

Green Building Standards

NJEDA GUIDANCE FOR PROJECTS REQUIRING GREEN BUILDING COMPLIANCE
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Green Building Standards Guidance for Potential Aspire, Emerge, CAFE Incentive Applicants (Updated 2025)

The below information is intended to be plain language guidance as to the process NJEDA uses to evaluate compliance with green building standards. For specific questions regarding this process or for more information on specific green building requirements for your project, please contact the Green Building Team at greenbuilding@njeda.gov

Background

The enabling acts establishing the Aspire, Emerge, CAFE, and NEXT NJ-AI Programs require any applicant seeking incentives for development and redevelopment projects under these programs to certify that the project was designed and built to green building standards.

Given the fact that these programs evolved through the Economic Recovery Act of 2020 as well as subsequent acts to allow for a greater degree of variation in the projects that are eligible for these incentives, EDA has established a flexible menu of options that applies the best practice principles of the NJ Green Buildings Manual to the applicant's specific type of project.

Potential applicants should understand going into the application process that these standards exist and, depending on the scope of the project, compliance with green building standards can impact overall project cost. **Therefore, it may be in the applicant's best interest to review this information with a design professional as early in the process as possible for guidance as to how the requirements will impact overall project cost and implementation.**

Identifying a Project Type

Given that green building standards differ depending on the scope of the project, during the application stage, the applicant will be asked to identify the specific project type (1 or 2, see below) that best applies to the scope of construction and which will drive capital investment costs. Please note that EDA staff will not recommend any project for EDA Board approval until a project type has been clearly identified on the program application.

The **project classification types** are as follows:

Type 1:

Construction consisting of 50% or more of the building's value and/or square footage

- **New Construction**
- **Reconstruction** – Commonly referred to as a “gut rehab” this includes extensive work involving the interior of a building, floor or tenant space to the degree that the work area cannot be occupied while the work is in progress, and where a new certificate of occupancy is required before the work area can be reoccupied. This does not include projects comprised only of floor finish replacement, painting, wallpapering, or the replacement of equipment or furnishings.

Type 2:

Construction consisting of 50% or less of the building's value and/or square footage

- **Renovation** – Work that is generally restorative in nature and involves the use of different materials. Examples include: replacement of interior finish, trim, doors, or equipment. Renovation does not involve the reconfiguration of space. Renovation also includes the replacement of equipment or fixtures.
- **Alteration** – Work that involves a change in layout of interior space while other portions of the space remain without rearrangement. For example, the rearrangement of any space by the construction of walls or partitions, the addition or elimination of any door or window, the extension or rearrangement of any system, the installation of any equipment or fixtures, or any work which affects a primary structural component.

For projects scopes considered “equipment only,” project teams must submit a letter signed by CEO (or equivalent) along with a project narrative and schedule of values clarifying the scope of work for the project to be reviewed for exemption from the green building standards stipulated above.

Basic Application of Standards

For all Type 1 Projects: *Table 1: Applicable Standards for Type 1 New Construction/Major Reconstruction Project - page 7*

For all Type 2 Projects: *Table 2: Minimum Required Standards for Type 2 Renovation/Alteration Project – page 12*

NJEDA will review for green building compliance at two (2) stages for every project; Pre-Development and Post-Construction.

Submitting for a Pre-Development Review

Upon Incentive application approval, EDA will require that a project's specific green building plan be submitted the sooner of six (6) months following application approval (when the first project update is due,) or upon the applicant's request for a grant agreement. **However, the plan must be submitted no later than the end of "Schematic Design" so green building elements can be incorporated into the design appropriately.** The plan is to be submitted via email to the Green Building Team at greenbuilding@njeda.gov with the name of the project in the subject line. The email should include the following information:

- NJEDA PROD #:
- Classification as described above (i.e.: New Construction, Reconstruction, Renovation or Alteration):
- Pre-Development or Post-Construction Review:
- Technical Contact Info (Owner, Architect/Engineer):
- Project Location(s):

All green building plans should include the following components:

1. A letter from the Applicant (on letterhead) outlining the project size and scope, plus a commitment to their specific standards based on project classification.
2. A signed and sealed letter (please rub lead on the seal so it's visible when scanning) from a licensed design professional outlining the scope of work for the project including the following:
 - a. Type of project (New Construction, Reconstruction, Renovation or Alteration as described above) with square footage of the project (and how the project relates to the overall building size – if applicable).
 - b. Identify which approved path of green building compliance the applicant is proposing (i.e., LEED Silver or % better than ASHRAE 90.1).
3. Comprehensive construction budget
4. The compliance documentation identified in the chart(s) below.

