Enterprise

2026
Enterprise Green Communities

AMBASSADOR BRIEF

Imagine a world where housing is not only abundant and affordable, but also healthy, durable, comfortable, efficient, resilient, thoughtfully designed, and environmentally responsive.

As a community of housing providers and advocates, we have an opportunity to make this vision our reality – by addressing today's affordability challenges and creating good homes for the long term.

Affordable housing that's healthy, energy-efficient, and resilient is about more than housing. It's an opportunity to provide homes where people can live with dignity, protect the stability of housing providers, and make smarter investments in communities.

In the past 20 years, Enterprise Green Communities has launched and scaled a national green affordable housing movement. By solving for education, capacity, cost, and policy barriers, we have taken green affordable housing from best practice to standard practice.

- Over 231,000 homes have been certified to date.
- Thirty states – along with New York, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico – require or incentivize developers seeking funding to certify to Enterprise Green Communities, more than any other green program.
- Each year, new Green Communities certified homes save owners and residents over $33 million in energy costs.
- New certified homes have collectively saved 33 billion gallons of water – enough to fill over 50,000 Olympic-sized pools, saving owners over $110 million.

The latest iteration of Enterprise Green Communities – the 2026 edition – translates the collective expertise of leading housing and green building practitioners into a clear, cost-effective framework for all affordable housing development types.

Certification to the 2026 Criteria is available for any housing development in the United States that includes affordable dwelling units: new construction, substantial rehab, and moderate rehab in multifamily and single-family homes. We provide special considerations for developments located in rural, Tribal and small-town locations. Where relevant, we identify exemptions based on project location or development type within each criterion.

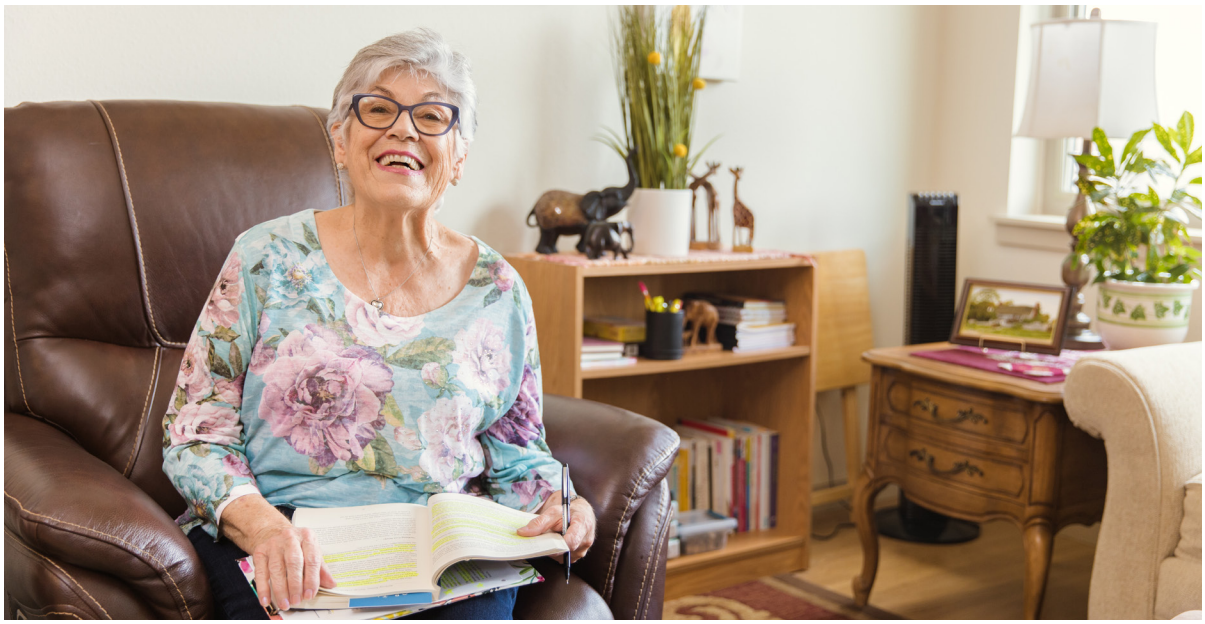
For developers who are new to sustainability, the criteria provide a clear roadmap for achieving holistic project performance. Developers who aspire to the highest possible performance, optional criteria provide a pathway to explore leading edge ideas. For policymakers, the criteria offer a tool to ensure affordable housing investments yield positive impact for residents and communities.

The program now offers three levels of certification: Green Communities Certification, Green Communities Certification Plus, and Green Communities Certification Plus Zero Emissions. Projects that earn the “Plus” level of certification are highly efficient and all electric. Projects that achieve “Plus Zero Emissions” have advanced one step further, and all site energy is supplied by clean energy sources.

