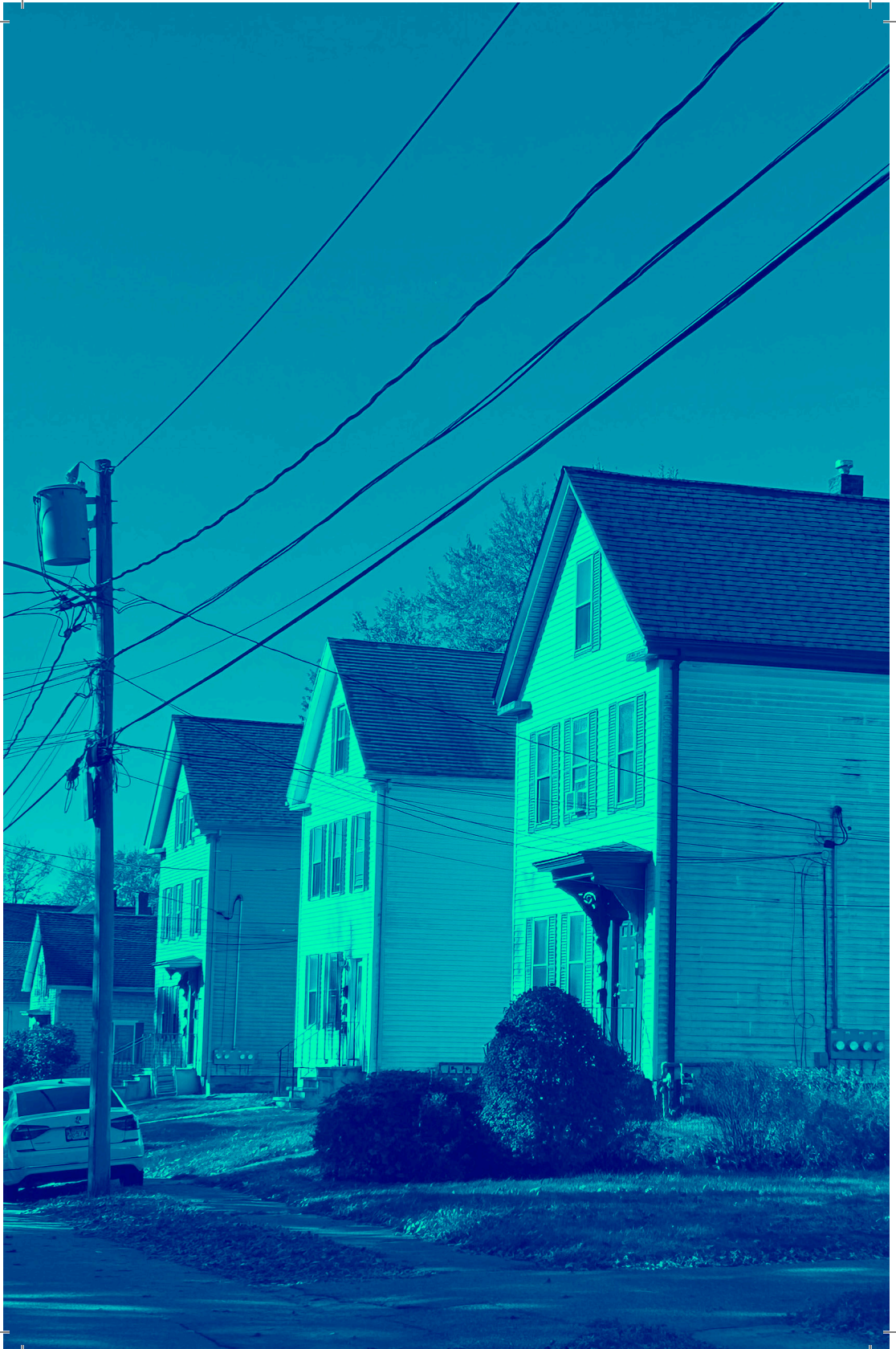


T E N A N T S

A Guide to Lowering Your Utility Bills



SUSTAINABLE
MIDDLEBOROUGH





As a renter,

you may think that there's not much you can do to lower your **utility bills** and make your home more **energy efficient**. Most big building improvements are up to your landlord. But there are plenty of smaller things **you** can do that can add up to real savings.



