



Buildings as Climate Action



The “Buildings as Climate Action Group” is a collaborative organizing effort between TCAT, NWEBG and other partners.

Proposed Win-Win-Win: A Healthy Zero Carbon Building Challenge¹

Coronavirus. Housing Crisis. Climate Change: a perfect storm has knocked our economy down and left us vulnerable. Yet our community is resilient and innovative. With the right stimulus, we can stand back up again stronger than before, and lead with a visionary win-win-win solution. Healthy zero carbon buildings.

State Law and local policy have Washington on a trajectory to achieve near Net-Zero energy standards for all new construction by 2031. By starting now, we can leverage federal stimulus and the economic rebound that will follow the Pandemic, to lead a transition to ultra-healthy, ultra-efficient homes and buildings for everyone. In the process we will create a healthier community, new jobs, business opportunities and innovative competitiveness that will help us on a just transition back to prosperity. And help protect Earth’s climate for future generations.

An Exemplary Building Challenge

The following parameters for the Building Challenge are draft, and will be reviewed with a panel of stakeholders prior to a public launch later this year. There is no official title yet (TBD).

Construct 50 or more exemplary buildings in Thurston County by 2031² including:

- Commercial & Multi Family
- Small Residential
- Both New Construction and Retrofits

Energy Performance Metrics:

- All electric and/or conversions
- For new Commercial + Multifamily - equivalent to projected 2031 energy code, EUI³ in the range of 15-25 depending on building type
- For new small residential (<4 units), Built Green 5 star, Passive House or better
- After maximizing energy efficiency, offset 100% of remaining load with renewable energy (on-site or assigned REC).



The Draft Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan, includes action Item B3.4, current priority ranked #11:

“Exemplary Buildings: Create a Zero-Energy Building Challenge by partnering with public, private, non-profit and faith-based organizations. Facilitate rapid deployment and public awareness of high-profile demonstration buildings”

¹ This building challenge is adapted from a successful model from King County, the 20 by 2020 Building Challenge (www.20by2020challenge.org), and the Exemplary Buildings program of Brussels, Belgium: (<http://www.buildinginnovations.org/policy/brussels-exemplary-buildings-program-passive-house-law-of-2011/>). Also see www.exemplarybuildings.housingconsortium.org.

² Must apply for permits by the effective date of 2031 Energy Code.

³ Energy Use Index, kBtu/square foot/year, a measure of operational energy use. 15-25 EUI range, projection by EcoTope.

The initial focus of the Building Challenge will be on housing. It would be a partnership of:

- Local and regional building industry and developers
- Affordable housing agencies and faith-based organizations
- Local government
- Shift Zero alliance (www.ShiftZero.org) member organizations
- Many others

How would it work?

The following elements will be key to success of the Building Challenge:

- Alignment with community-wide goals for affordable housing and economic recovery
- Early buy-in and commitment from leading developers and builders
- Collaboration on cost-effective design and construction methods
- Local government incentives awarded to healthy and efficient affordable homes and buildings
- Including grants and other financial assistance to exemplary buildings
- Technical Support from regional high-performance building experts
- Training and workforce development

These elements suggest the array of partnerships that would be necessary for this program to succeed, all of which already exist or can be developed quickly.

From May – August, the Buildings As Climate Action Group will conduct outreach, focus groups, and policy advocacy, and build the partnerships needed to implement a healthy zero carbon challenge. Our goal is a public launch of the building challenge in Fall 2020.

Key next steps (May 2020):

- Position shovel-ready exemplary building projects for federal Coronavirus stimulus
- Partner early with local building industry leaders and developers, prior to finalizing building challenge criteria, title and marketing strategy
- Engage local government for collaboration, support and policy leadership
 - Thurston Climate Plan Steering Committee
 - Local elected officials and staff
 - Thurston Thrives Housing Action Team
- Reach out to economic & workforce development agencies and academic institutions
- Discussion between Shift Zero regional partners and local leaders about cost-effective design and construction, and technical support.