

City of Austin Green Building Policy Update

5/27/2021

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A. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the City of Austin’s facility portfolio is leading the way in conserving energy, water and other natural resources, promoting human health, safety and wellness, and ensuring a high-quality built environment. **This policy updates and/or reinforces previous green building policies as referenced in Council Resolution Numbers: 000608-43, 20071129-045, 20071129-046, 20071129-04, and 20190619-091.**

B. Applicability

This policy shall apply to all City capital improvement projects (CIPs) and third party financed and/or delivered (such as public-private partnerships, also known as P3s) projects that meet the thresholds defined in Section E. Other city projects that are not covered by this policy are encouraged to pursue applicable sustainability ratings, as outlined in Section G, and meet the intent of this policy where possible.

CIP projects are encouraged to consider, utilize and pursue higher levels of sustainability, ratings and performance in addition to the requirements of this policy, as noted in Sections D and G.

The requirements stated herein shall not supersede code requirements or other legal agreements.

Alternative compliance standards may be used with approval (consult the Public Works Department’s Project Management Manual for process and guidance), especially in cases where they may be more applicable for a unique project type or where they recognize a higher level of performance than the

standards required by this policy. Alternative standards may be substituted for or paired with the requirements herein and should utilize recognized rating systems or checklists for sustainability and project performance.

C. Organizations Affected

The following organizations involved in City of Austin CIP and other City facilities related activities are expected to be guided by this policy:

- All City Departments and Offices and any party responsible for financing, planning, designing, developing, constructing, renovating, occupying, managing, or decommissioning buildings of which the City of Austin will be primarily responsible for through ownership and/or operations shall meet the requirements of this policy.
- All City Departments and Offices and any party responsible for leasing space to City entities in non-City-owned buildings.
- All non-City entities involved in financing, planning, designing, developing, constructing, renovating, occupying, managing, or decommissioning buildings of which at least 50% of the project funding (exclusive of land costs) is provided by the City of Austin OR which the City will assume responsibility of and/or pay for operations, maintenance, or utilities within 10 years shall meet the requirements of this policy (or an alternative standard as approved, consult the Public Works Department's Project Management Manual for process and guidance).
- All non-City entities occupying City-owned buildings or constructing facilities on City-owned land shall meet the requirements of this policy (or an alternative standard as approved, consult the Public Works Department's Project Management Manual for process and guidance).
- S.M.A.R.T. Housing™ developments are subject to the S.M.A.R.T. Housing™ Policy Initiative and not subject to the policy requirements stated here.

D. Key Policy Priorities

The requirements outlined below in Section E are intended to set forth minimum expectations and performance standards. **Project teams are encouraged to meet higher levels of certification or rating and explore strategies for maximum building performance whenever feasible and allowable within a project budget.** The City strongly encourages prioritizing and incorporating the following strategies for all applicable projects:

Site Selection Strategies:

Choosing the right site can have a significant impact on the overall enjoyment and accessibility of a building as well as the carbon footprint of its users and occupants.

- **Project locations that minimize transportation impacts** and/or limit travel distances; including easy access to public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian amenities and serviced by City of Austin shuttles.
- **Project locations in Imagine Austin Activity Centers and Corridors** with walkable access to shopping, dining, and community services such as post offices, healthcare, and affordable high-quality childcare services.
- **Project sites that utilize previously developed areas** (such as greyfield or brownfield sites over greenfield sites) and limit new or remove existing impervious cover.

Net Zero and Low Carbon Performance Strategies:

The City of Austin has the goal to achieve net-zero community wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 and aggressive performance goals for water and waste. Meeting such targets is ambitious and may incur significant project costs but can also contribute to operational resiliency. The following are net-zero and low carbon strategies that are applicable to the project types covered by this policy.

- Where feasible, **design the project to achieve net-zero energy, water, and/or waste performance**, as defined by LEED, AEGB or other building standard being utilized.
- For new construction or building renovations that involve roof replacements, incorporate the installation of rooftop solar or use of solar-ready design practices, as determined by the feasibility analysis required in Section E. Projects with large landscape areas or outdoor elements can also provide opportunities to integrate solar panels and should explore that.
- For new construction or building renovations that involve HVAC or hot water system replacements, incorporate building electrification (avoidance or disconnection of natural gas), as determined by the feasibility analysis required in Section E.
- For new construction, provide dual plumbing or systems for non-potable water sources, as determined by the feasibility analysis required in Section E.
- Provide EV charging stations (especially if intended for City fleet vehicles) or EV-ready design, as determined by the feasibility analysis required in Section E.
- Provide building amenities for employees that encourage alternative transportation such as bicycle storage, showers and lockers, or the ability to install these in the future.
- Provide water bottle refilling stations.
- Prioritize building reuse and refurbishment over new construction.
- For new construction, consider designing for deconstruction and material reuse at end-of-life to reduce construction and demolition waste and to lower embodied carbon impact.
- For new construction or building renovations, consider setting a goal of lowering the embodied carbon of materials, in particular structural materials. Tracking progress towards this goal can include Material Specifications that include type III, third-party verified, Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs), which provide information about the lifecycle environmental impact of a product, including its global warming potential (GWP), expressed in carbon dioxide equivalents (CO₂e).
- For new construction or building renovations, consider the use of clean refrigerants and the safe disposal and/or destruction of old refrigerants.