The submission of this green building plan along with the backup documentation identified in the chart below will start the Pre-Development Review process.

During this Pre-Development Review, EDA will evaluate the project specific green building plan for compliance with the referenced standards applicable to that specific project type. EDA will then either approve the plan or advise applicants as to the most applicable plan amendments to satisfactorily meet the standards. Should an applicant request a “preliminary” Pre-Development approval, a letter would be required from the applicant (on letterhead) clearly identifying a commitment to an approved metric in which the project’s performance shall be measured against. Once the required documentation demonstrating compliance with the identified metric (i.e., an energy model or COMcheck calculations) is available and ready for review, the applicant can submit for “final” Pre-Development Review. Once all submissions have been reviewed and approved, a project will receive an approved review letter clearly stating that project has met the pre-development green building requirements of the program.

Project design documents should not be finalized by the applicant until EDA has reviewed and approved the green building pre-development plan.

EDA’s Green Building staff are available at this stage to review the green building pre-development plan. However, applicants are advised to channel questions and information through their design professional charged with planning and executing the plan.

Submitting for a Post-Construction Review for Final Certification

Once EDA approves the green building pre-development plan, **the applicant will be expected to execute the plan as approved.** To ensure the plan was executed as approved, EDA will minimally require a signed and sealed letter from the licensed design professional certifying that the as-built project meets the specifications of the approved plan and all green building measures identified are actually installed and/or implemented. Additional required documentation will be outlined in the approval letter based on predevelopment submission. Refer to the chart below for requirements for each measure.

Table 1: Applicable Standards for Type 1 New Construction/Major Reconstruction Projects

Category	Project Type	Standard	Acceptable Measure	Pre-Development Review in addition to Green Building Plan	Proof of Compliance for Post- Construction Review
AI Data Center Commercial	New Construction or Reconstruction of Data Centers	American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers	Whole Building Energy Simulation verifying 5% (commercial) above ASHRAE 90.4-2022 (or most current version)	Signed and sealed energy model summary results clearly identifying efficiency percentage over the referenced standard.	Signed and sealed letter from the licensed design professional indicating construction is complete and in accordance with the approved green building plan
Commercial	New Construction or Reconstruction	U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)	Minimum Silver for all USGBC-LEED rating systems (most current version)	LEED Scorecard identifying at least 50 points and proof of project registration from GBCI. If project will not be registered and pursue actual certification, the applicant should clearly identify this approach in the green building plan.	Signed and sealed letter from the licensed design professional indicating construction is complete and in accordance with the approved green building plan and final LEED scorecard OR final LEED scorecard and award certificate indicating a minimum of Silver level.
Commercial	New Construction or Reconstruction	American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers	Whole Building Energy Simulation verifying 5% (commercial) or 15% (multi-family) above ASHRAE 90.1-2022 (or most current version)	Signed and sealed energy model summary results clearly identifying efficiency percentage over the referenced standard.	Signed and sealed letter from the licensed design professional indicating construction is complete and in accordance with the approved green building plan

