

2023 – 2026

# Strategic Plan

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[greenbuildingunited.org](https://greenbuildingunited.org)

**Introduction: Welcome to Green Building United's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan**

On behalf of Green Building United's Board of Directors, staff, and members, we are thrilled to share this document which lays out our vision to create a sustainable, healthy, and resilient environment for everyone in Southeastern Pennsylvania, the Lehigh Valley, and Delaware. This plan builds upon the rich history of the organization and was forged with the intent to capture the priorities and needs of our members, residents, and businesses across the region.

The work we do at Green Building United (GBU) is critical. Climate change is here and it has indisputably altered our region and put communities at risk. Buildings are the single-largest contributor to climate change in our region and offer the biggest opportunity to mitigate and adapt to future climate impacts. With your support, collaboration, and collective effort, we can transform our urban landscapes into thriving, inclusive, and environmentally conscious spaces.

**The Challenges Ahead and Our Opportunity to Meet Them**

Our region's present is defined by its past. Industry helped create working class homes and quality infrastructure, but that infrastructure has faced decades of disinvestment and many of our communities suffer from the legacy of industrial pollution. A history of redlining and racial discrimination contributes to enduring inequities for Black and Brown residents that must be addressed to achieve an equitable society.

As we look ahead to the ongoing impacts of climate change, our cities and neighborhoods face complex challenges. From limited access to affordable housing and green spaces to escalating energy costs and lack of climate resiliency, our built environment is at a critical crossroads. Green Building United will continue to lead the region-wide conversation to address these issues and secure a sustainable future for future generations

**Strategy Overview**

To meet these challenges and advance our mission, Green Building United will be committed to advancing the following strategies over the next three years to create lasting change:

- 1. Drive local, state, and regional policy priorities through advocacy and expertise*
- 2. Deliver meaningful educational opportunities for a range of audiences*
- 3. Strengthen capabilities to champion and implement Strategic Initiatives*
- 4. Advance opportunities for frontline communities to benefit from green building practices*
- 5. Foster a diverse and engaged GBU membership and network*

**Your Role**

As a *member*, you are at the center of Green Building United’s work. Your expertise in green building practices powers our network and drives our collective impact. GBU’s members serve as connectors, issue experts, and powerful advocates for the future we believe is possible.

As a *partner*, your expertise and perspective is essential for achieving Green Building United’s mission. We cannot accomplish these ambitious goals alone, and we will work with you and other organizations similarly seeking to transform our region and our world to achieve a more sustainable and resilient future.

As a *funder*, your involvement is pivotal in realizing our mission. By aligning your resources with our strategy, you become a catalyst for change. Your support enables us to deliver meaningful projects, provide education that empowers communities and foster positive change.

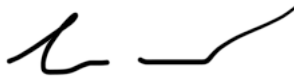
Together, all of us will further our vision of a sustainable, healthy, and resilient environment for all. We invite you to explore our strategic plan and consider how your collaboration can drive positive impact. With your partnership, we are confident in our ability to create a sustainable built environment for all.

Thank you for joining us on this journey.

Sincerely,



Lisa Shulock  
Board Chair



Rich Freeh  
Executive Director

## WHY THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

We're born in buildings, we go to school in them, we work in them, and we go home to them every day. While most people take them for granted, the way we design, build, and operate buildings and their sites has a profound impact on environmental quality, on the local economy, and on public health.

Climate change has indisputably altered our region's weather and will continue to demand more of our built environment going forward. Buildings are the primary driver of climate change in our region, and by far the best opportunity to mitigate and adapt to future climate impacts.

## WHAT WE DO

Green Building United promotes the development of a built environment that is sustainable, healthy for inhabitants, resilient to current and future climate impacts, and that reduces energy costs for residents and building occupants. Through education, advocacy, and strategic initiatives, Green Building United informs and engages individuals and organizations to transform the way buildings and communities are designed, built, and operated.

## WHO WE ARE AND WHO WE SERVE

Green Building United (founded in 2001 as Delaware Valley Green Building Council) is a member-driven, mission-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. We are an aligned chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council and have active Passive House and Living Future Communities. We serve the greater Philadelphia area, Lehigh Valley, and the State of Delaware ([see a map of our region](#)).

Green Building United convenes building industry and sustainability professionals, issue advocates, and passionate residents with an interest in, or a commitment to, improving the built environment for the benefit of the entire region. Our work impacts more than 1.5 million Philadelphia residents and an additional 6 million people across our region.

We achieve our mission through the generous support of sustaining partners, individual members, donors, and funders. With hundreds of active members, event participants, and dedicated volunteers, we are excited to see our impact continue to grow in the region.



Pennsylvania and Delaware counties served by Green Building United.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

To develop this strategic plan, Green Building United’s Board of Directors convened a Strategic Planning Committee (see Page 10) comprised of representations from the organization’s staff, past and present Board of Directors, membership, and external issue experts. The Committee met regularly through the first half of 2023 with our strategic planning consultants to help shape both the process and content of this new plan.