For a full description of the Green Communities certification process, including required documentation for the pre-build and post-build submissions, visit **www.greencommunitiesonline.org.**

KEY THEMES: HEALTH, ENERGY, RESILIENCE

Our stakeholders identified three themes — health, energy, and resilience — to serve as focal points in the most recent update to Enterprise Green Communities, the 2026 Criteria. Icons throughout the criteria highlight how each measure in the standard relates to one or more of these themes.



HEALTH

In the United States, it's common practice to detect and treat disease in medical settings. But the origins of illness can be identified long before someone enters a doctor's office. An estimated 70% of differences in health status correlate to people's social and physical environment, including the quality, affordability, stability. and location of a person's home.

The 2026 Criteria enhances the focus on healthy living environments. A new criterion, 6.1 Product Material Screening, allows development teams to evaluate high-level health and emissions effects of the materials used to construct their project. Screening to determine whether there are high, medium, or low impacts can influence product selection before specs are locked in. This screening aligns with 6.4 Advanced Material Selection, which has been re-imagined for greater clarity. We've also added new criteria, such as 3.7 Traffic Safety and Mobility, and significantly reworked 7.12a/b Sensory and Rest-Friendly. These additions directly address the top health concerns raised by resident groups.

Health-promoting strategies are located in each of the eight categories of Green Communities. The most significant health-related update to the 2026 Criteria is a reframing within the Healthy Living Environments category. Each criteria in this category appears in one of three sections: A Safe Place to Call Home, A Welcoming Community, and Well-Being and Empowerment. This reorganization centers the importance of health in the built environment and guides developers and their teams in prioritizing an approach that meets their residents' needs and aspirations.

Health-Related Criteria

Integrative Design

- 1.1 Project Priorities Survey
- 1.6 Design for Health and Well-Being: Health Action Plan

Location + Neighborhood Fabric

- 2.7 Access to Fresh, Local Foods

Site Design

- 3.7 Traffic Safety and Mobility
- 3.8 Heat-Island Management

Water

- 4.3 Water Quality
- 4.4 Monitoring Water Consumption and Leaks
- 4.5 Efficient Plumbing Layout and Design
- 4.7 Access to Potable Water During Emergencies

Energy

- 5.4a All-Electric & Electric-Ready Design: New Construction
- 5.4b All-Electric & Electric-Ready Design: Rehabilitation
- 5.9 Passive Survivability

Materials

- 6.1 Product Category Screening
- 6.3 Reduction of Lead Hazards in Pre-1978 Buildings
- 6.4 Advanced Material Selection

Healthy Living Environment

A Safe Place to Call Home

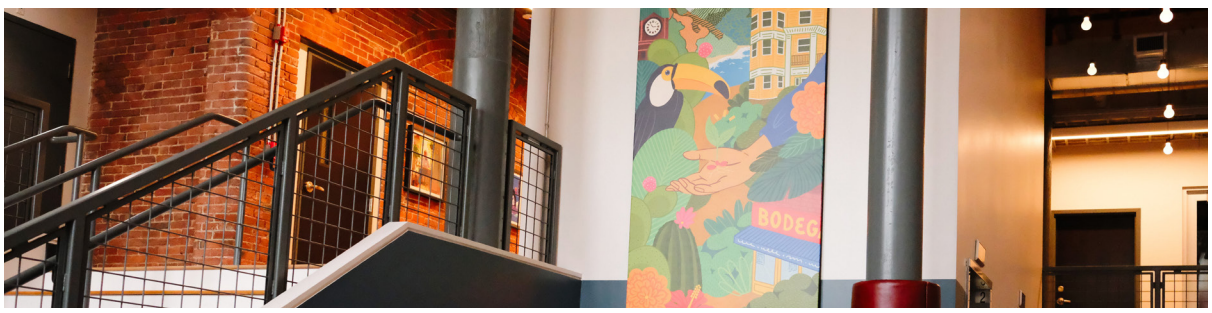
- 7.1 Clean Air: Radon Testing and Mitigation
- 7.2 Clean Air: Combustion Equipment
- 7.3 Clean Air: Garage Isolation and Vehicle Pollution Management
- 7.4 Clean Air: Smoke-Free Policy
- 7.5 Clean Air: Ventilation
- 7.6 Clean Air: Indoor Air Filtration
- 7.7 Clean Air: Enhanced Indoor Air Quality
- 7.8 Managing Moisture: Dehumidification
- 7.9a Managing Moisture in the Building Enclosure: New Construction
- 7.9b Managing Moisture in the Building Enclosure: Rehabilitation
- 7.10 Managing Moisture: Bath, Kitchen, and Laundry Assemblies
- 7.11 Reducing Allergens and Disease Vectors: Integrated Pest Management
- 7.12a Sensory and Rest Friendly: Noise Reduction, New Construction
- 7.12b Sensory and Rest Friendly: Noise Reduction, Rehabilitation
- 7.13 Personal and Social Safety

