



Green Building & Energy Reach Code Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

SCOPE: COMMERCIAL

APPLICABLE CODES: 2019 CBC, CRC, CPC, CMC, CEC, CALGreen, CEnC, and PAMC

General Questions:

1. **Question:** Is there an educational packet or binder that can be provided to new contractors or architects working within the City of Palo Alto?

Answer: All of the Green Building and Energy Reach Code requirements are outlined on the [Green Building Compliance](#) webpage. Please view the educational videos and written instructions for details. For Inspections, please review the [Green Building Non-Residential Inspection Guidelines](#).

2. **Question:** What is expected during construction of new mixed-use office building and multi-family building for Green Building? Please explain the process.

Answer: The project will be subject to a mandatory Green Building Pre-Construction Meeting (IVR#151), a Green Building Incremental Verification during Rough Inspection (IVR#152), and a Green Building Final (IVR#153) prior to the Building Final. For the residential portion, the project must follow the Residential Green Building Inspection Guidelines. In addition, the owner must hire a Residential Green Building Special Inspector from the Palo Alto approved list. For the non-residential portion, the project will be required to follow the Non-Residential Green Building Inspection Guidelines. See the Green Building Compliance page for details. For Inspections, we have published the [Non-Residential Inspection Guidelines](#)

3. **Question:** Filing for Planning Review sets date for Green Building Code, right?

Answer: The requirements are impacted by the permit submittal date only. Projects that previously submitted for Planning using the Green Point Rated system must resubmit under the new ordinance if the project submitted for permit after 6/22/2015.

4. **Question:** My project is a limited remodel project within a larger non-residential building. There are no water fixture changes, no appliance changes, and no landscaping in the scope. I am not finding any of the provisions that apply to my project within 5.3 Water Efficiency. How do I indicate this on the GB-1?

Answer: Yes. In this case, you would mark the water provisions as "N" for Not Applicable. Additionally, in the Reference column, you can indicate that the item is "not in scope".

5. **Question: For a smaller project can I use the standard Public Works Storm water Pollution Prevention sheet to comply with the CALGreen 4.106 storm water drainage and retention during construction? Where can I find this sheet?**

Answer: Yes. It is located at the link below. Please note that projects must independently meet the CALGreen and Public Works requirements.

<http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/2732>

6. **Question: If my project is occurring in phases, are all permits subject to Green Building Requirements?**

Answer: Phased projects are subject to the requirements in CALGreen Section 303.1. For shell buildings and others constructed for future tenant improvements, only those code measures relevant to the building components and systems considered to be new construction (or newly constructed) shall apply. The provisions of CALGreen shall apply only to the initial tenant improvements to a project. Subsequent tenant improvements will be subject to non-residential additions and alterations requirements. (CGBC 303.1.1)

7. **Question: How is a new mixed-use project to comply with the Green Building requirements?**

Answer: The project will submit two GB-1 Sheets, one for the residential portion of the project and one for the non-residential portion of the project. The project will be subject to a mandatory Green Building Pre-Construction Meeting (IVR#151), a Green Building Incremental Verification during Rough Inspection (IVR#152), and a Green Building Final (IVR#153) prior to the Building Final. For the residential portion, the project must follow the Residential Green Building Inspection Guidelines. For the non-residential portion, the project will be required to follow the Non-Residential Green Building Inspection Guidelines. In addition, the owner must hire a Residential and Non-Residential Green Building Special Inspector (GBSI) from the Palo Alto approved list. See the Green Building Compliance page for details.

8. **Question: My project is a newly constructed hotel; will it be subject to green building requirements?**

Answer: Yes. The project will be subject to Tier 2 requirements. Typically, in Palo Alto, a hotel does not fit exactly into residential or non-residential. As a result, hotels usually submit two GB-1 sheets including one for the commercial space and one for the residential zones.

9. **Question: Does my project have to comply with the Recycled Content requirements?**

Answer: If the project is subject to Tier 1 or Tier 2 requirements, yes. Tier 1 projects shall comply with recycled content of 10% for materials based on estimated total cost and Tier 2 projects shall comply with recycled content of 15% for materials based on estimated total cost. The Recycled Content Worksheet (RCV Table 1 – Recycled Content Value Calculations) provided by the HCD shall be used to show compliance: <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/building-standards/calgreen/cal-green-forms.shtml>.

10. Question: I have a project that triggers CALGreen Mandatory. Will I be required to hire a Green Building Special Inspector (GBSI)?

Answer: No, only projects subject to Tier 1 or Tier 2 require a GBSI.

11. Question: My project submitted for building permit in 2019 but is undergoing construction in 2020, will we be required to hire a GBSI?

Answer: No. Projects submitted before January 1, 2020, regardless of construction phase timeline, trigger the 2016 Palo Alto Municipal Code (PAMC 5393) 16.14, which does not require GBSIs for Commercial Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects.

Energy Reach Code:**1. Question: On what date will the building department begin enforcing the new Energy Reach Code?**

Answer: Permit applications submitted on or after April 1st, 2020.

2. Question: Does the project need to hire a Commissioning agent to review the construction documents?

Answer: Yes, all new construction must complete design phase commissioning requirements in accordance with California Energy Code Section 120.8.

3. Question: What is the new Certified Energy Analyst (CEA) requirement, which projects does it apply to, and when does it go into effect?

Answer: The CEA requirement is effective April 1, 2020 for residential and non-residential energy models for new construction projects using the performance approach to show compliance. The Certificate of Compliance shall be prepared and signed by a Certified Energy Analyst along with the Tier 2 GB-1 sheet, and the energy budget for the Proposed Design shall be no greater than the Standard Design Building.

Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment:

1. Question: How do I know the required number of EVSE spaces for my project?

Answer: We have developed a calculator to help project teams comply with the requirements. Complete the EVSE Calculator found on the Green Building Compliance page to identify the number of required spaces.

The EVSE Calculator can be found here:

<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?BlobID=47673>

2. Question: Where must EVSE be located? Can the EVSE be all on one floor or split between multiple floors?

Answer: The ordinance clarifies only that the spaces should be convenient to the electrical panel. No other location stipulations are included in the ordinance.

3. Question: For the Electric Vehicle requirements, does a dual-head station that can charge two cars count as two stations?

Answer: Yes.