Get a free energy assessment

Anyone who pays a Middleborough Gas & Electric Department (MGED) bill can get a free energy assessment every three years. The assessor can identify air leaks, tell you about inexpensive measures you can do yourself, and you'll get a free energy-savings kit with a power

strip, light bulbs, and night light. The assessor can also tell you if the building needs insulation or bigger improvements that you could discuss with your landlord. Not to worry—this isn't an inspection. The assessor will be looking only to give you info on energy savings. You don't have to do anything till you're ready.

Energy New England provides free energy assessments for MGED customers. Sign up here:



888-772-4242
Ene.org/
sustainability/hea

If you need help organizing your questions about what you can do about cold and drafts, interpreting the assessment, or putting it into action, contact our Weatherization Navigator Hayden Kane:



774-419-5250
navigator@
sustainablemiddleborough.org

[sustainablemiddleborough.org](https://www.sustainablemiddleborough.org)

SIGNS YOUR RENTAL IS NOT ENERGY EFFICIENT:



Cold walls, floors, or doors in winter



Inability to get cool in summer



Drafty rooms



Rattling windows



Pests, dust, or allergens entering through holes or cracks



Odors from the outside when windows and doors are closed



Visible gaps around window or door trim



Peeling paint around the window or door frames



Increase in energy use (or high heating/cooling bills)

2

Do-it-yourself air sealing

The average home loses 25%-45% of heating/cooling costs due to air leakage and poor insulation. Air sealing measures, many you can do yourself, can save you as much as 20% on your utility bill. Finding leaks may take a little detective work, but many of the fixes to seal them are not expensive. It's always a good idea to check your lease or with your landlord first, especially if you're altering the apartment itself.



Thick floor coverings.

Look for rugs and pads at local discount stores, online marketplaces, & yard sales.

“

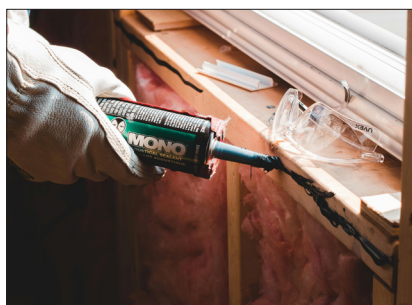
Air sealing can save you as much as 20% on your heating/cooling bill.”



Window insulating kits.

Creating a barrier using plastic shrink film, double-sided tape, and a hair dryer will help keep heat in your house. You can find 3-window kits for around \$5. MGED now offers up to \$75 annually in rebates for these kits.

A few tips: Check that the window is locked before you begin. Be sure to get the shrink film very tight. Take care removing the tape at the end of winter so it doesn't pull up paint or wood.



Caulking.

Landlords are required to ensure caulking around the trim of windows, doors, joints, and other potential air leaks. Gaps under your window frames or where the floor meets the walls are usually the first places to look. Try using an incense stick on a breezy day to help find air leaks. Ask before making any repairs yourself.



Weather stripping and door sweeps.

These also help keep cold out and need to be replaced every few years. You can find door sweeps for about \$15 and weather stripping for less than \$10 a roll. Cloth or foam draft stoppers, which are fabric tubes you simply lay inside the door, can be found for even less at local discount stores.



Insulation covers for attic hatch, bulkhead, or window/wall air conditioners. A more expensive fix at around \$100, these covers may well be worthwhile if your rental unit has any of these openings. All can be major sources of heat loss. You may also want to speak to your landlord about installing these.



Insulating gaskets for light switches and outlets on exterior walls. You can find a set of 20 for less than \$10.



Thermal curtains or shades. These do a better job keeping cold (or summer heat) out but can be pricey. Check discount stores, online marketplaces, and yard sales. Close at night or on summer days, open in winter to let sun in.

NEW REBATES FOR AIR SEALING

Starting in 2026, Middleborough Gas & Electric is offering rebates for window insulating kits and weather stripping. You can get up to \$75 reimbursed each year for window kits and up to \$25 every 3 years for weather stripping.

You can also apply for rebates for WiFi thermostats, air purifiers, air conditioners, dehumidifiers, and 9 types of cordless electric lawn and home equipment.

No energy assessment is required for any of these rebates.

