



First Look: 2026 Criteria

ENTERPRISE GREEN COMMUNITIES

January 15, 2026



Today's Session

- 1 HOW THE 2026 CRITERIA WAS DEVELOPED
- 2 HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2026 CRITERIA
- 3 WHAT TO EXPECT FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE YEAR

Impacts



Affordable homes that are healthy, efficient and climate resilient

GREEN COMMUNITIES

Impacts

- Green Communities Criteria is the only national green building standard developed with and for affordable housers
- More than 231,000 homes certified nationwide
- More than \$30mm diverted each year from certified homes' energy bills
- 29 states + New York City, Chicago, DC, and Puerto Rico require or incentivize affordable housing to certify to Green Communities



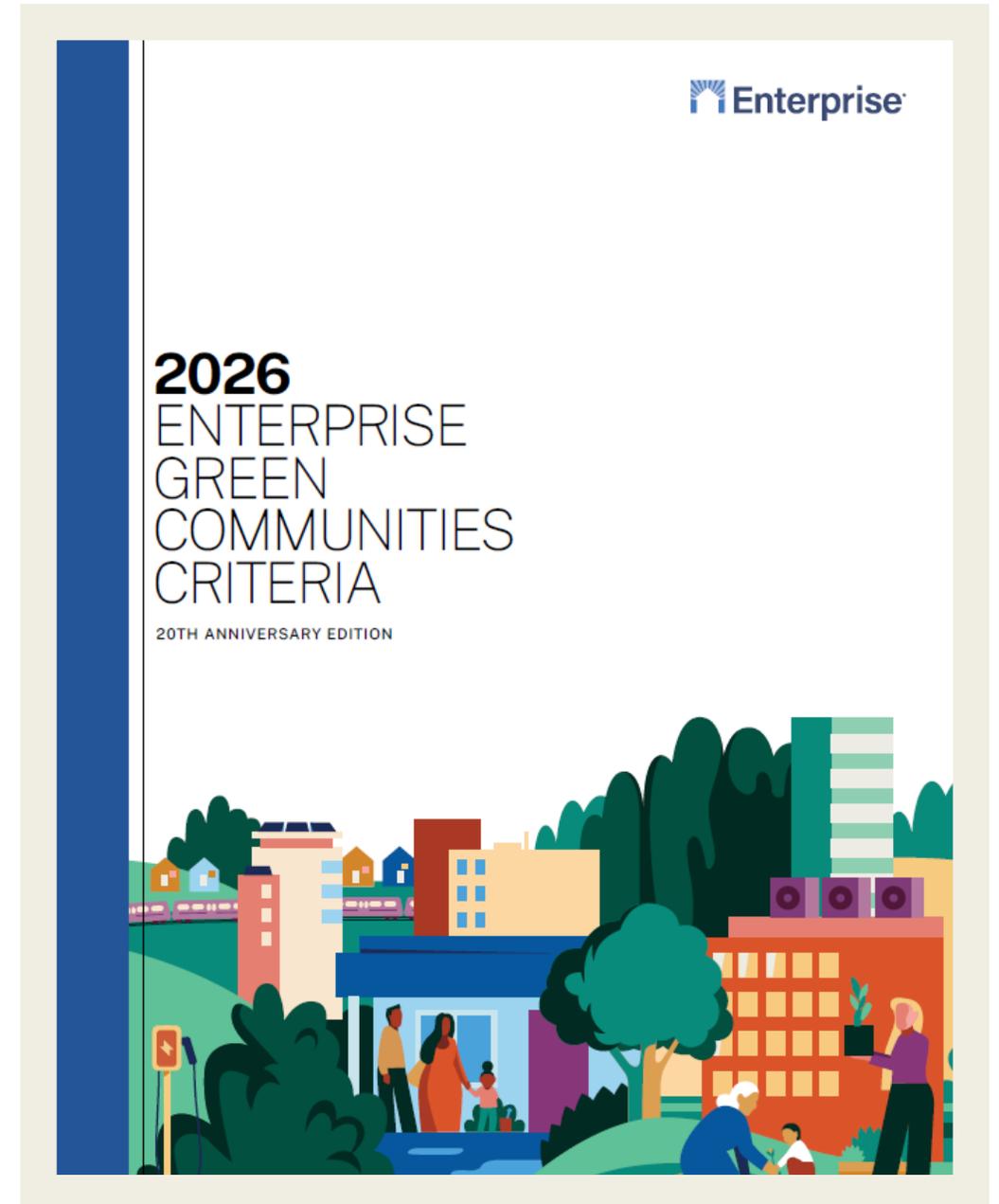
GREEN COMMUNITIES

2026 Criteria

Updates to the Green Communities Criteria respond to:

- technological advancements
- evaluation outcomes
- environmental, industry, and policy trends
- input from stakeholders

Download the 2026 Criteria today!

