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**Rhode Island Green Buildings Advisory Committee  
Rhode Island Public Green Buildings  
Draft 2021 Annual Report**

This draft is for discussion purposes at the March 2022 meeting of the Green Buildings Advisory Committee. The final version will be copy-edited and graphically formatted.

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**Introductory Letter  
(Forthcoming)**

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## **Section 1 – Overview**

Executive Summary of GBA Impacts and Infographic  
(Forthcoming)

### **Rhode Island Green Buildings Act**

On November 9, 2009, the Green Buildings Act (RIGL §37-24) was signed into law. The Act requires that all new construction projects over 5,000 gross square feet, and all renovation projects over 10,000 gross square feet, constructed by a public agency be designed and constructed to LEED Certified or an equivalent high-performance green building standard.

In November 2017, the Act was amended to include a pilot phase for using LEED for Neighborhood Development and SITES— two certification systems that apply sustainability and resilience measures to project landscapes. This pilot phase was expected to last through December 31, 2020, or for up to four (4) pilot projects, whichever came first. Once the pilot phase was complete, any projects that utilized LEED for Neighborhood Development and/or SITES would be evaluated to help determine if the Act should permanently require the use of these site-focused standards.

### **About the Green Buildings Advisory Committee**

The Green Buildings Act also created the Green Buildings Advisory Committee (GBAC) – a group that provides advice on implementing the Green Buildings Act to the Department of Administration and the Building Code Commission.

#### **Responsibilities of the Green Buildings Advisory Committee**

1. Making recommendations regarding education and training processes and ongoing evaluations to the Department of Administration and the Building Code Commission regarding the Green Buildings Act
2. Providing advice and counsel to the Building Code Commissioner in determining if a project is qualified for an exception from the Act's green building standards
3. Providing advice and counsel to the Building Code Commissioner and Department of Administration when determining equivalencies between standards

### **Committee Membership**

**To be updated if new appointments are made.**

James Cambio  
Commissioner  
RI Building Code Commission

Dr. Carrie Gill, Chair

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Chief Economic and Policy Analyst  
RI Office of Energy Resources

Stephen Turner  
President  
Stephen Turner Inc.  
*Representing the Building Commissioning Industry*

Christopher Armstrong  
Director of Building Envelope Science  
PACE Representatives, Inc.  
*Representing the Building Design Industry*

Dr. Joseph da Silva  
School Construction Coordinator  
RI Department of Elementary & Secondary Education

Mark Winslow  
Environmental Solutions Executive  
Gilbane Building Company  
*Representing the Construction Industry*

We would also like to thank former members of the GBAC, including Kevin Rose, Ann Battersby, and Stephen Hughes for their service to the Committee. Their valuable insights and support have strengthened the GBAC for years and we are grateful for the time that they have dedicated to this effort.

### **Policy Recommendations**

RIGL §37-24-5 requires that the Green Buildings Advisory Committee (GBAC) publish an annual report of findings that includes recommended changes in policy. In 2022, the GBAC will be completing a study to help strengthen the Green Buildings Act and the Green Buildings Advisory Committee. By completing a thorough study, the Green Buildings Advisory Committee will have data to support new policies in the future. This study will evaluate both new and previous policy recommendations including, but not limited to the following topics:

- Identify best practices for implementing green building standards in other states. Best practices may be specific to public buildings or may extend to private buildings.
- Assess awareness of the Green Buildings Act in Rhode Island.
- Estimate the costs and benefits of the Act, including but not limited to upfront costs, operational savings, environmental impacts, economic development impacts, job impacts, and occupant impacts, as well as who incurs these costs and benefits.
- Recommend ways in which we may amend the Green Buildings Act, including but not limited to application of the Act and green performance standards.