To learn more, contact

508-947-1371,
smartenergy@mged.com,
mged.com/256.



Sustainable Middleborough has been advocating for more incentives that can help tenants and low/moderate-income households make their homes more energy efficient. We're very pleased with these new rebates and hope you can make use of them.



See our website for links to videos about do-it-yourself air sealing and insulation, also links to all the resources mentioned in this guide.

Sustainable Middleborough is raising funds so we can offer tenants free air-sealing materials and free insulating window inserts.

Contact us to learn more or get on our list:

774-419-5250 or navigator@sustainablemiddleborough.org

3 Energy-saving habits


We at Sustainable Middle-borough have identified four habits that will give you the most bang for your energy buck.

First, make sure you've done all the air sealing you can—that alone could save you up to 20% on your heating/cooling bill.


Then each of these 4 habits can also save you 10% or more on your oil, gas, or electric bill, potentially hundreds of dollars per year.

“—————
Each of these habits can save you 10% or more on your heating/cooling bill.”




 **Adjusting your thermostat can save you 10% or more on heating/cooling costs.** Set your heating/cooling system back 7°-10°F anytime you're away 4+ hours and overnight. Then sleep with more blankets. (Note: The exception is heat pumps, which work best at a more constant temperature.) Keep above 55°F in winter to prevent frozen pipes. Consider installing a WiFi or programmable thermostat. Middleborough Gas & Electric offers a \$50 rebate on a WiFi thermostat (\$100 if you're on the low-income rate), which can be an instant payback.




 **Air drying clothes on a rack or lines when possible can save \$100 or more in most households.** In winter, drying inside will help humidify your house too. You can find racks at local discount stores for \$10-\$15. Clothes dryers use a huge amount of energy to do something that happens naturally. Use the high-speed spin cycle on your washer to remove water, reducing drying time. When you do use the dryer, choose the low heat setting.



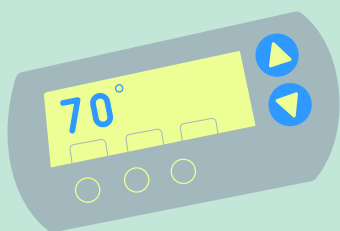
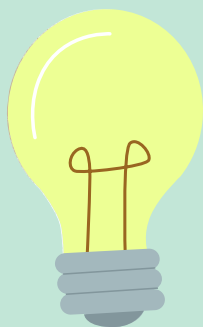
 **Unplugging and powering down electronics can save \$100-\$200/year.** Electronics even in “off” mode can still consume energy, called “phantom load.” Turn off or unplug cords that have a box or “power brick” when you’re not using them, including phone charging cords. Common offenders include TVs, cable boxes, gaming consoles, soundbars, streaming devices, audio systems, computers; anything with a digital clock (microwave, coffee makers), instant-on features, blinking or always-on lights, voice activation, or remote controls. Consider using an energy-efficient power strip (you’ll get one free with your energy assessment), and turning off strips to cut power to multiple devices.



 **If you don't need a second refrigerator or freezer,** empty, consolidate, and unplug it, for savings of \$100-\$130/year. Recycle it or use only when necessary for large gatherings. A 20-year-old fridge uses three times as much energy as a newer model.

MORE INEXPENSIVE ENERGY-EFFICIENT MEASURES

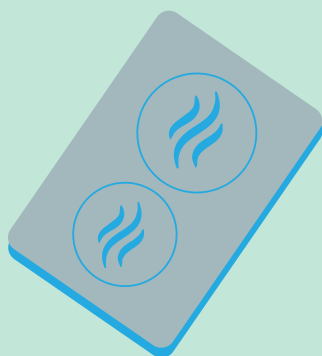
LED lightbulbs. These bulbs use 90% less energy than incandescent bulbs and up to 30% less than compact fluorescents. Look for them on sale. Or buy a few every time you shop till you've replaced all your older bulbs, which is worth doing even before the old ones burn out. You could recover the cost in about 4 months, with electricity savings of \$280/year.



Smart thermostat. Savings of about \$100/year. You can find them as low as \$50. WiFi thermostats may be eligible for a **\$50 MGED rebate** (up to \$100 for low-income households), for an instant payback!
mged.com/256

Portable induction cooktops.