Health and Wellness Strategies:

The environment in which a person spends their time can have a significant impact on their physical and mental health. Acknowledging that a majority of people's time is now spent indoors, "healthy buildings" seek to create indoor spaces that promote the overall health and wellbeing of occupants. Benefits include increased mood, satisfaction and productivity for building users with decreased absenteeism and healthcare costs. The following are healthy building strategies that are applicable to the project types covered by this policy.

- Where feasible, **design the project to achieve WELL Building certification** - The WELL Building Standard is the first and most comprehensive standard to focus solely on the health and wellbeing of building occupants and is designed to work harmoniously with LEED and other green building standards.
- Design stairs that are prominent, easily accessible, and aesthetically pleasing, in order to encourage stair use.

- Offer health and wellness amenities to employees such as gyms, huddle and phone rooms, wellness/mothers' rooms, kitchens, breakrooms, healthy food vending or food trailers, and access to outdoor recreation.
- Provide non-smoking facilities or designated smoking areas, in accordance with the City's Smoking in Public Places Ordinance.
- Maximize views and natural daylight by allowing for open space with high ceiling heights and access to natural daylight for the many rather than the few.
- Limit hardwall and enclosed spaces, including limiting the height of solid panels around workstations and overhead cabinets that block natural light. If enclosed offices or spaces are necessary, they should be situated towards the interior of the floor plate so that they do not obstruct window light or views and they should incorporate glass fronts to maximize the transmission of light, whether from daylight or internal lighting.
- Provide multi-use areas for collaboration, meeting and conference spaces, and common areas with access to large exterior windows, views and natural light.
- Have centralized copy, printing, mail rooms, and landfill, recycling, and compost collection areas that encourage employees to get up and walk around.
- Employ Green Housekeeping standards and Green Procurement standards for common office-related items, such as paint and carpet, and use Green Seal products and services.

Sustainable Landscape Strategies:

Sustainability does not stop at the front doors. Sustainable landscapes provide numerous multi-benefits for the environment, property owners, and communities. Thoughtfully designed landscapes can positively impact building and landscape performance, maintenance, and aesthetics as well as promote human and ecological health. The following are site and landscape strategies that are applicable to the project types covered by this policy.

- Incorporate green infrastructure elements and innovative stormwater management to help reduce urban heat island, promote beneficial use of stormwater, enhance biodiversity, and achieve carbon sequestration. Strategies include rain gardens, rainwater harvesting, porous pavement, green roofs, green walls, trees along streets and sidewalks/trails, landscaping with native plant species, preservation of existing trees and vegetation, increased soil volume, and pollinator resources. Ensure facility design to allow ongoing monitoring of these systems, as noted in Resolution No. 20071129-046. Consult the Public Works Department's Project Management Manual for guidance.

E. Performance Standards

It is the policy of the City of Austin to finance, plan, design, construct, manage, renovate, operate, maintain, and decommission its buildings using green building best practices. All buildings or portions of buildings owned by, leased by, or leased to the City of Austin as well as buildings or portions of buildings receiving significant funding from the City of Austin or which the City will assume responsibility for, shall meet the following requirements to the maximum extent possible. Additionally, there are requirements for Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) projects, regardless of whether these projects include buildings or not. These performance standards represent minimum expectations by the City for all of these buildings and partners.

1. New Construction for Capital Improvement Projects

All new construction projects which

- i. the City of Austin will be primarily responsible for through project ownership and/or operations
- AND**
- ii. have a construction cost of \$2,000,000 or more (*exclusive of land costs and furniture, fixtures and equipment*)

must meet a minimum performance of:

- iii. US Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver certification
- OR**
- iv. Austin Energy Green Building (AEGB) Three-Star Rating
- OR**
- v. If the project will be owned or operated by the Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PAR), aquatic facilities and landscape-oriented must achieve Sustainable SITES Certified. Building projects that will be owned or operated by PAR, such as cultural centers, recreation centers, and office buildings should achieve LEED or AEGB ratings as outlined above.
- OR**
- vi. If the project scope does not qualify for an overall LEED certification, AEGB rating, or SITES certification, the project should meet the LEED, AEGB, or SITES standards for every category that is applicable.
- AND**
- vii. Perform feasibility analyses for 1) rooftop solar installation, 2) avoidance of natural gas, 3) use of auxiliary or non-potable water sources, and 4) provision of EV charging stations. Consult the Public Works Department's Project Management Manual for guidance.

