

CLEAN & SAFE BUILDINGS

Policy options for local government

Buildings are the fastest-growing source of greenhouse gas emissions in Washington, due to the continued use of fossil fuels like gas to heat and cool our homes.

Shifting our buildings from gas to using highly-efficient electric heat pumps will:

- **Reduce our greenhouse gas emissions** and keep us on track to meeting our state climate goals, taking advantage of Washington's clean electricity
- **Protect our health by reducing indoor and outdoor air pollution** from combusting gas
- **Create resiliency from heat waves and smoke**, since heat pumps also provide cooling
- **Keep us safer** from gas leaks, fires, and explosions
- Create **more stable electricity prices** for all
- **Create clean energy jobs locally** in our Washington communities

Local governments across the state are already taking action to phase out the use of gas and support local communities in transitioning off fossil fuels. We've compiled a series of policy options designed for cities, counties, and school districts to take action on climate and protect their residents.

Cities in Washington are already leading clean building action

Bellingham, Seattle and **Shoreline** have adopted policies that eliminate most uses of fossil fuels for space heating and hot water in newly constructed commercial buildings, as well as multifamily buildings that are four stories or taller.

Local government entities like **Olympia, Tacoma** and **Seattle Public Schools** have also made commitments to phase out fossil fuels in buildings.

Clark, King, Thurston, Snohomish, Whatcom and **Pierce counties** have adopted C-PACER programs to allow commercial property owners to access financing for clean energy projects



Clean Energy Resolutions for Existing Government Buildings

Local governments should lead by example and commit to transitioning existing government buildings off fossil fuels and moving to clean, safe, all-electric buildings. Community spaces such as libraries, schools, and community centers should be prioritized to build resilience during heat events and smoke.



Resources:

Sample Resolution: [Electrify Existing City-Owned Buildings](#)

Sample Resolution: [Electrify School Facilities](#)

Building Performance Standards for Existing Large Buildings

Building performance standards (BPS) are energy or emissions targets that existing buildings must meet over time to improve energy efficiency and reduce climate impacts. The City of Seattle is developing a carbon-based BPS in line with City climate goals for existing buildings over 20,000 square feet. Your city or county can join a national network committing to have a municipal BPS in place by Earth Day 2024.



Resources:

[Seattle Building Performance Standards](#)

NW Energy Coalition's Blueprint for Seattle: [Reducing Emissions from Seattle's Largest Buildings](#)

[National BPS Coalition](#)

Utility Electrification Programs

Public electric utilities can offer incentives to their customers to switch from fossil-fuel appliances to all-electric appliances if they develop a plan that demonstrates a business case for electrification - showing that an electrification program will benefit all customers and the utility. Local governments and community members can advocate to their local electric utility governing body to develop such a plan and offer these incentives, expanding customer choice and keeping electric rates low for everyone.

Heat Pump/Electrify Campaigns

Building on the incentives that utilities offer for retrofits, some communities have launched campaigns designed to help residents make the switch to all electric appliances. In Lake Oswego, residents recently launched a campaign that provides information about incentives, bulk discounts on appliances, and preferred installers. Five east King County municipalities in Washington have joined together dedicating public subsidies to help low income families retrofit and incentives for mid and higher income families as well.



Resource:

[Electrify Lake Oswego](#)

Other Funding, Incentives, and Financing Options

Direct Funding to Frontline Communities for Clean Energy Projects

Portland's Clean Energy Fund levies a 1% business tax on certain large retailers and is expected to raise between \$44-\$61 million for clean energy investments that prioritize benefits to communities of color and low-income communities.

Green Building Incentives for New Buildings

Local jurisdictions can help incentivize builders and developers to choose clean energy. In Seattle, green building incentives for new buildings allow for builders to go through an expedited permitting process or build with greater height or floor area for complying with requirements around clean electric energy.

Financing for Clean Commercial Buildings

In Washington, counties can adopt commercial property assessed clean energy and resiliency (C-PACER) programs that allow commercial property owners to access financing for qualifying clean energy, energy efficiency, water conservation, and resiliency improvements for their buildings. As of April 2022, Clark, King, Thurston, Snohomish, Whatcom and Pierce counties have adopted C-PACER programs.



Resources:

Shift Zero's [Zero Carbon Policy Toolkit](#)

[Seattle Green Building Permit Incentives](#)

[Portland Clean Energy Fund](#)

Shift Zero's [Introduction to C-PACER](#)