Seattle
Office of Sustainability
& Environment

Seattle Building Emissions Performance Standard

Guide to the New Law (JANUARY 2026)

Seattle's Building Emissions Performance Standard (BEPS) law establishes incremental greenhouse gas emissions targets that large existing buildings must meet. Most buildings will reach net-zero emissions between 2041 and 2050.

BEPS Timing and Requirements

BEPS covers existing nonresidential & multifamily buildings greater than 20,000 square feet (SF), excluding parking — the same buildings that currently report Energy Benchmarking data to the City. Buildings used for industrial and manufacturing purposes are exempt, as are single family homes.

The first compliance interval is 2027–2030, which requires building owners to conduct Benchmarking Verification and complete a GHG Report. These help owners prepare, develop plans, and, if not already below targets, start taking actions to **meet the 2031–2035 emissions targets.**

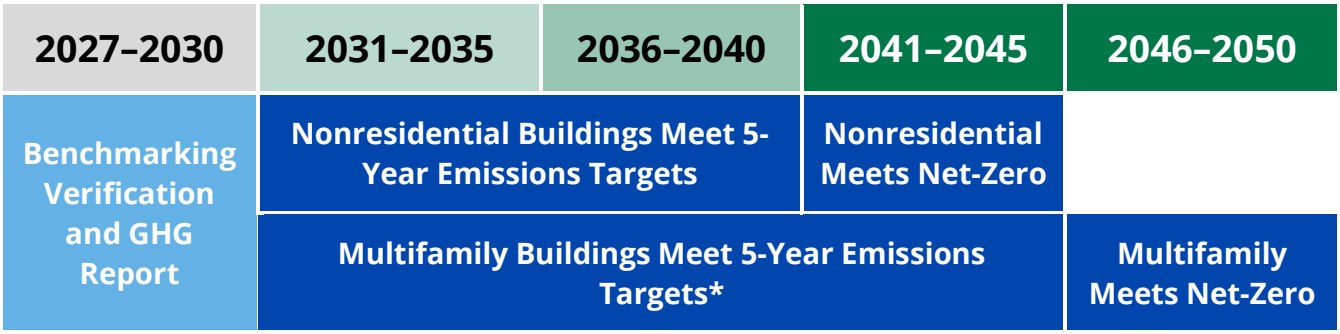
Buildings are also required to meet progressively lower emissions targets every five years. Compliance deadlines are phased by building size — giving smaller buildings greater flexibility and more time for getting technical and financial support.

BEPS offers options for portfolios and campuses to comply as a group of buildings. And buildings with certain hardships can use the many flexible pathways and extensions offered by BEPS. (**see page 3**).

Initial BEPS Deadlines (First Two Compliance Intervals)		
By October 1 of Year Listed	**Verify & Report[1]**	**Meet Target[1]**
>220,001 SF	2027	2031
90,001 to 220,000 SF	2027	2032
50,001 to 90,000 SF[2]	2028	2033
30,001 to 50,000 SF	2029	2034
20,001 to 30,000 SF	2030	2035

1 — Benchmarking Verification & GHG Report also required 2031–2035 and ongoing for next intervals.
2 — Campus, portfolios, and connected buildings

BEPS Compliance Timeline



**Low-income and low-rent housing and human services extension available for 2031–2035 emissions targets.*

Emissions Targets

BEPS specifies greenhouse gas emissions intensity targets (or GHGITs, measured in $kgCO_2e$/SF/year) for 24 building activity types (e.g., office, retail, multifamily, etc. that map to ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager) for each compliance interval. Targets reach net-zero for nonresidential in 2041–2045 and multifamily in 2046–2050. For portfolios or buildings with multiple uses, GHGIT is weighted based on activity types and proportion of gross floor area (GFA). Many emissions deductions and extensions are available to give owners more flexibility to meet their building's GHGIT, including for emissions from cooking equipment, district steam heat, and more. All-electric buildings are exempt from meeting GHGITs once Benchmarking Verification confirms the building uses no fossil fuels.

GHGIT Calculation — Mixed-Use Building or Portfolio

Activity Types	Percent of GFA	Building Activity Type GHGIT	Weighted GHGIT
Office	80%	0.81	0.64
Retail	13%	1.03	0.13
Gym (Recreation)	7%	3.22	0.23
Total GFA	**100%**	**GHGIT ($kgCO_2e$/SF/yr)**	**1.00**

Percent of GFA is multiplied by the 2031–2035 Building Activity Type GHGIT to calculate a weighted GHGIT, which is summed to obtain the overall GHGIT.

See Your Building's Current Reporting

Check your benchmarking data at **www.seattle.gov/energybenchmarkingmap** to see your building's estimated future GHGI target (not including deductions) and current emissions.

What Should I Know Before I Get Started?

Choose a Qualified Person who will conduct Benchmarking Verification and complete a GHG Report by the building's 2027–2030 deadline. The Qualified Person will review data accuracy, report to the City and help you plan for the upgrades necessary to meet your building's GHGIT in 2031–2035. BEPS Qualified Person credentials are the same as those required for the Washington Clean Buildings Performance Standard (WA CBPS), so you may already have one on staff or as a vendor.

Looking ahead, it's critical to plan for building asset management with BEPS in mind, so that equipment updates are lower-emissions options, even if the building is meeting its first BEPS target. For many buildings, complying with BEPS is achievable by strategically replacing old equipment when it is due to be retired with lower emissions alternatives, along with maximizing energy efficiency.