2. Major Renovations and Interior Finish-outs for Capital Improvement Projects

All major building renovation projects which

- i. the City of Austin will be primarily responsible for the project through ownership and/or operations
- AND**
- ii. have a construction cost of \$750,000 or more (*exclusive of land costs and furniture, fixtures and equipment*)

must meet a minimum performance of:

- iii. US Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver certification

OR

- iv. Austin Energy Green Building (AEGB) Three-Star Rating

OR

- v. If the project scope does not qualify for an overall LEED certification or AEGB rating, the project should meet the LEED or AEGB standards for every category that is applicable.

AND

- vi. Perform feasibility analyses for 1) rooftop solar installation, 2) avoidance of natural gas, 3) use of auxiliary or non-potable water sources, and 4) provision of EV charging stations, as applicable to the scope. Consult the Public Works Department's Project Management Manual for guidance.
 - Renovation projects involving HVAC or hot water system replacements must perform a feasibility analysis for the avoidance of natural gas.
 - Renovation projects involving roof replacements must perform a feasibility analysis for rooftop solar installation.

3. Minor Renovations and Interior Finish-outs for Capital Improvement Projects

All minor renovation, interior finish-out, and other projects which

- i. the City of Austin will be primarily responsible for the project through ownership and/or operations

AND

- ii. Construction costs do not meet the thresholds for the project types above, under \$750,000 (*exclusive of land costs and furniture, fixtures and equipment*)

must meet a minimum performance of:

- iii. The LEED or AEGB standards for every category that is applicable to the project scope.

4. Third Party Financed and/or Delivered Projects

All third party financed and/or delivered projects (including Public Private Partnerships, P3s, or 3Ps) that meet the thresholds for new construction or major renovations and interior finish-outs, as defined above, where

- i. at least 50% of the project funding, exclusive of land costs, is provided by the City of Austin

OR

- ii. the City will assume responsibility and/or pay for operations, maintenance, or utilities within 10 years

are intended to be held to the same expectations which the city holds its CIP projects, and therefore must:

- iii. Follow the minimum performance requirements for the corresponding project types as defined and noted above

AND

- iv. Participate in Better Builder Program®, if construction cost is \$1,000,000 or more.

Including, but not limited to the following protections for all construction workers performing work on the project, as noted in Resolution No. 20190619-091:

- Wages no less than the City of Austin living wage, as defined in Austin City Ordinance No. 20160324-015;
- Completion of OSHA 10-hour training;
- Workers' Compensation insurance coverage;
- Hiring goals from local craft training programs that at least meet the requirements of Resolution No. 20180628-061;
- Compliance with all applicable state, federal, and local laws; and
- Independent on-site monitoring by an entity that is neither a construction company nor affiliated with a construction company, or by an individual that is neither employed by a construction company nor affiliated with a construction company.

5. Leased Spaces

5.1 Non-City Entities that Occupy City Buildings WITH City Assistance:

Non-City entities whose facility is constructed on City land or located in a City building with a long-term (10-years or more) lease where

- i. At least 50% of the construction cost, exclusive of land costs, is provided by the City of Austin

OR

- ii. the City of Austin plans to pay for operations, maintenance, or utilities

must meet a minimum performance of:

- iii. US Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver certification

OR

- iv. Austin Energy Green Building (AEGB) Three-Star Rating

OR

- v. If the project scope does not qualify for an overall LEED certification or AEGB rating, the project should meet the LEED or AEGB standards for every category that is applicable.

ADDITIONALLY

- vi. **Food service providers** operating under these conditions *must comply* with the Universal Recycling Ordinance (URO) and are *encouraged* to adopt Good Food Purchasing standards. Consult the Public Works Department's Project Management Manual for guidance.

5.2 Non-City Entities that Occupy City Buildings WITHOUT City Assistance:

Non-City entities whose facility is constructed on City land or located in a City building with a long-term (10-years or more) lease and **do not receive financial assistance** for construction, operations, maintenance, or utilities (as defined above):

- i. Meeting the intent of US Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Certified or Austin Energy Green Building (AEGB) Two-Star Rating is *encouraged*.

OR

- ii. If the project scope would not qualify for an overall LEED certification or AEGB rating, businesses are *encouraged* to make a good-faith effort to implement sustainable practices.

ADDITIONALLY

- iii. **Food service providers** operating under these conditions *must comply* with the Universal Recycling Ordinance (URO) and are *encouraged* to adopt Good Food Purchasing standards. consult the Public Works Department's Project Management Manual for guidance.

