



Powered by the Solid Waste Division

Program: King County Green Building Team Program  
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**Subject: Technical Memo #2: Key Changes in the 2025 Update to K.C.C. 18.17 and the 2025 King County Strategic Climate Action Plan and Implications for Capital Projects**

**To: Green Building Team**

**Cc: Mo McBroom**

**Date Issued:** May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Audience: Capital project managers, design teams, sustainability staff, and division leadership

### 1. Purpose of this memo

This memo explains what changed in the 2025 update to K.C.C. 18.17 (aka Green Building Ordinance), why those changes matter, and how they affect capital projects, leases, and reporting requirements.

[Technical Memo #1](#) explains what the requirements are starting in March 2022.

Technical Memo #2 explains what's different now starting January 1, 2026.

### 2. High-Level Summary: What Changed in 2026

The 2025 update to K.C.C. 18.17 is the most significant revision since 2022. The changes fall into three major categories:

Category	What Changed in 2025
Certification pathways	Higher minimum certifications; new Zero Energy/Zero Carbon requirements starting 2026
Infrastructure projects	Envision Platinum now required for more project types
Construction and Demolition (C&D) waste diversion	Minimum diversion standardized at 85% and shall achieve zero waste of resources with economic value beginning in 2030

### 3. Detailed Breakdown of 2025 Changes

#### 3.1 LEED & Living Building Challenge Requirements Increased

Before 2025

- Zero Energy/Zero Carbon was encouraged but not required.

After 2025

- New construction (pre-2026 start):
  - Must achieve LEED Platinum or Living Building Challenge (LBC), or both.
- New construction (starting 2026):
  - Must achieve LEED Platinum + Zero Energy or Zero Carbon, or  
LBC CORE + Zero Energy, Energy Petal, or Zero Carbon.

What stays the same:

- Major remodels:
  - Must achieve LEED Gold or LBC, or both

**Why this matters:**

Projects must plan for higher performance, more rigorous energy modeling, and early integrative design to meet these thresholds.

### 3.2 Infrastructure Projects Must Now Achieve Envision Platinum

What's new

Envision Platinum is now required for:

- Wastewater Treatment Division conveyance, CSO, and pump station projects above a cost threshold (\$20M<sup>1</sup>)
- Metro Transit RapidRide and bus base electrification charging infrastructure
- Solid Waste Division heavy-duty electrical infrastructure with ≥10 DC fast chargers

The parks and recreation division shall maintain its overall, programmatic Salmon Safe certification.

**Why this matters:**

Provides clearer compliance pathways for large-scale infrastructure and site-related projects. Infrastructure teams must integrate resilience, community benefit, and climate impact metrics earlier in design.

### 3.3 Affordable Housing Requirements Clarified

What's new

- Housing projects funded by DCHS or part of transit-oriented development must meet:

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<sup>1</sup> 2025 King County Strategic Climate Action Plan, GHG 64. Expand third-party certification to large County infrastructure projects

- Evergreen Sustainable Development Standard, or
- Highest rating in an alternative system, or both.
- Market-rate TOD on county-owned land must meet:
  - LEED Platinum or LBC CORE.

**Why this matters:**

Affordable housing teams now have clearer compliance pathways and more flexibility.

3.4 Construction & Demolition (C&D) Diversion Simplified

Before 2025

- Diversion requirements were phased (80% → 85%).

After 2025

- All projects must achieve 85% diversion.
- Zero waste of economically valuable materials required by 2030.

**Why this matters:**

Project teams must plan for higher recycling, material salvage, and contractor accountability.

3.5 Equity & Social Justice Credits Requirements remain the same

- ESJ credits from the Sustainable Infrastructure Scorecard are mandatory, even if the project uses LEED, LBC, Envision, or another system.

**Why this matters:**

Projects must incorporate community engagement, workforce equity, and anti-displacement strategies into design and construction. Project managers must integrate reporting into project schedules and consultant scopes.

3.8 Policy and Process Clarified

What's new

Updated Green Building Ordinance Exemption and Waiver Policy. Updated Construction and Demolition Reporting Exemption Policy. Energy Only Project Policy. Emergency Project Policy.

All Exemptions and Waivers must be requested by 30% design. All Waivers will be listed in the quarterly budget management report to Council.

Green Building Ordinance Exemption means the project falls within the defined Exemption category described in Green Building Ordinance Exemption Policy and does not need to report and comply with any Green Building Ordinance Requirements.

Green Building Ordinance Waiver means, in the agency's judgement, compliance is not possible, the costs of compliance are unreasonable or the costs of compliance do not generate sufficient fiscal, operational, environmental and social benefits to justify the costs.

**Why this matters:**

Teams must evaluate feasibility early and document justification thoroughly.

**4. What Project Teams Should Do Now**

- ✓ Review your project's required certification pathway.
- ✓ Update scopes of work for architects, engineers, and sustainability consultants.
- ✓ Include Zero Energy/Zero Carbon modeling, ESJ credits, and Envision requirements.
- ✓ Revisit C&D diversion strategies
  - Ensure contractors can meet the 85% C&D diversion rate minimum.
- ✓ Integrate ESJ credits into early design
  - These are no longer optional beginning March 2022.
- ✓ Confirm whether your project qualifies for a waiver/an exemption.
  - If so, begin documentation immediately.