## **Section 2 - Compliance**

### **Rhode Island Public Schools Compliance**

Rhode Island public schools must be built to a green school standard – the Northeast Collaborative for High Performance Schools (NE-CHPS). Rhode Island’s Department of Education (RIDE) and the School Building Authority (SBA) ensure compliance with this standard by incorporating NE-CHPS into their school construction and renovation funding requirements. All financial awards over \$500,000 from the Housing Aid Program must use NE-CHPS and must pass a construction plan review by state government officials.

### **School Green Construction – Nationally Recognized**

The national Green Ribbon Schools program recognizes and awards schools that are leaders in three categories: 1) reducing environmental impact and costs, including waste, water, energy use and alternative transportation; 2) improving the health and wellness of students and staff; and 3) providing effective sustainability education. Awards are presented by the U.S. Department of Education.

Each year, the School Business Authority draws from a list of Rhode Island schools that have complied with the Green Buildings Act for their annual award nominations. Since 2012, 15 Rhode Island schools and colleges have successfully achieved Green Ribbon status. Such achievement has been made possible by the energy efficient and sustainable construction requirements of Housing Aid funding and the integration of green school features into educational curricula.

### **Benefits for Students**

#### **High-performance schools are healthy schools**

With an average age of 56 years, Rhode Island school buildings present ample opportunities for cost-effective energy investments that can improve air quality, ventilation, lighting, and acoustics.

#### **Improve air quality**

Good air quality is critical for health. Poor air quality can induce asthma attacks, increase absenteeism due to illness, and provide an uncomfortable environment for people with pre-existing respiratory conditions.

Improving indoor air quality can help keep students, teachers, and staff healthy and safe.

#### **Reduce absenteeism**

Healthy students are able to attend more days of school.

Asthma is a leading cause of absenteeism among students, accounting for 13.8 million missed school days per year nationwide.

#### **Healthy students learn better**

More days in school can improve education outcomes.

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Better indoor air quality, lighting, and acoustics make the classroom more comfortable and an easier place to learn.

### **2021 Achievements**

In 2021, two Rhode Island schools were selected as awardees of the Green Ribbon Schools designation. Barrington Middle School and Portsmouth School district achieved this distinction for their efforts to save energy, reduce costs, feature environmentally sustainable learning spaces, protect health, foster wellness, and offer environmental education to boost academic achievement and community engagement. In addition, the Rhode Island School Building Authority's leadership received the 2021 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools Director's Award for their exemplary efforts to administer the Green Ribbon Schools program in the state of Rhode Island.

School Data  
(Forthcoming)

### **State Government, College, and University Compliance**

State Data  
(Forthcoming)

### **Municipal Government Compliance**

Local governments throughout Rhode Island are expected to, and have been, making a good faith effort to comply with the Green Buildings Act.

The Green Buildings Advisory Committee will continue to support municipal governments with education and resources about the Green Buildings Act and its compliance paths. The goal is to fully integrate the Green Buildings Act requirements into the design and construction processes of all 39 local governments throughout Rhode Island.

Municipal Data  
(Forthcoming)

## **Section 3 - Recommendations**

### **Data Sources and Constraints**

The data in this report was provided by public entities throughout the state through an online survey. The GBAC received 49 responses to the survey out of approximately 120 inquiries, for an overall response rate of 40 percent. Higher education institutions had a 100 percent survey response rate, K-12 schools had an approximate response rate of 46 percent, and municipalities had a response rate of approximately 31 percent.

The GBAC will continue to improve the data collection and tracking of green building construction and renovations. Through the study planned for 2022, the Committee will identify best practices from other states for future adoption in Rhode Island. The goal is to establish a system or process that allows the

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GBAC to view all public agency new construction projects and renovations over 10,000 square feet within each calendar year.

## **Outreach and Collaborations**

### **Appendix A: Exemplars**

(Forthcoming)

### **Appendix B: Exceptions Granted**

No exceptions were granted by the GBAC in 2021, nor were any requests for exemption from the Green Buildings Act Standards submitted to the Committee.

### **Appendix C: Data**

(Forthcoming)

## **Contact Information**

### **Green Buildings Advisory Committee**

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c/o Chairperson Gill

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