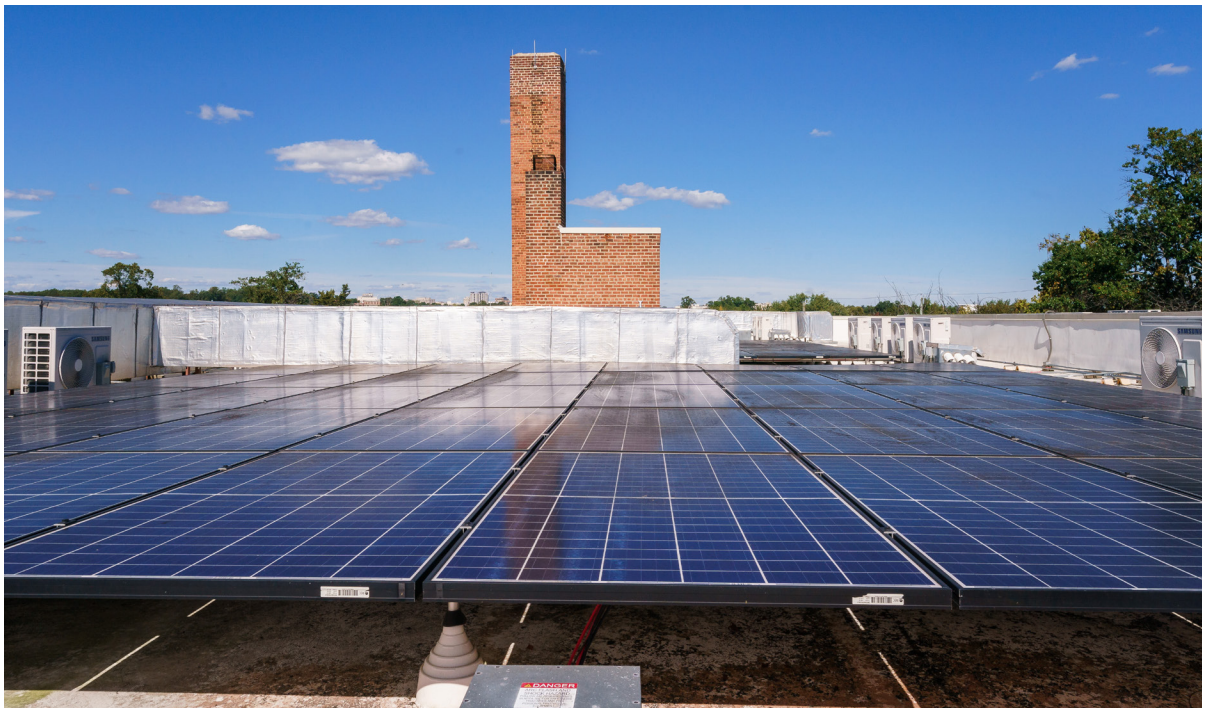
A Welcoming Community

- 7.14 Social Connection and Accessibility: Design for All Ages and Abilities
- 7.15 Access to Nature and Biophilic Design
- 7.16 Healing-Centered and Culturally Responsive Design

Well-Being and Empowerment

- 7.17 Active Design: Promoting Physical Activity
- 7.18 Place-Based Wealth Building





ENERGY

In the United States, residential and commercial buildings account for 40% of total energy consumption and 35% of the nation's greenhouse gas emissions. When we reduce the amount of energy a building uses, we reduce the cost of operating the building, which benefits building owners and residents alike.

The 2026 Criteria feature three essential energy-related strategies: design and installation strategies to reduce the amount of energy a building needs to operate through sound construction practices; reducing emissions through the energy sources that fuel a property; and reducing emissions embodied in the materials used for construction.

A new optional criterion, 5.1 Energy Planning, encourages project teams to develop and implement a plan to reach zero emissions within 20 years of certifying to the 2026 Criteria. Other criteria in this category provide mandatory standards and optional stretch goals for energy efficiency, using clean energy sources, and managing how and when to use backup power.

Our new – and highest – tiers of Green Communities Certification are available to projects that are designed to be highly efficient, all-electric, and only use clean energy sources.