These highly efficient appliances, which use cast-iron or stainless-steel cookware, create a magnetic field to heat your pans directly without burning gas or heating coils with electricity. The biggest benefit may be eliminating dangerous indoor air quality from gas stoves. You can find good-quality cooktops as low as \$70.



Learn about more low/no-cost energy-savings measures, our full weatherization guide, and so much more at our website.

4

Know your rights

The Massachusetts State Housing Code sets minimum standards for rental housing, including issues that may affect your utility bill.

Mass Legal Help offers a **Housing Code Checklist and Guide** for documenting any problems and notifying your landlord.



masslegalhelp.org/housing-apartments-shelter/repairs-bad-conditions/how-use-housing-code-checklist

If you think your building is in violation of the housing code, you can also get advice and assistance from South Coastal Counties Legal Assistance, which has several offices in southeastern Massachusetts:

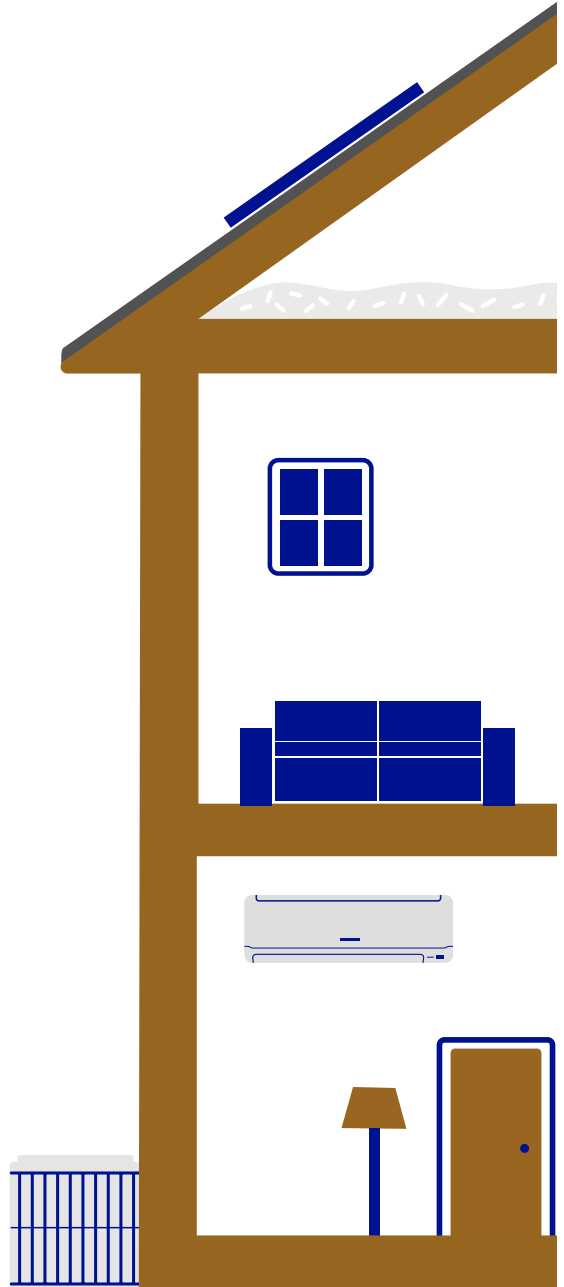
800-244-9023

sccls.org



Although the code does not require insulation for rental units, it does require that buildings:

- are weathertight, including foundation and walls
- have caulking around windows
- have storm doors and windows, or good weather stripping
- are free of holes, cracks, loose plaster, dampness, and broken window glass



5 Talk to your landlord

Insulation and air sealing are almost certainly the best ways to reduce your heating/cooling costs, especially if your rental house or apartment was built before 1980.

If you're comfortable doing so, talk to your landlord about how energy-efficient improvements can benefit them, too. The easiest way to start that conversation is to share our guide for landlords.



See our online tenant resources, which include a link to our landlord guide that you can download or print, and a model email or cover letter you can use to send the guide to your landlord.