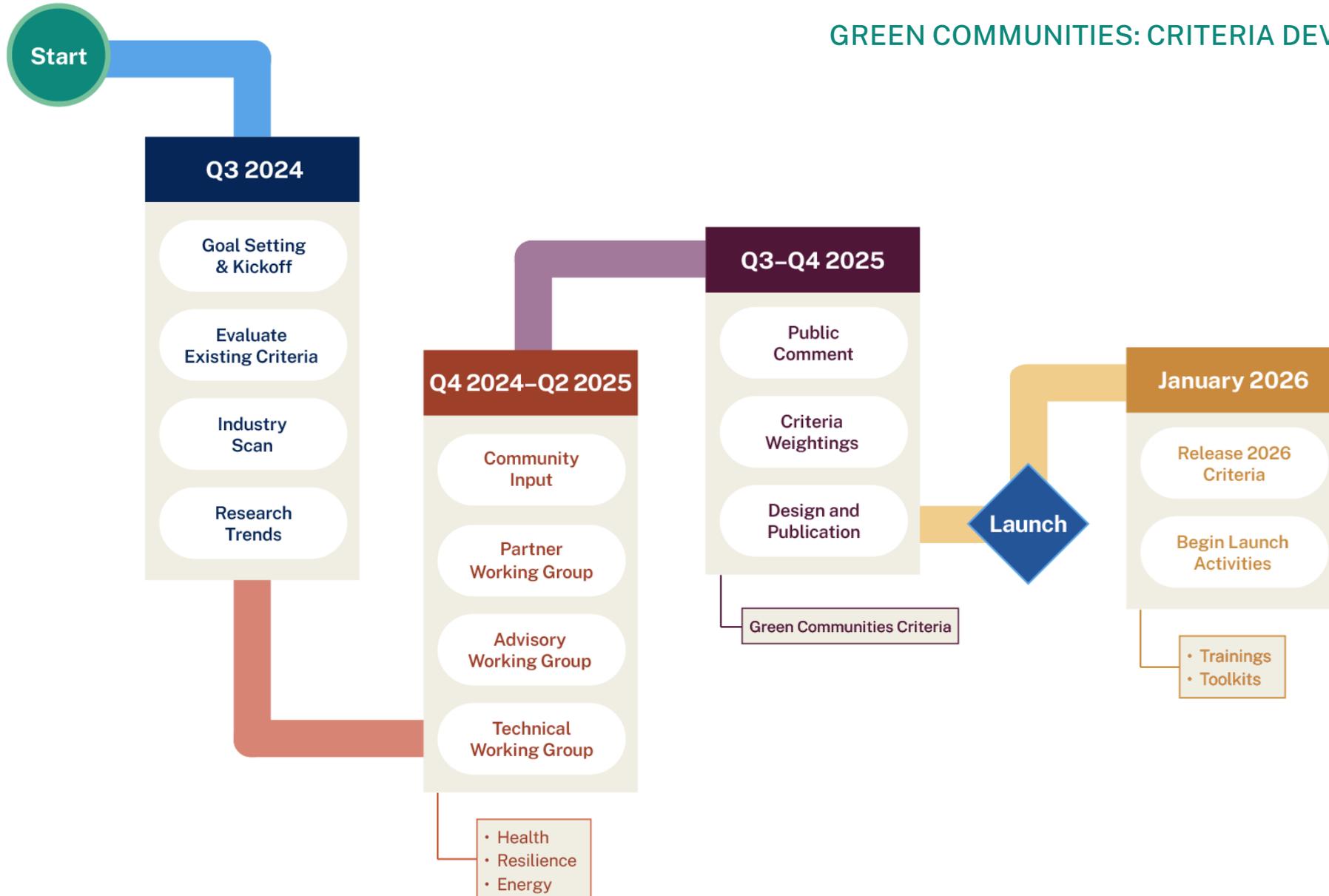


DEVELOPING THE 2026 CRITERIA

Core principles of the Green Communities Criteria

1. **Achievable** for all affordable housing development types — new construction, substantial and moderate rehab; single family, and low-to high-rise multifamily; urban, suburban, rural & tribal
2. **Cost-effective and proven** green development approaches
3. Designed to deliver **significant health, economic and environmental benefits**, with equity as a primary lens
4. **Technically sound and rigorous** performance standards that are best in class and comparable to other national and regional green residential programs
5. **Measurable and verifiable**, whether through paper or field review