5.3 City Tenancy in non-City owned buildings:

When the City of Austin will be a tenant in a building or space that is not owned by the City (*regardless of construction, maintenance, operations, or utility costs*), the following criteria should be considered and those buildings and spaces should strive to achieve as many items from the list below as possible.

Buildings are preferred that:

1. Are U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified or Austin Energy Green Building (AEGB) rated.
2. Are WELL Building Standard certified.
3. Are in locations that minimize transportation impacts and/or limit travel distances; including easy access to public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian amenities and serviced by City of Austin shuttles.
4. Are located in Imagine Austin Activity Centers and Corridors with walkable access to shopping, dining, and community services such as post offices, healthcare, and affordable high-quality childcare services.
5. Co-locate City tenants, especially where functional adjacencies exist.
6. Offer bicycle amenities to employees such as bicycle storage, showers and lockers, or the ability to install these as part of tenant agreements or progressive improvements.
7. Offer health and wellness amenities to employees such as gyms, huddle and phone rooms, wellness/mothers' rooms, kitchens, breakrooms, healthy food vending or food trailers, and access to outdoor recreation.
8. Provide water bottle refilling stations.
9. Have access to Electric Vehicle recharging stations.

10. Are non-smoking facilities or provide designated smoking areas, in accordance with the City's Smoking in Public Places Ordinance.
11. Use solar ready design strategies, consult the Public Works Department's Project Management Manual for guidance.

Interior spaces and improvements are preferred that:

12. Are U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified or Austin Energy Green Building (AEGB) rated.
13. Are WELL Building Standard certified.
14. Have stairwells that are designed into the building in such a way so that they are prominent, easily accessible, and aesthetically pleasing, in order to encourage stair use.
15. Are designed to maximize views and natural daylight by allowing for open space with high ceiling heights and access to natural daylight for the many rather than the few.
16. Limit hardwall and enclosed spaces, including limiting the height of solid panels around workstations and overhead cabinets that block natural light. If enclosed offices or spaces are necessary, they should be situated towards the interior of the floor plate so that they do not obstruct window light or views and they should incorporate glass fronts to maximize the transmission of light, whether from daylight or internal lighting.
17. Provide multi-use areas for collaboration, meeting and conference spaces, and common areas with access to large exterior windows.
18. Have centralized copy, printing, mail rooms, and landfill, recycling, and compost collection areas that encourage employees to get up and walk around.
19. Provide recycling and compost bins, convenient recycling and compost services, and are in compliance with the Universal Recycling Ordinance.
20. Employ Green Housekeeping standards and Green Procurement standards for common office-related items, such as paint and carpet, and use Green Seal products and services.

F. Notes

The following notes are applicable to all the above policy requirements:

1. The project team shall have the discretion to choose between utilizing LEED or AEGB rating systems for buildings, as allowed for in the Performance Standards described above.
2. The project team shall submit for approval (consult the Public Works Department's Project Management Manual for process and guidance) the rating system under LEED or AEGB that they believe is most appropriate for the project. For example, LEED has rating systems for New Construction, Core and Shell, Existing Buildings, and Commercial Interiors projects.
3. In most cases, the LEED Core and Shell rating system should only be used when it is paired with the LEED Commercial Interiors rating, otherwise it may lead to the City owning and/or occupying buildings that provide limited benefits to the end users.
4. The LEED Campus Guidance is encouraged to be utilized in cases where there will be multiple LEED certified buildings on a single site under the control of a single entity, for example a campus of multiple office buildings or the airport complex.
5. As the City has the need to remain agile and flexible in its real estate transactions, the policies pursuant to leased spaces and third party financed and/or delivered projects may be considered and included as "objectives to be negotiated".

G. Unique Projects and Paired Rating Systems

For projects outside the scope of this policy, design teams are encouraged to research and pursue alternative sustainability ratings.

Additionally, projects that fall within the thresholds of this policy are encouraged to pair the requirements above with additional rating systems in order to achieve higher levels of overall project performance and community benefit.

Some examples of alternative or additional rating systems are:

- *Sustainable SITES Initiative for landscape-oriented projects,
- *WELL Building Standard,
- Living Building Challenge,
- ParkSmart for parking structures,
- Envision for infrastructure projects,
- CEEQUAL for civil engineering projects,
- GreenRoads for roadways and trail projects.

* These rating systems are specifically designed to pair with LEED certification.

H. Financial Incentives

The City and its representatives or partners should pursue all federal, state or local incentives to facilitate the implementation of Green Building Policy elements and overall project goals, as applicable.

I. Effective Date

Projects that have begun schematic design by the effective date of this policy are exempted, but they must continue to meet the policy requirements of the previous Green Building Policy.