Category	Project Type	Standard	Acceptable Measure	Pre-Development Review in addition to Green Building Plan	Proof of Compliance for Post- Construction Review
AI Data Center Commercial	New Construction or Reconstruction of Data Centers	American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers	Whole Building Energy Simulation verifying 5% (commercial) above ASHRAE 90.4-2022 (or most current version)	Signed and sealed energy model summary results clearly identifying efficiency percentage over the referenced standard.	Signed and sealed letter from the licensed design professional indicating construction is complete and in accordance with the approved green building plan.
Commercial	New Construction or Reconstruction	New Jersey Board of Public Utilities Pay for Performance	New Jersey BPU Pay for Performance. Minimum 5% above ASHRAE 90.1-2022 (or most current version)	New Jersey Board of Public Utilities Pay for Performance Application and/or Energy Reduction Plan (ERP) from an approved Pay for Performance Provider. If project will not actually participate in the P4P Program, the applicant should clearly identify this approach in the green building plan along with P4P formatted ERP.	New Jersey Board of Public Utilities Pay for Performance Application. Should the project not actually submit for P4P, the applicant shall submit a signed/sealed letter from the licensed design professional indicating construction is complete and in accordance with the approved green building plan.
Commercial	New Construction or Reconstruction	American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air- Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE)	Standard 189.1-2020 (or most current version)	Energy model and Identification of Mandatory Provisions	Proof of compliance with the mandatory provisions. Signed and sealed letter from the licensed design professional indicating construction is complete and in accordance with approved green building plan.
Commercial	New Construction or Reconstruction	International Green Construction Code (IGCC) – 2024 (or most current version)	Choose minimum of 15 electives from the Jurisdictional and/or Project Electives	Energy Model and Completed IGCC Table 302.1 and/or Table A103.2	Signed and sealed letter from the licensed design professional indicating construction is complete and in accordance with the approved green building plan.

Category	Project Type	Standard	Acceptable Measure	Pre-Development Review in addition to Green Building Plan	Proof of Compliance for Post- Construction Review
Residential/ Mixed Use	New Construction/ Reconstruction	LEED, Home Energy Rating System (HERS), and/or EPA Energy Star (most current version)	Development projects can pursue LEED ND (Silver) or choose an identified EPA Green Building Standards Guidance compliance path for individual buildings within a development project. Residential projects (single or multifamily) within a mixed- use project, HERS 75 or less. If more than 50 percent of the project is residential, than utilize Energy Star Homes or Energy Star Multifamily, otherwise utilize Energy Star Commercial score of 75 or better	LEED: Scorecard identifying at least 50 points and proof of project registration from GBCI. If project will not be registered and pursue actual certification, the applicant should clearly identify this approach in the green building plan. AND/OR HERS: Letter from RESNET provider confirming eligibility and engagement AND/OR EPA: Screen shot of Portfolio Manager with project's status	LEED: Signed and sealed letter from the licensed design professional indicating construction is complete and in accordance with the approved green building plan and final LEED scorecard OR final LEED scorecard and award certificate indicating a minimum of Silver level. AND/OR HERS: Certificate AND/OR EPA: Energy Star Certificate

Category	Project Type	Standard	Acceptable Measure	Pre-Development Review in addition to Green Building Plan	Proof of Compliance for Post-Construction Review
Commercial/ Residential	New Construction or Reconstruction	International Living Future Institute	Net Zero Building Energy Certification	Proof of registration	Net Zero Building Energy Certification
AI Data Center	New Construction/ Reconstruction	LEED (most current version)	Data Center projects can pursue LEED for Building Design and Construction (Silver) or LEED Operations and Maintenance (Silver)	LEED: Scorecard identifying at least 50 points and proof of project registration from GBCI. If project will not be registered and pursue actual certification, the applicant should clearly identify this approach in the green building plan.	LEED: Signed and sealed letter from the licensed design professional indicating construction is complete and in accordance with the approved green building plan and final LEED scorecard OR final LEED scorecard and award certificate indicating a minimum of Silver level.
Residential	New Construction or Reconstruction	NJ Housing and Mortgage Finance Authority (NJ- HMFA) and NJ Department of Community Affairs (NJ- DCA)	Residential projects that are utilizing affordable housing subsidies offered by NJ- HMFA and NJ-DCA are already required to conform to green building standards which meet the statutory requirement.	NJ Housing and Mortgage Finance Authority (NJ- HMFA) and NJ Department of Community Affairs (NJ- DCA) projects follow a separate and individual process outside of the green building standards review	HMFA final green building approval
Residential/ Mixed Use	New Construction or Reconstruction	National Green Building Standard	National Green Building Standard	Proof of registration and NGBS Green Scoring Spreadsheet	NGBS Green certificate or the checklist
Residential/ Commercial	New Construction or Reconstruction	Passive House Institute US	Passive House Institute US Certification	Proof of registration	Passive House Institute US Certification