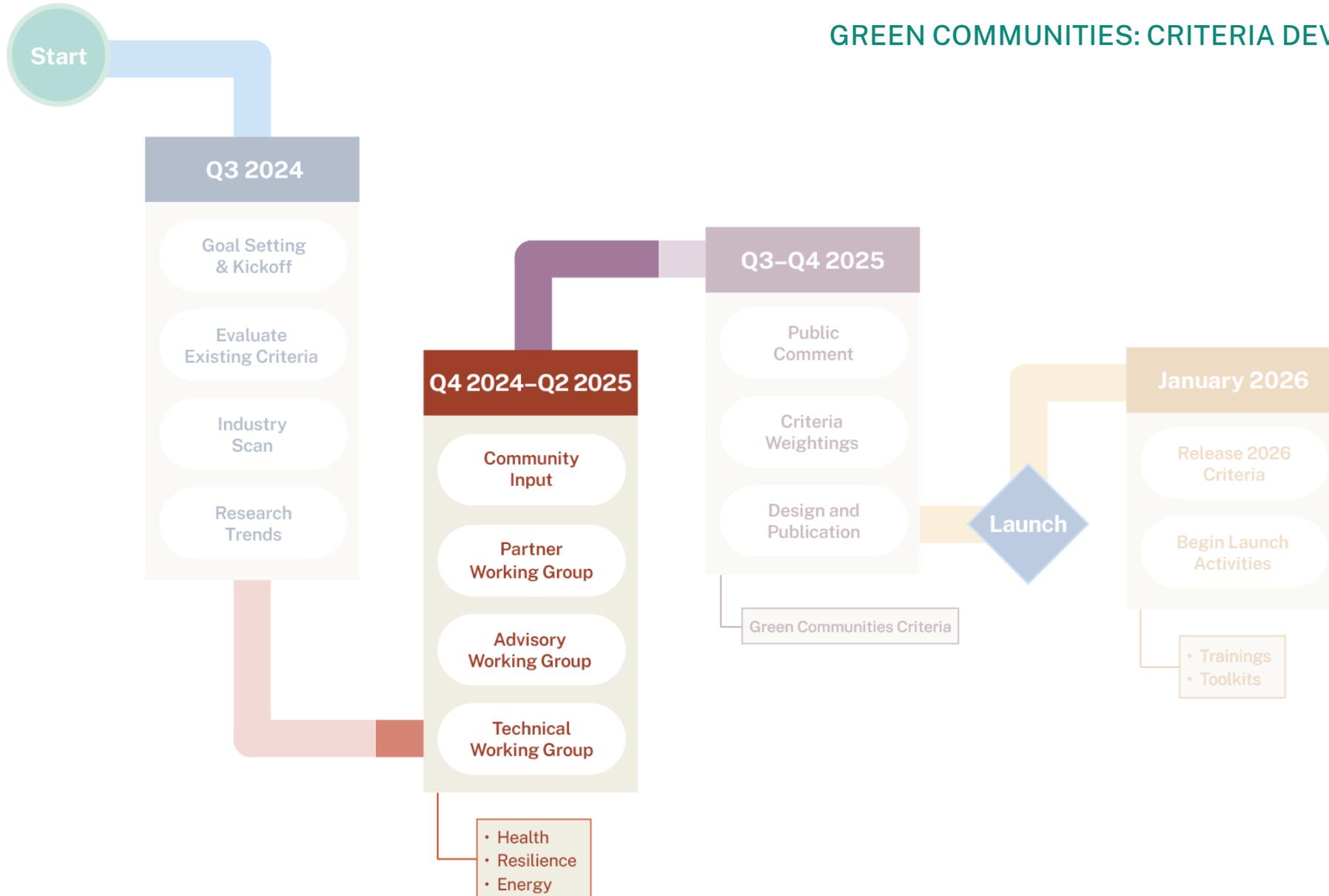
GREEN COMMUNITIES: CRITERIA DEVELOPMENT



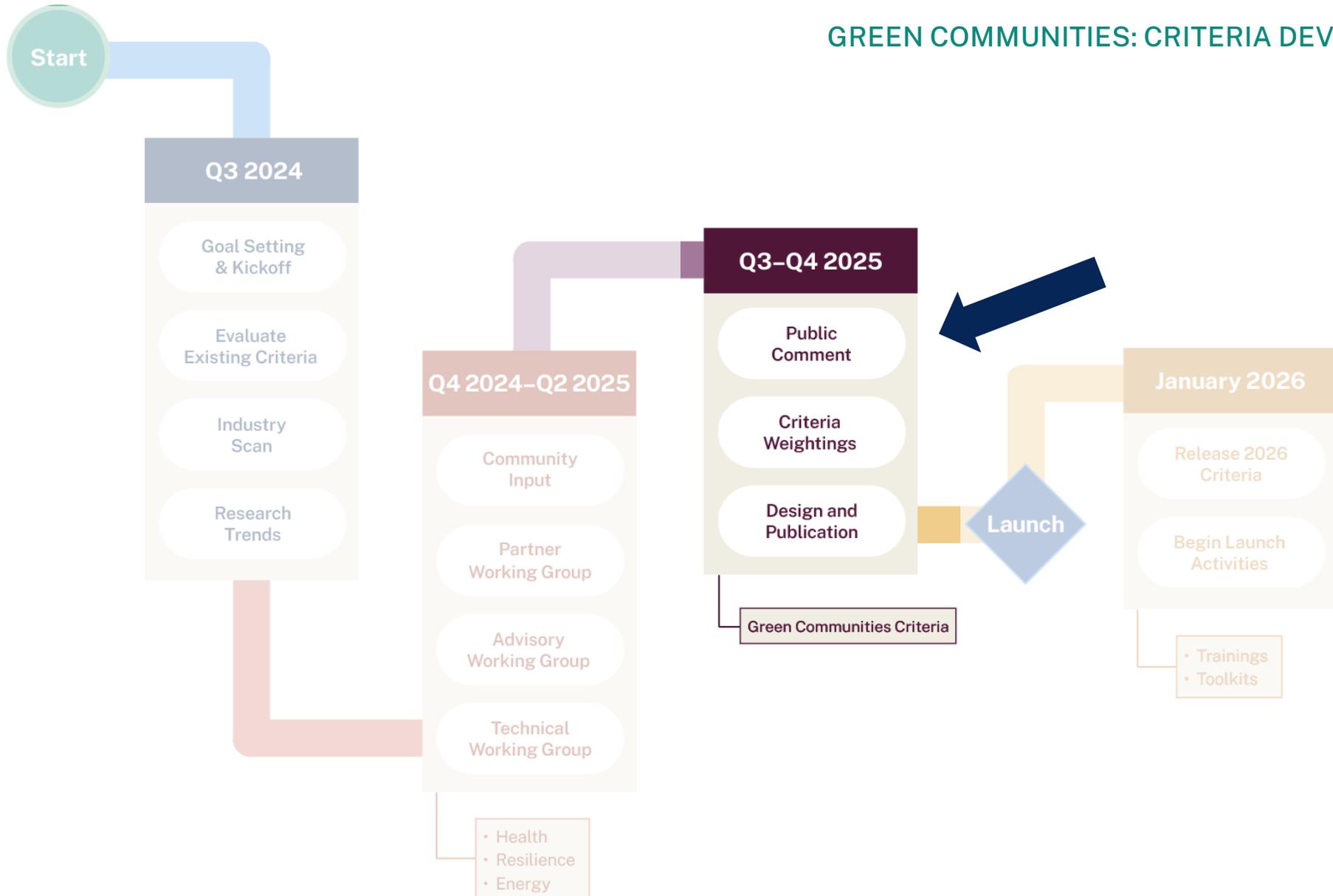
GREEN COMMUNITIES: CRITERIA DEVELOPMENT



GREEN COMMUNITIES: CRITERIA DEVELOPMENT



GREEN COMMUNITIES: CRITERIA DEVELOPMENT



Public Comment: draft and supporting materials



1. Crosswalk between 2020 Criteria and 2026 draft
2. Green Communities Criteria
3. Project Priorities Survey
4. Climate Risk-Assessment template
5. Zero Over Time planning template

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The screenshot displays the website layout for the 2026 Criteria Update. At the top, the Enterprise logo and title 'Green Communities 2026 Criteria Update' are visible. Below this is a grid of five draft materials, each represented by a green card with a large red number (1-5) and a description in a rounded rectangle below it:

- 1. Navigating Changes Between the 2020 and 2026 Criteria
- 2. 2026 Green Communities Criteria Draft
- 3. Project Priorities Survey Draft
- 4. Climate Risk Assessment Template Draft
- 5. Zero-Over-Time Planning Template Draft

To the right of the grid is an 'Introduction' section with the following text:

Introducing the first full draft of the 2026 Green Communities Criteria

Every five years, Green Communities, the one-and-only green building standard created with, and for, the affordable housing sector, gets a refresh. Over the last several months, we've worked diligently to develop this first draft of the 2026 version--our 20th anniversary edition of the program.

