



# Building Seattle Better

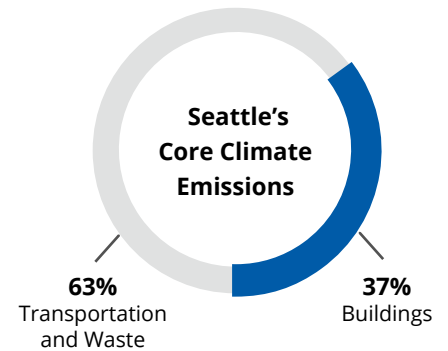
## Performance standards for existing commercial and multifamily buildings

Photo credit: Erik Stuhaug

Climate change is already impacting Seattle and the people who live here, but we can do something about it. Buildings can be part of the solution by improving how they use energy. Through building performance standards — carbon-emissions targets that existing large commercial and multifamily buildings must meet over time — we can address climate pollution, while enhancing quality of life for residents and creating local, well-paying jobs.

Buildings are responsible for more than one-third of Seattle’s carbon emissions. These emissions pollute the air and environment, accelerate climate change, and harm human health, disproportionately impacting people of color and people with lower incomes.

Seattle’s largest source of building-related carbon emissions — over 90% — is from burning fossil fuels, like gas and oil for heat, hot water, and cooking.<sup>1</sup> Seattle’s climate goals are to reduce carbon emissions 40% from commercial and residential buildings by 2030 and to be net-zero emissions by 2050.



## Building performance standards: A high-impact solution

Building performance standards are a powerful tool to address climate change — and create healthy and efficient buildings where we work and live. The standards Seattle is considering are carbon-emissions targets that existing commercial and multifamily buildings 20,000 square feet and larger would need to meet over five to 25 years. **Implementing these standards is projected to reduce building emissions 27% citywide by 2050.**<sup>2</sup>

While Washington State building energy performance standards will go into effect beginning in 2026, they are estimated to only reduce emissions 4% by 2030. Seattle’s policy will complement and build on the state standards and the City’s existing programs.

### What is a building performance standard?



Sets carbon-emissions targets that buildings must meet over time.



Provides a framework to improve building energy efficiency and transition to cleaner energy sources.



Offers flexibility to choose technologies and operational strategies that work best for owners.



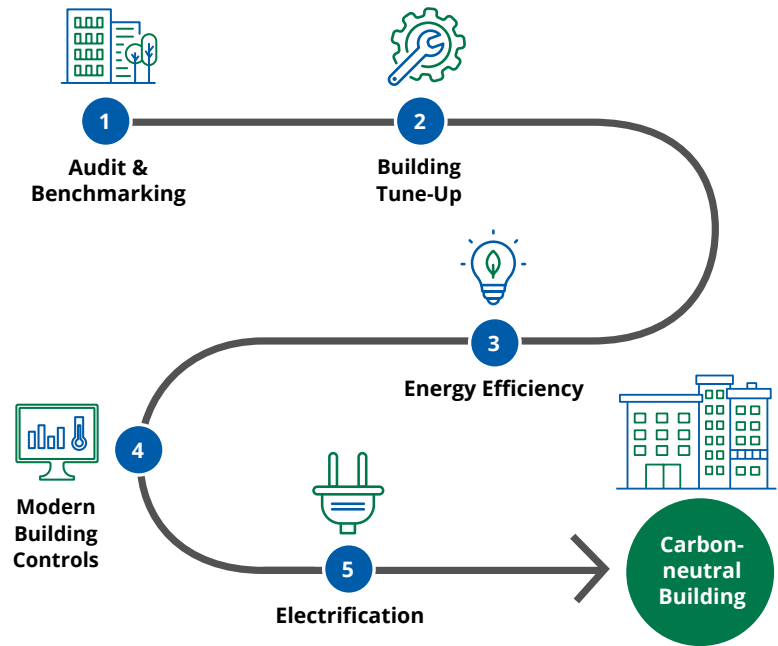
Identifies long-term expectations so owners can plan upgrades accordingly.

1 City of Seattle. 2018 Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory. [https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/OSE/ClimateDocs/2018\\_GHG\\_Inventory\\_Dec2020.pdf](https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/OSE/ClimateDocs/2018_GHG_Inventory_Dec2020.pdf)

2 <https://www.seattle.gov/environment/climate-change/buildings-and-energy/building-performance-standards/bps-policy-development>

## Standards move us to carbon-neutral buildings

By taking steps to tune up operations, maximize energy efficiency, upgrade controls, and electrify systems, buildings can confront climate change, rather than contribute to it. With every existing commercial and multifamily building that reduces its emissions over time, we're one step closer to achieving net-zero emissions across Seattle.



## Benefits to better building performance

Improving a building's performance modernizes it to be more energy efficient and climate friendly, which can benefit operations and the bottom line. Better heating and cooling systems can create more comfortable spaces and lower utility costs for owners and tenants. Phasing out fossil fuels and reducing carbon emissions from existing buildings also leads to cleaner air — indoors and outdoors — and safer communities.

Performance standards can push the market forward in Seattle. A building performance standards policy is forecasted to generate 150 to 270 new local, well-paying jobs annually, directly benefitting area workers and our economy.<sup>3</sup>

Coming soon!

### Seattle Clean Buildings Accelerator

✓ Coaching   ✓ Training   ✓ Guidance

A new technical support hub will provide coaching, training, and guidance for building owners and managers with less capacity and resources to help them meet requirements and reduce emissions.

## Community voices are critical to shaping policy

The Seattle Office of Sustainability & Environment is responsible for developing the policy with community input for the Mayor's and City Council's consideration. We are meeting with building owners, managers, tenants, labor representatives, affordable housing proponents, environmental justice groups, and others to advance a collaborative process that creates a policy package that works for all.

<sup>3</sup> Inclusive Economics. 2021. Seattle Building Decarbonization Jobs Model, Version April 19, 2021. Inclusive Economics, Oakland, CA.

Learn more

Help shape building performance standards to support a just and livable Seattle. Contact [cleanbuildings@seattle.gov](mailto:cleanbuildings@seattle.gov) or visit [seattle.gov/building-performance-standards](https://seattle.gov/building-performance-standards) for more information.