

Policy Briefing Summary

City Council



Regarding:	Resolution in support of Charlottesville High Performance Building Standards
Staff Contact(s):	Kristel Riddervold, Director of the Office of Sustainability
Presenter:	Kristel Riddervold, Director of the Office of Sustainability
Date of Proposed Action:	March 16, 2026

Issue

Office of Sustainability is bringing forward a High Performance Buildings Resolution for the purpose of aligning with state requirements and establishing High Performance Building Standards for the design, construction, operation, maintenance, and renovation process for all municipal buildings. This action reflects strategies found in both the Comprehensive Plan as well as the Charlottesville Climate Action Plan and will replace the City's 2008 Green Buildings Resolution.

Background / Rule

In 2008, Charlottesville adopted its first Green Buildings Resolution, making a policy commitment to environmentally sustainable building practices. Since that time, all major City construction projects have achieved certification through the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building rating standard. To date, the City has built seven LEED certified facilities and two more (the Bypass Fire Station and Charlottesville Middle School) are in process.

More recently, the Virginia General Assembly passed the *High Performance Buildings Act of 2021*, requiring certain facilities constructed by Virginia localities to meet a state-mandated performance threshold. These requirements went into effect for smaller localities in 2023. Charlottesville has been in compliance with the state law through the existing green building policy as well as the design/construction of new facilities to achieve LEED certification.

Analysis

Charlottesville has long been committed to building high performing, energy efficient facilities. Adopting this updated policy to reflect current best-practices is in alignment with many of the City's guiding documents, including the Comprehensive Plan, the Climate Action Plan, the Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment, the Green Building Policy, and the Energy & Water Management Policy. It will also ensure that we continue to be in compliance with Virginia's *High-Performance Buildings Act*.

Staff from the Office of Sustainability, with consultant support, worked closely with an interdepartmental team to develop the *Charlottesville High Performance Building Standards v1.0* (HPBS) for municipal building projects. These standards establish current practices as requirements and are intended to standardize building methods across all departments and for all building projects. They also present strategies and technologies that may be appropriate for some projects (referred to as Opportunities) and point to developing technologies for staff to monitor or consider piloting (referred to as Stretch Goals). The HPBS sections include:

- Sustainable Design Procedures and Activities - outlines the procedures that apply broadly to the design and construction of high-performance buildings. This section also includes a matrix to assist project managers and designers in assessing requirements for specific projects.

- Building Planning - describes a wide range of issues that apply to the planning and scoping phases of a building project.
- Technical guidance sections - explore an array of topics organized into traditional building categories (building envelope, building materials, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems, commissioning, and site design).

High-performance buildings have many benefits, including increased occupant comfort and safety, reduced energy and water usage, reduced operating costs, minimized environmental impacts, and maximized building longevity. Continuing our commitment to build and operate efficient, environmentally responsible buildings will contribute to reaching our climate commitments as well as reduce utilities costs for the City. Modernizing our high-performance building best practices also ensures that we take future environmental conditions into account as we plan and build the next generation of public facilities.

Financial Impact

Development of the *High Performance Building Standards* was funded through the Climate Action Initiative Fund, previously appropriated as part of the FY2026 Capital Improvement Program. Since the HPBS are largely based on existing building methods including ones that have contributed to the City's track record of achieving LEED certification for new and major building projects, adopting the proposed Resolution should not have significant new financial impacts.

Recommendation

Staff recommend adopting the High Performance Buildings Resolution.

Recommended Motion (if Applicable)

Recommended to move to a second reading for approval.

Attachments

1. High Performance Buildings Resolution
2. Attachment 1 - HPBS link
3. HPB Resolution 03162026