To get this draft ready, we convened experts across disciplines, hosting 15 hours of workshops and listening sessions with nearly 250 affordable housing thought leaders, policy experts, residents, developers, and building practitioners.

Priorities for the first 2026 draft

We started this update by highlighting three enduring and connected themes that remain foundational to Green Communities:

- The health and well-being of residents and communities
- The energy used and the substances emitted when we make materials, construct buildings, and operate homes
- The resilience of the homes and communities we build — preparing for the worst and ensuring they can recover from climate events

GREEN COMMUNITIES: CRITERIA DEVELOPMENT



GREEN COMMUNITIES: CRITERIA DEVELOPMENT



2026 CRITERIA HIGHLIGHTS

Key updates to the 2026 Criteria

- 2026 Criteria themes and eight categories
- General approach to each category
- What aspects of the 2026 Criteria project teams should address differently
- What aspects of the 2026 Criteria are generally the same as they are in the current version



Three themes for the 20th anniversary update

ENERGY	RESILIENCE	HEALTH
Eyeing efficiency, emissions, storage, peak demand, embodied carbon	Preparing for common hazards, critical energy loads, post-event livability	Analyzing approaches to materials, acoustics, indoor air quality, and universal design

Navigating themes in the 2026 Criteria

-  **Energy:** Reducing energy use, cost, and emissions
-  **Health:** Enhancing the health and well-being of residents and communities
-  **Resilience:** Preparing now for livability in light of future hazards and risks

Holistic design

1. Integrative Design
2. Location + Neighborhood Fabric
3. Site Design
4. Water
5. Energy
6. Materials
7. Healthy Living Environment
8. Operations, Maintenance and Resident Engagement



1 Integrative Design

A successful integrative design process engages people, identifies collective priorities, and ensures that economic, health, resilience, and environmental objectives are met.



Integrative Design:

2026 Approach: Clarified requirements and streamline administrative lift while ensuring impact

- What's new?
 - Clarified requirements for mandatory pre-design and project management criteria
 - Reorganized Project Priorities Survey with specific guidance for compliance, and operationalized topics of energy use, resilience and health for impact
- What will be the same?
 - Ethos of inclusive and holistic predesign
 - General mandatory requirements, with opportunities to go deeper on certain topics

2

Location + Neighborhood Fabric

Locating the project in a neighborhood with existing infrastructure, transportation, and services enhances livability, leads to more responsible and resource-efficient development of land, saves energy, and increases the vitality of the community.



Location + Neighborhood Fabric

2026 Approach: More pathways for projects of all types to comply with criteria; right sized requirements for the sector across the board based on stakeholder feedback

- What's new?
 - No longer avoiding farmland as site prerequisite
 - More flexibility/opportunities for access to transit / mobility / walkability
 - Common space broadband access requirements based on availability
- What will be the same?
 - Adhere to site protocols and restrictions in response to the 100-year floodplain, aquatic ecosystems and habitats for safety and ecology; familiar, industry recognized standards
 - Approaches to other mandatory site provisions, i.e. connections to infrastructure and services



Site Design

A healthy, thriving site protects people and infrastructure from pollutants, reduces negative project impacts, and boosts community well-being and resilience by leveraging ecosystem services for social, economic, and environmental benefits.



Site Design

2026 Approach: More comprehensive attention to site design opportunities; emphasis on resilience strategies

- What's new?

- Specificity for stormwater management compliance based on size of site; more rigorous for new construction
- Strategies for traffic safety
- Mandatory heat island mitigation path (new construction, sub rehab)
- Exterior lighting incorporated (category 5 previously)
- Tailored site design opportunities in responses to climate risks (wind, flood, fire)

- What looks the same?

- Site considerations during construction

4 Water

Water quality and conservation are key to healthy, efficient housing. Testing and remediation protect health. Reducing potable water use, managing leaks, and performing regular maintenance save money, conserve water, and reduce the risk of property damage.



Water

2026 Approach: More optional pathways and clarification about certain mandatory provisions for water use and quality

- What's new?

- Water Reuse – new tools and simple approach
- Water Quality – mandatory lead and Legionella pathways clarified with new template(s)
- Additional pathway for advanced water conservation via whole home certification with WaterSense
- Efficient plumbing pathway based on pipe sizing

- What looks the same?

- Same baseline water conservation requirements
- General emphasis on the tried and true strategies

Energy

Manage how energy is used in a building to ensure the property will be efficient, affordable, healthy, and resilient. Start by investing in a foundation of energy efficiency and then consider how to optimize economics, emissions, and resilience.