Energy-Themed Criteria

Integrative Design

- Project Priorities Survey

Location + Neighborhood Fabric

- 2.10 Adaptive Reuse of Buildings

Water

- 4.5 Efficient Plumbing Layout and Design

Energy

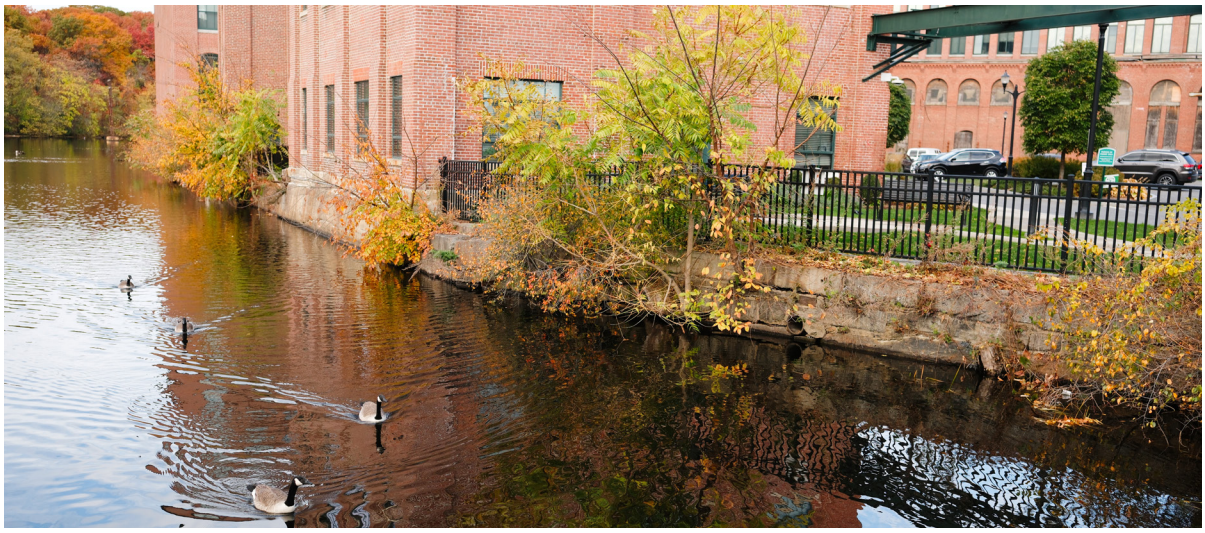
- 5.1 Energy Planning
- 5.2a Building Performance: New Construction
- 5.2b Building Performance: Rehabilitation
- 5.3 Advanced Building Performance
- 5.4a All-Electric & Electric-Ready Design: New Construction
- 5.4b All-Electric & Electric-Ready Design: Rehabilitation
- 5.5 Peak Demand Control
- 5.6 Backup Power
- 5.7 Renewable Energy
- 5.8 Electric Vehicle Charging
- 5.9 Passive Survivability

Materials

- 6.1 Product Category Screening
- 6.2 Reduction of Materials and Waste
- 6.4 Advanced Material Selection

Operations, Maintenance + Resident Engagement

- 8.5 Energy and Water Data Collection and Monitoring



RESILIENCE

Enterprise believes resilience isn't just about being able to bounce back or rebuild after a disaster – it's about drawing from the inherent strength in communities and helping everyone prepare for and move forward in the face of more frequent and severe weather and natural disasters. Buildings that incorporate resilient features help ensure that communities are better prepared for heatwaves, storms, wildfires, and other extreme events

The 2026 Criteria includes four new resilience-themed criteria, one each for heat, high winds, fires, and flooding, and has enhanced long-standing resilience-focused criteria. While it is vital for developers to invest in forward-thinking design and anticipate likely hazards, lifting up resident expertise and relationships can be a valuable guiding principle. The Project Priorities Survey (Criterion 1.1) has been reworked based on user feedback to more directly link climate hazards with a property's mitigation approaches. Criterion 1.7 Strengthening Cultural Resilience honors cultural identities, resident voices, and community histories – bringing resident needs and benefits into sharp focus during property design and operations.

Resilience-Themed Criteria

Integrative Design

- 1.1 Project Priorities Survey
- 1.5 Adaptive Planning for Resilient Communities
- 1.7 Inclusive Community Engagement

Location + Neighborhood Fabric

- 2.1 Ecological Conservation and Safer Sites
- 2.5 Access to Open Space

Site Design

- 3.2 Site Design for Ecosystem Services
- 3.4 Surface Stormwater Management
- 3.5 Outdoor Water Use: Efficient Irrigation
- 3.6 Outdoor Water Use: Alternative Sources
- 3.8 Heat-Island Management
- 3.9 Resilient Site Design: Wind
- 3.10 Resilient Site Design: Floor
- 3.11 Resilient Site Design: Wildfire

Water

- 4.1 Water-Conserving Fixtures
- 4.2 Advanced Water Conservation
- 4.4 Monitoring Water Consumption and Leaks
- 4.6 Indoor Water Efficiency: Non-potable Water Reuse
- 4.7 Access to Potable Water During Emergencies

Energy

- 5.3 Advanced Building Performance
- 5.6 Backup Power
- 5.7 Renewable Energy
- 5.9 Passive Survivability

Healthy Living Environment

- 7.16 Healing-Centered and Culturally Responsive Design

Operations, Maintenance and Resident Engagement

- 8.2 Emergency Management Manual