

A Look at Green Building Strategies Across California



The Importance of Green Building Strategies

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In California, green buildings are a critical strategy to reducing greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by 2030, as set by AB 32. Out of the 179 MMTCO₂E of greenhouse gas emissions that need to be reduced in this time frame, it is estimated that green buildings can make up about 30 MMTCO₂E of this reduction, mainly from energy savings.

State Policies

Existing state policies include the Green Building Initiative (the Green Building Action Plan), the California Green Building Code, and the California Public Utility Commission's "zero net energy" (ZNE) goals (all new homes are ZNE by 2020 and all new commercial buildings are ZNE by 2030).

At the local level, many jurisdictions have already started implementing green building strategies, plans, and ordinances. A few ICLEI local government members that are already in action are highlighted below.

Los Angeles

Los Angeles requires LEED certification for private nonresidential over 50,000 square feet, and residential buildings over 50,000 square feet and at least 50 units. The standards are higher for municipal buildings, which have to be LEED certified if over 7,500 square feet. In addition, as an incentive, Los Angeles has an expedited permit process for LEED Silver buildings.

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Rohnert Park

Rohnert Park requires LEED Silver for all private nonresidential buildings and 90 GreenPoints for all residential buildings. In addition to required ratings, Rohnert Park also prescribes specific green building measures including variable speed pool pumps and EnergyStar exhaust fans. Rohnert Park has adopted a 10-15% energy efficiency requirement increase (over Title 24) for residential buildings (based on size), and requires all municipal buildings to be LEED Silver.

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Santa Cruz

Santa Cruz requires 10 GreenPoints plus 1.5 GreenPoints for every 100 square feet over 350 square feet for private residential buildings. It also has a green building enforcement method that checks plans at the permit stage.

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Livermore

Livermore requires private nonresidential buildings to be LEED Certified Equivalent and residential buildings to have a minimum of 50 GreenPoints. The standards are higher for municipal buildings which are required to be LEED Silver.

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Additional Resources

- View a comparison of green building ordinances in California.
- Visit BuildItGreen.org for ideas, trainings, tools, and guidelines for green buildings in California.
- Visit StopWaste.org for resources on recycling and waste reduction.