Energy

2026 Approach: Reinforce essential strategies for energy optimization rooted in energy efficiency practices and energy sources that fuel a property

- What's new?

- Distinct pathways for construction types for electrification; new construction requirement for electric cooking
- A focused EV charging strategy for New Construction and Substantial Rehab
- Folded in lighting, HVAC guidance into the baseline performance standard for rehab projects
- Optional pathways to support teams in meeting energy goals i.e. renewables (geothermal and enhanced solar), peak demand control, passive survivability, energy planning (zero-emissions-over-time!)

- What looks the same?

- Stringency for rehab performance standard
- Structure for all projects to go above and beyond baseline performance standard
- Certification Plus...

Energy

PATHWAYS FOR ACHIEVING HIGHER TIERS OF CERTIFICATION



6

Materials

Good design does more with less. By using only what we need and selecting durable, low-impact, and healthy materials across their life cycles, we can reduce costs, protect precious resources, and support health and well-being.



Materials

2026 Approach: Ensure the materials in homes are selected for health and comfort and responsible use of resources; sharpened focus on embodied carbon

- What's new?

- Additional pathways for the reduction of materials and material waste
- Consideration for overall material reduction threaded throughout
- Attention to the end-of use stage of a material's life cycle as well as a similar avenue for construction waste reduction
- Screening process for going above and beyond in material selection for both better health and environmental impacts

- What looks the same?

- Standards for material selection i.e VOC content and emissions
- Adherence to remediating lead

Healthy Living Environment

A safe home is more than shelter: It is the foundation of health and community. Safe, welcoming, and inclusive homes can nurture social support, connect us to vital resources, and equip communities to withstand life's stresses.



Healthy Living Environment

2026 Approach: A familiar focus on what can be done within the four walls of a property to ensure comfort, health and safety for people; expands the scope of healthy living to consider how a property engages with the community

- **What's new?**
 - Recast category into three topics:
 - **A Safe Place to Call Home**
 - **A Welcoming Community**
 - **Wellbeing and Empowerment Key elements**
 - Air filtration requirement for all properties with new HVAC
 - New standard for Radon testing requirements: AARST 2023
 - Detailed requirements for ventilation system performance and maintenance
 - Managing moisture broken out by new construction and rehab
 - Optional acoustic design pathway

Healthy Living Environment

- What looks the same?
 - Combustion equipment
 - Garage Isolation [and Vehicle Pollution Management]
 - Smoke-free - policy

8 Operations, Maintenance, and Resident Engagement

The integrative process doesn't end with design. Effective communication, training, and documentation set the project up for success and help residents and operators realize long-term benefits from affordability, health, efficiency, and resilience.



Operations, Maintenance, and Resident Engagement

- What's new?

- Explicit guidance for Emergency Management Manual
- Inclusion of key resources i.e. Building Readiness Report
- Manual design based on developers existing processes

- What looks the same?

- Three critical topics to organize materials for
- Utility data collection and monitoring retains flexibility introduced in 2020

Holistic design



CERTIFICATION AND PROGRAM DESIGN

Green Communities Certification

- ✓ Mandatory criteria
- ✓ Optional points
- ✓ Program timelines and protocols



Verification that the project meets the Green Communities standard for affordable housing.



What types of homes can achieve certification?