Get Support: Seattle Building Emissions Navigator

Free trainings: The Seattle Building Emissions Navigator has already helped nearly 90 building owners and managers get ready to comply with BEPS and WA CBPS. It includes self-led education for all audiences, and light coaching prioritized for buildings that serve or are in frontline communities. New coaching cohorts start often — check out the Navigator's events page to find one.

Grants: Building Decarbonization Grants for engineering design and capital support for affordable housing, non-profit owned buildings, and buildings serving frontline communities are available annually pending funding. Learn more about financial support on the Navigator's website.

BEPS Paths to Compliance

Flexibility to accommodate buildings of various uses, size, type, ownership, age, and systems.[1]

Path A

Meet GHGITs at each five-year compliance interval

- **Individual building compliance.** Meet a GHGIT weighted for the building's uses (e.g., a mix of office, retail, and restaurant spaces).
- **Multi-building compliance.** Meet an Aggregate GHGIT based on a weighted blend of spaces for all buildings' square footage combined, in lieu of building-by-building compliance.

Path B

Modifications like extensions or an alternative compliance payment.

- **Alternate GHGIT.** A constant percent emissions reduction target from a covered building, district campus, connected buildings, or public/nonprofit building portfolio baseline Greenhouse Gas Intensity to net-zero for unique buildings or those with extremely high emissions.
- **Multifamily Prescriptive Path.** Streamlined compliance by installing all-electric heat or hot water in lieu of meeting GHGIT.
- **Extension for low-income and low-rent housing and human service uses**. May be exempt from meeting the 2031–2035 GHGITs but must still do Benchmarking Verification and create a GHG Report.
- **Other extensions include** newly constructed buildings, high vacancy rate (≥35%), buildings with pre-existing financial distress, and change of owner.
- **Alternative Compliance Payment (ACP).** A payment proportional to the total metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent ($MTCO_2e$) exceeding the target. The ACP is limited to 2031–2035 and funds will help under-resourced building owners reduce emissions.

Path C

Special consideration and flexibility for extenuating circumstances. Buildings must meet eligibility criteria to use.

- **Net-Zero or Low Emissions by 2041–2050 Decarbonization Compliance Plan.** A plan, created by a Qualified Person, that shows how a building will achieve net-zero or low emissions by 2041–2050. Plan must include details such as an energy and emissions audit, cost analysis, GHGIT schedule, and planned actions.
- **District Campus Decarbonization Compliance Plan.** A customized plan, by a Qualified Person, that shows how a campus will upgrade its district energy plant to generate cumulative emissions reductions from 2028–2050 equal to or greater than the reductions achievable by meeting the standard GHGIT.

Deductions and Exemptions

Emissions deductions can be used for all paths. This includes district thermal energy in 2031–2035 and uses like cooking, fossil fuel equipment in residential condo units, laundry in hotels and hospitals, emergency generators, and emergency backup heat in hospitals, labs, and more.

Exemptions are available for all-electric buildings if a Qualified Person verifies that the building only uses electric energy sources and for buildings scheduled for demolition.

[1] Please refer to the 2025 Director's Rule for complete list, allowed compliance intervals, and eligibility criteria.

Glossary

Benchmarking Verification

Benchmarking Verification is required to accurately establish the covered building's GHGI. Every five years, a Qualified Person must verify emissions and energy performance of the covered building's annual benchmarking reporting and correct any errors, if needed. The Qualified Person cannot be the person that prepared the annual energy benchmarking report. Benchmarking Verification does not supersede annual benchmarking requirements — it just adds required verification every five years.

GHG Report

The GHG Report documents the GHGIT and compliance GHGI. It includes a short outline of a building's BEPS compliance journey and high-level plans to meet future GHGITs. A Qualified Person must complete it per a building's compliance schedule, as early as Oct. 1, 2027, for buildings larger than 90,000 SF. Benchmarking Verification and the GHG Report will be submitted via a new online reporting portal under development.

Qualified Person

A Qualified Person — meaning a person having training, expertise, at least three years professional experience in building energy use analysis, and any of these certifications or licenses — is required to conduct Benchmarking Verification, GHG reporting, and to fulfill all BEPS reporting requirements with the exception of certain extensions or exemptions applications. WA CBPS uses the same expertise and certifications, so owners may use the same person or vendor for both laws. Owners of covered buildings that have in-house employees meeting Qualified Person expertise may use those persons.

Deductions

To provide flexibility, certain types of equipment emissions or "end-uses" can be deducted from a building's GHGI. Deducting these emissions allows building owners more time to decide on alternatives and to focus their resources on other reductions. See the list of deductions, some of which expire over time, here.

Greenhouse Gas Intensity (GHGI)

GHGI is a measurement of a covered building's annual greenhouse gas emissions from its energy use relative to its size. GHGI, which is typically expressed as $kgCO_2e/SF/yr$, is calculated by including all the different energy or fuel sources used in the building (e.g., electricity, gas, steam, etc.), and the total usage associated with each energy source. Each type of energy source has an emissions factor (a measure its carbon emissions), which is multiplied by the energy use to obtain the building's total greenhouse gas emissions (measured in kilograms of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_2e)). The cumulative greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the building are then divided by the gross floor area of the building.

Greenhouse Gas Intensity Target (GHGIT)

GHGIT is the target a building must achieve to comply with BEPS. Targets are set based on the type of activity within the building, and targets are weighted for buildings with multiple uses as well as portfolios of buildings. Check out the 24 BEPS targets here.

Learn more about Seattle BEPS

- Review the **2025 Director's Rule** for details on paths, calculations, and documentation requirements.
- **Sign up for the e-news** to access tools and training opportunities.
- Visit **seattle.gov/building-emissions-performance-standard** for FAQs and more.
- **Questions?** Contact cleanbuildings@seattle.gov