Guidance for Type 2 Projects

Table 2 below outlines the minimum green building requirements for all Type 2 projects considered an Alteration or Renovation, that are less than 50% of the building's value and/or square footage and fitting the project type criteria. These requirements are intended to give clear guidance to program participants, provide a consistent level of expectation throughout varying project types and reduce complications during the compliance review process. As noted in submission section, project teams must submit a construction budget & scope of work narrative outlining the minimum proposed standards and any additional green measures the project intends to pursue that address, but not limited to, the following areas of sustainability:

- Energy & Water Efficiency
- Indoor Air Quality Management
- Fundamental Commissioning
- Construction & Demolition Waste Management
- Occupancy Sensors
- Daylighting
- Innovative Measures

NOTES

1. Because of the variability in scope of work for each approved TYPE 2 project, not every category outlined below will/may be incorporated into every project. However, if the scope of work addresses one, any, or all categories listed in Table 2, project must adhere to the required measure.
2. LEED-CI Minimum Silver Certification will fulfill all prerequisites and requirements for TYPE 2 green building program approval

Table 2: Minimum Required Standards for Type 2 Renovation/Alteration Project

Category	Project Type	Standard	Acceptable Measure	Pre-Development Review in addition to Green Building Plan	Proof of Compliance for Post-Construction Review
Energy Efficiency	Newly installed lighting improvements including fixtures, ballasts and/or other electrical equipment	American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE)	Minimum 5 percent energy improvement over ASHRAE 90.1-2022 (or most current version)	COM Check or energy model signed & sealed by project design professional	Signed and sealed letter from the licensed design professional indicating construction is complete and in accordance with the approved green building plan.
Energy Efficiency	Newly installed heating, ventilation, air conditioning & water heating equipment	American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE)	Minimum 5 percent energy improvement over ASHRAE 90.1-2022 (or most current version)	COM Check or energy model signed & sealed by project design professional	Signed and sealed letter from the licensed design professional indicating construction is complete and in accordance with the approved green building plan.
Energy Efficiency	Appliance	EPA Energy Star	Energy Star Labeled	Spec Sheet highlighting compliance	Signed and sealed letter from the licensed design professional indicating construction is complete and in accordance with the approved green building plan.
Energy Efficiency	AI Data Center	American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE)	Minimum 5 percent energy improvement over ASHRAE 90.4-2022 (or most current version)	COM Check or energy model signed & sealed by project design professional	Signed and sealed letter from the licensed design professional indicating construction is complete and in accordance with the approved green building plan.

Category	Project Type	Standard	Acceptable Measure	Pre-Development Submission	Proof of Compliance for Post Construction Review
Energy Efficiency	AI Data Center Equipment	EPA Energy Star	Energy Star Labeled	Spec Sheet highlighting compliance	Signed and sealed letter from the licensed design professional indicating construction is complete and in accordance with the approved green building plan.
Water Efficiency	Toilets	1.6 Gallons per flush	In aggregate, 20% better than baseline standard	LEED v5 Indoor Water Use Reduction Calculator (or most current version)	Signed and sealed letter from the licensed design professional indicating construction is complete and in accordance with the approved green building plan.
	Urinals	1.0 gpf			
	Public Lavatory Faucet	2.2. gpm@60psi			
	Kitchen Faucet	2.2 gpm@60psi			
Low Emitting Materials	Interior Wet Applied Paints	VOC Content Requirements for Wet Applied Products	Must meet the applicable VOC limits of the California Air Resources Board (CARB) 2022 (or most current version)	Spec Sheets highlighting compliance	Signed and sealed letter from the licensed design professional indicating construction is complete and in accordance with the approved green building plan.
Low Emitting Materials	Interior Adhesives/ Sealants	VOC Content Requirements for Wet Applied Products	Must meet the applicable chemical content requirements of SCAQMD Rule 1168, November 4, 2022 (or most current version), Adhesive and Sealant Applications	Spec Sheet highlighting compliance	Signed and sealed letter from the licensed design professional indicating construction is complete and in accordance with the approved green building plan.

Category	Project Type	Standard	Acceptable Measure	Pre-Development Submission	Proof of Compliance for Post Construction Review
Low Emitting Materials	Carpet Flooring	VOC Content requirements	CRI Green Label Plus	Spec Sheets highlighting compliance	Signed and sealed letter from the licensed design professional indicating construction is complete and in accordance with the approved green building plan.