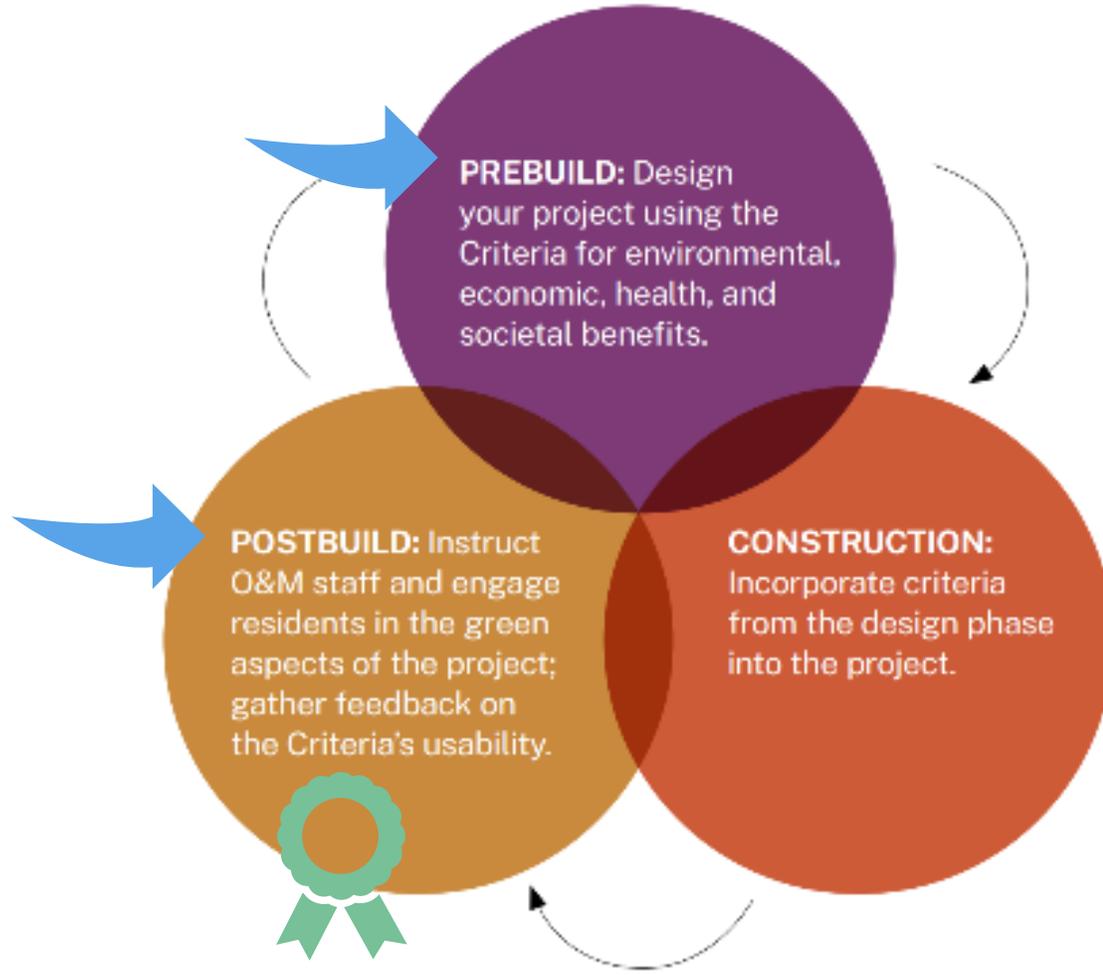


MULTI-FAMILY &
SINGLE-FAMILY

URBAN & RURAL
COMMUNITIES

NEW CONSTRUCTION,
MODERATE/SUBSTANTIAL
REHAB PROJECTS

Certification Process



Two submittals to Enterprise



30-day review windows | Waiver process available for mandatory criterion

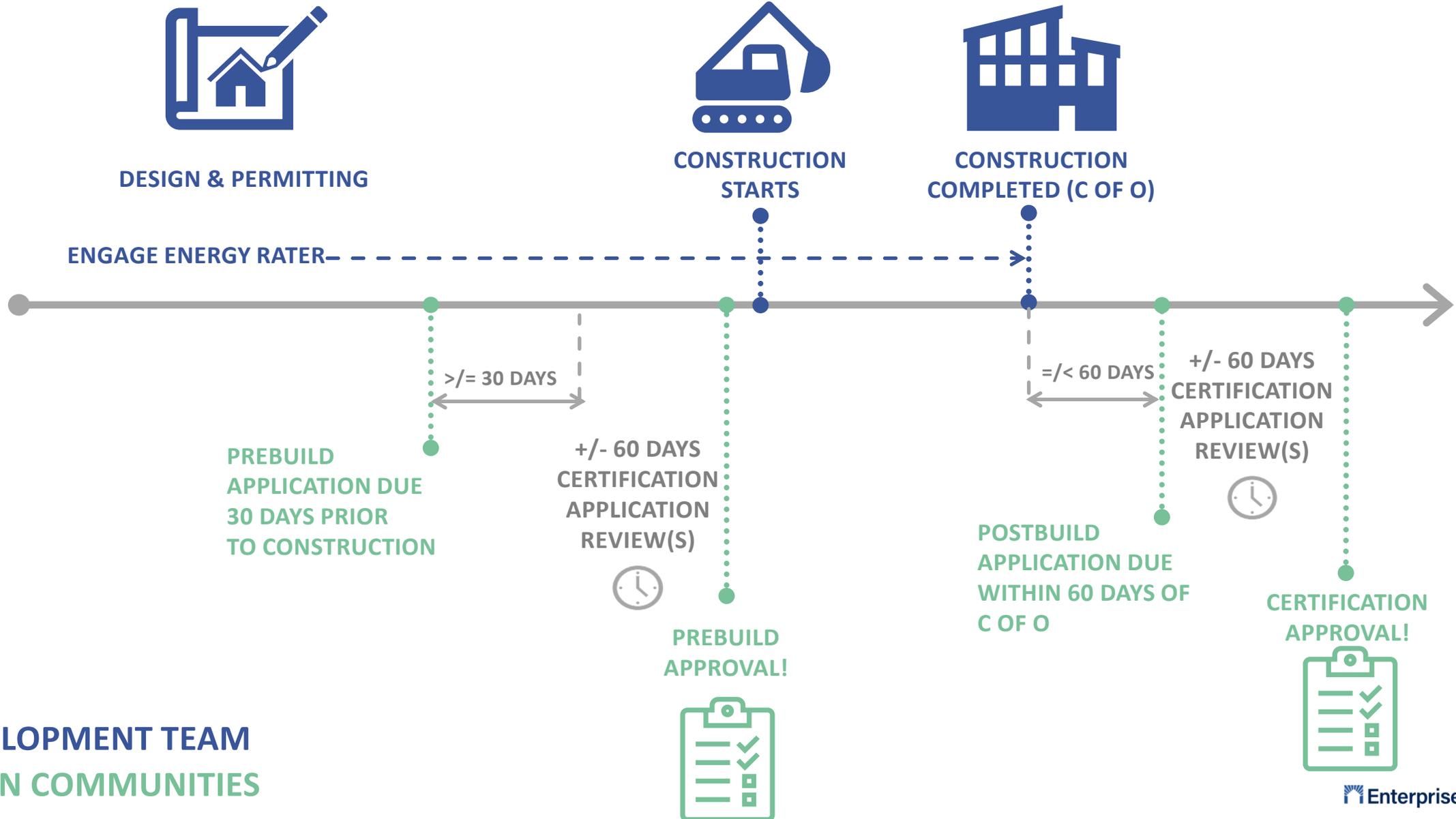
Communications with cert team via email/calls during process, monthly open office hours



