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**To: Mayor and City Council**  
**From: Richard McLeod, Community Development Director**  
**Date: March 10, 2025**  
**Subject: Policy on Green Buildings**

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**ITEM DESCRIPTION**

This item is a policy change to the City of Dunwoody’s Green Buildings.

**DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the City of Dunwoody to plan, design, construct, manage, renovate, and maintain its facilities and buildings in a sustainable manner. Green buildings are designed to reduce the overall impact of the built environment on human health and the natural environment. The Green Building policy was put into place in March of 2010 and has not been revised since then.

At a recent meeting of the mayor and council, Michael Smith discussed the green building policy for two buildings that are scheduled to be built by the city in Brook Run Park. One is a storage shed and the other is a small, under 5000 square feet office building for parks and public works staff to work out of. From the discussion, the mayor and council wanted the staff the review the policy and recommend some changes.

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council in 2000 set the bar for buildings to become certified in energy efficiency. The process is very detailed and quite expensive. Since that time EarthCraft certification run by Southface and Energy Star certification were developed to address similar situations. Southface is a local organization and Energy Star, administered by the federal EPA, is focused on mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems.

The current green buildings policy states that LEED certification is required for building over 5000 square feet and offers the EarthCraft or Energy Star certification for buildings under 5000 square feet but only if the cost increase due LEED certification exceeds 20%.

However, under the new policy it says that either LEED or EarthCraft or Energy Star certifications are acceptably green building certifications, and the 5000 square foot limit is removed. There is also the option to obtain an exemption if the added cost to achieve certification exceeds 10%. In that case, the director of sustainability will bring a building project to the mayor and council to get approval.



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**REQUESTS**

Approve the recommend draft of the City of Dunwoody Green Building Policy.

**ATTACHMENTS**

The draft Green Building Policy



CITY OF DUNWOODY

*COMMUNITY INCENTIVES  
FOR GREEN BUILDING*

Article

Version 2025.03.10



City of Dunwoody  
Policies

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**GREEN BUILDING POLICY**

**I. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the City of Dunwoody to plan, design, construct, manage, renovate, and maintain its facilities and buildings in a sustainable manner. Green buildings are designed to reduce the overall impact of the built environment on human health and the natural environment. Green buildings accomplish these goals in three main areas, first, by efficiently using energy, water, and other resources; second, by protecting occupant health and improving employee productivity; and third, by reducing waste, pollution and environment degradation.

Several different certification programs and benchmarks exist to rate the sustainability of a building. One such standard is the United States Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system. Additionally, the Environmental Protection Agency and United States Department of Energy’s EnergyStar and EarthCraft Light Commercial programs include guidelines for buildings that are not LEED certified.

The intent of this policy is to ensure that all new buildings constructed by the City of Dunwoody shall be designed and measured using these programs. The LEED, EnergyStar, and EarthCraft programs will be used to determine what constitutes sustainable building under this policy.

**II. Definitions**

When used in this policy, the following words, terms and phrases, and their derivations, shall be the meaning ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning,

- A. AGENT means an official contracted or subcontracted person who is authorized to act on behalf of the City of Dunwoody and represent their interests.
- B. CITY DIRECTOR OF SUSTAINABILITY means the Director of Sustainability or other employee or agent as designated in writing by the City Manager.



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- C. **EARTHCRAFT CERTIFIED** means a certification program created in 1999, a residential green or light commercial building program of the Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association in partnership with Southface. This program serves as a blueprint for energy and resource efficient homes.
- D. **EMPLOYEE** means an individual drawing a salary or wage from the City whether on a full-time, part-time, or contractual third-party basis. The term shall encompass all members of the Governing Authority without regard to whether or not such individual is compensated.
- E. **ENERGY STAR** means a joint program of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the United States Department of Energy which aims to protect the environment through energy efficient products and practices. ENERGY STAR is also an energy performance rating system. The EPA also recognizes top performing buildings with the ENERGY STAR designation.
- F. **LEADERSHIP IN ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (LEED)** means a regulatory system for construction that establishes several levels of environmental achievement from a Certified rating to a Platinum rating.
- G. **OFFICIAL** means any elected or appointed person who holds office or serves in a position of public capacity.
- H. **UNITED STATES GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL (USGBC)** means an entity that promulgates the LEED Rating System.

### III. Scope

This policy applies to both new construction and renovations.

#### A. New Construction

1. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council or the Earthcraft certification or the



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~~Energy Star certification~~ shall be used as guidance for a design and a measuring tool to ensure that new construction and renovations are designed sustainably and according to national standards. ~~But EarthCraft Certified or Energy Star can be achieved instead of LEEDS if cost are too high for LEEDS. Facilities and buildings shall be certified under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for New Construction (LEED-NC) certification standards, EarthCraft Certified, or Energy Star.~~

~~2. Facilities and buildings over 5,000 gross square feet of occupied space or one million dollars total project cost~~

~~2.3. shall be certified under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for New Construction (LEED-NC) certification standards. The specified certification can be one of four certification levels: Certified, Silver, Gold, or Platinum. Ideally, new construction should achieve the LEED-NC Silver rating or higher, when feasible.~~

~~Facilities and buildings under 5,000 gross square feet of occupied space or less than one million dollars total project cost are encouraged to be designated LEED-NC Certified. However, if LEED-NC certification is not feasible, per the exceptions in Section IV, smaller buildings must be certified using Energy Star or EarthCraft Light Commercial standards.~~

### B. Renovations

1. Renovations are defined as a project that includes construction activity that make substantial changes to at least one entire room in the building and requires the isolation of the work site from the regular building occupants for the duration of the work. Renovations can affect no more than 50% of the total building floor area, or affect over 50% of the regular building occupants. Work that exceeds these limits must be considered new construction. Renovations that affect less than 5% of the floor area are considered minor and are exempt from this policy.

~~2. All renovations must follow the LEED Guidelines for Existing Buildings, EarthCraft Light Commercial standards or Energy Star certifications. If LEED Existing Building certification is not feasible, per the exceptions in Section IV, renovations must be certified using Energy Star or EarthCraft Light Commercial standards.~~



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### IV. Exceptions

The City of Dunwoody’s practice to incorporate green building techniques, methods, and materials is not always practicable. The following project situations are exceptions to the Green Building Policy.

A. Historically designated buildings with design considerations which limit the inclusion of green materials or building techniques.

B. Projects for which achieving LEED certification, [Earthcraft certification or Energy Star certifaictions](#) would increase costs by 120% or more such that the project is no longer financially feasible. Some projects may be burdened with other extraordinary upfront costs that act as a financial barrier to development, for example, development on Brownfield sites, development on sites without infrastructure, or historic preservation projects.

[If there is a ~~cost~~ greater than 10% ~~increased-cost~~ increase, the Director of Sustainability will bring the case to the Mayor and City Council for their consideration.](#)

C. No practical green alternative exists for the proposed improvement.

### V. Responsibility

A. Director of Sustainability

The City Council may appoint the City Manager, or said agent appointed by the City Manager, to serve as the Director of Sustainability for the City, or the Council may contract with an independent third party to serve as the Director of Sustainability. (per City Charter, Section 3.02).

DUTIES: The Director of Sustainability shall have the following duties and powers in regards to the Green Building Policy:

1. Work with all Department Heads to make certain that employees are aware and educated about this Green Building Policy.
2. Work with the Chief Building Official to ensure that the Green Building Policy of expedited review is practiced in all City appropriate projects.





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- 3. Work with all department heads to make certain that this practice is monitored.