HERE ARE A FEW BENEFITS OUTLINED IN OUR LANDLORD GUIDE:

\$ Money in the form of rebates, tax credits, and low-cost financing for improvements and systems they may need to replace anyway

▲ Lower maintenance and operating costs

🏠➔ Decreased turnover costs

▼ Increased property value


6. Paying for energy improvements

Your landlord will need your assistance to use two local resources that can reduce the cost of energy-efficiency improvements—one may even pay 100%.

Weatherization Assistance Program:

If half or more of the tenants qualify for fuel assistance, buildings of up to 4 units could get 100% of weatherization costs paid for. Households with seniors, people with disabilities, children under 6, and high-energy users are given priority.

a. The first move is yours: find out if your income qualifies for fuel assistance during the heating



“ My husband and I rent a house in town and are on fuel assistance. We had \$6,000+ of weatherization done to the house through South Shore Community Action Council at no cost to us or our landlord. He did have to agree not to raise our rent or ask us to move for a year—a pretty nice bonus.”

—Middleborough tenant on North Street

months, November to April, with South Shore Community Action Council (SSCAC). Be sure to say you're also interested in weatherization. If you've already been qualified, you'll need to renew your qualification each year, usually starting in August:

(508) 746-6707

sscac.org/fuel-assistance

b. If your building has more than 2 units, it's a good idea to talk to other tenants in the building, as

well as your landlord, to make sure they're on board with your interest in weatherization. SSCAC will ask your landlord to sign an agreement. Our Weatherization Navigator can help with those conversations:

774-419-5250

navigator@sustainablemiddleborough.org

c. The next step will be applying for SSCAC's Weatherization Assistance Program:

508-747-7575 X6240

sscac.org/weatherization



Middleborough is one of four towns in the state that operates its own municipal utility for both gas and electricity. We have our own energy assessment and rebate system here. (MassSave is not available to Middleborough residents.)

Middleborough Gas & Electric Rebates:

Our local utility offers heat pump and weatherization rebates to landlords for multifamily buildings up to 5 units—one of the few municipal utilities that does.

To qualify for the rebates, the building must have had a free energy assessment within the past three years. The person who pays the utility bill must be the one to sign up for the assessment. And that may be you, the tenant.

Getting an energy assessment can help you, too. The assessor can tell you inexpensive measures you can do yourself, and you'll get a free energy-savings kit.

To learn about the MGED rebates:

508-947-1371

smartenergy@mged.com

mged.com/375

To sign up for a free assessment with Energy New England:

888-772-4242

ene.org/sustainability/hea

Several other state and federal programs offer additional rebates, grants, and 0%/low-interest loans that can make energy-efficiency improvements more affordable for your landlord.

We've listed all these programs with contact info and links in our online landlord guide. Please share with your property owner.



7. Help with your utility bill

a. Check whether you are eligible for fuel assistance through South Shore Community Action Council. You can apply only during the heating season (November to April). This application can also qualify you for 100% weatherization assistance.

508-746-6707

sscac.org/fuel-assistance

b. If you already receive benefits from any of 15 programs (e.g. fuel assistance, MassHealth, SNAP), or if all adults in your household are 65 or over, apply for a 5% discounted rate from Middleborough Gas & Electric. Sustainable Middleborough advocated for MGED to add the low-income discount, which began in 2023.

508-947-1371

mged.com/158/Billing-Discounts

c. Put your name on a wait list for MGED's two community solar programs. When a spot becomes available, you'll get a discount on your electricity rate.

508-947-1371
mged.com/296/MGED-Solar-Community

sustainablemiddleborough.org

R E S O U R C E S

Sustainable Middleborough:

774-419-5250, navigator@sustainablemiddleborough.org

Middleborough Gas & Electric:

508-947-1371, smartenergy@mged.com

Energy New England:

888-772-4242, hea@ene.org

South Shore Community Action Council:

508-746-6707 for fuel assistance,
508-747-7575 X6240 for
weatherization assistance

South Coastal Counties Legal Services:

800-244-9023



Use this QR code for links to all the resources mentioned

in this guide and a link to our landlord guide.

**We're a volunteer-run local nonprofit.
Our services are free.**



SUSTAINABLE MIDDLEBOROUGH
24 Murdock Street
Middleborough, MA 02346

Contact:

Weatherization Navigator Hayden Kane

774-419-5250 or

navigator@sustainablemiddleborough.org



Learn More!
sustainablemiddleborough.org

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