Certification fees at Prebuild and Postbuild submissions

If > 2 submissions in a phase, re-review fee for each subsequent submission

Certification Workflow



KEY:

DEVELOPMENT TEAM
GREEN COMMUNITIES

Certifications



- Green Communities
- Green Communities Plus
- Green Communities Plus Zero Emissions



Green Communities certification provides an automatic dual certification with WELL for Residential – no additional fees or paperwork

2026 Enterprise Green Communities Criteria - Summary

1. Integrative Design
2. Location + Neighborhood Fabric
3. Site Design
4. Water
5. Energy
6. Materials
7. Healthy Living Environment
8. Operations, Maintenance, + Residential Engagement



- **Eligibility:** All buildings with affordable housing units ($\leq 60\%$ AMI for rentals, $\leq 80\%$ AMI for-sale)
- **Project types:** New Construction, Substantial Rehab, Moderate Rehab
- **Typology:** Multifamily and Single-family | certification for individual and/or groups of buildings
- **Achieving certification:** meet all Mandatory criteria + earn Optional points (at least 40 for NC; 35 for Rehabs)
- **Certification levels:** Green Communities | Green Communities Plus | Green Communities Plus Zero Emissions
- **Automatic dual certification:** with WELL for Residential

COMING SOON: WHAT TO EXPECT

Launch Resources

- **National Sessions**

- **January 15** Preview Event: 2026 Enterprise Green Communities Criteria *pdf available*
- **February 19** Live Demo: Introducing the 2026 Criteria *new website launch*
- **March 19** Deep Dive: Exploring the 2026 Criteria
- **April 13** National Building Museum, Washington, D.C.
- **May 14** Certifying to the 2026 Criteria
- **Monthly** office hours (Zoom) – Scroll to ‘What’s New’ on <https://www.greencommunitiesonline.org/>

- **Links**

- **Webinars:** <https://cvent.me/VaBMM0>
- **Stay Updated:** <https://www.enterprisecommunity.org/impact-areas/resilience/green-communities#sign-up>
- **2026 Criteria pdf:** <https://www.enterprisecommunity.org/learning-center/resources/2026-enterprise-green-communities-criteria-20th-anniversary-edition>

Launch Resources

- Updated templates and toolkits
- Program comparisons
- Specifications
- Certification portal
 - Teams may utilize either the 2020 or 2026 Criteria for projects that are beginning their certification journey this April-September
 - Any first-time certification Prebuild application submitted October 1st or later will use the 2026 Criteria

Certification mailbox: certification@enterprisecommunity.org

Website: www.greencommunitiesonline.org

Thank You



**We are here
for impact.
We are here
for change.
Join us.**

 Enterprise