The Strategic Planning Committee received feedback from GBU’s Board of Directors, staff, Communities, and Committees through meetings, surveys, and feedback forms. This feedback helped inform and shape this strategic plan, ensuring the new plan aligns with staff and members’ core values and goals. Through this inclusive approach the strategic plan was designed to address challenges and effectively achieve GBU’s mission.

## WHAT’S NEW IN THE 2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

Green Building United’s 2023-2026 strategic plan builds on the history of the organization, including the previous strategic plan approved in December 2017. Since that time, much has changed across the organization, the region, and the world, and this plan reflects both the perspectives of new GBU staff and members as well as the transformative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, heightened attention on the enduring struggle for racial justice in the United States, and the worsening impacts of climate change on Greater Philadelphia, the Lehigh Valley, Delaware, and the world.

The plan is organized around five interlocking strategies designed to guide GBU as the organization pursues its work (see Page 4). Many of these strategies and the accompanying supporting activities reflect ongoing work led by the organization and membership. Throughout the plan is an increasing emphasis on accelerating action, centering equity, and ensuring that those residents and businesses most impacted by climate change are benefitting from an increased adoption of high-performance building practices.

Within each of the plan’s strategies are objectives, supporting activities, and ways to visualize success including sample metrics. GBU’s staff and Board will use this document to develop further planning documents to ensure the effective implementation of the plan and drive progress toward our mission. Lastly, Page 10 includes a glossary of terms used throughout the plan.

## GBU ROLES



*Green Building United’s staff and membership work to achieve our vision and mission in several overlapping roles.*

# Summary: High-Level Strategies



## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Programs implemented by or in partnership with Green Building United staff.

# Drive local, state, and regional policy priorities through advocacy and expertise

## OBJECTIVES

- Lead efforts to shape, pass, and implement policies that advance resilience, sustainability, and equity in the built environment.
- Educate and promote awareness of green building practices and a just energy transition among local, state, and regional decision-makers.
- Integrate on-the-ground expertise, best practices, and emerging insights on how to address the climate crisis to create more equitable, actionable, and impactful policies.

## SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES

- Build relationships with key local and state decision-makers, legislators, and coalitions.
- Educate elected officials and candidates in local elections about best practices for high performance buildings.
- Organize members and partners to impact key policy discussions.
- Draft and review local, state, and regional sustainability and climate policies and legislation.
- Ensure prioritization of frontline communities and other equity considerations in policy design and implementation.
- Grow partnerships with peer organizations operating on a regional and national level to expand influence and drive policy change.

## WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- Impactful legislation being passed and implemented.

*Sample metrics:* Legislation passed; long-range data on increase in high-performance building practices, particularly in front-line communities

- Deepening relationships with local community-based organizations (CBOs).

*Sample metrics:* Number of CBO attendees at GBU events; number of GBU members representing CBOs

- GBU membership and staff maintaining and growing their reputation as a thought leader and issue expert on high performance building practices and climate action.

*Sample metrics:* Number of opportunities to present to external audiences or join working groups



# Deliver meaningful educational opportunities for a range of audiences

## OBJECTIVES

- Provide educational opportunities that bring green building insights to audiences including building design, construction, and operations professionals, policymakers, students, community groups, and the public.
- Support the professional development of both emerging and established professionals with the skills needed to enable a just climate transition.

## SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES

- Tailor educational content to each audience with a priority on emerging best practices for green buildings and centering equity in the built environment.
- Offer targeted and impactful webinars, hands-on workshops, and major events in partnership with individuals, GBU Committees and Communities, regional and national partner organizations, and local community-based organizations.
- Partner with other professional groups in the architectural, construction, and engineering fields to offer GBU member and staff expertise at peer groups' events.

## WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- An increase in the number of individuals and groups benefitting from GBU educational opportunities.

*Sample metrics:* Number of event attendees; hours of educational content delivered

- Educational opportunities with both newly engaged organizations and longtime partners.

*Sample metrics:* Number of groups partnering with GBU on educational opportunities

- A growing number of credentialed GBU members and new opportunities to offer credits for new and emerging certifications.

*Sample metrics:* Number of individuals receiving credits for a given certification (e.g. LEED or AIA); number of new certifications offered at GBU events





# Advance opportunities for frontline communities to benefit from green building practices

## OBJECTIVES

- Support the reduction of energy burdens and environmental injustices in frontline communities through GBU's policy, program, and educational work.
- Grow relationships with organizations advocating for these communities to help further their goals and inform the development and implementation of equitable green building practices.

## SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES

- Meet and build relationships with community groups, environmental justice leaders, and other stakeholders in the spaces (physical and virtual) where they are already working.
- Partner with other organizations seeking to reduce energy burdens and environmental injustices and identify opportunities for GBU to leverage its expertise and skills to support this work.
- Advocate for policies that prioritize investments in under-resourced communities and equitable outcomes in green building initiatives.
- Continue to offer free or reduced-price membership and admission to GBU events for frontline communities and others experiencing economic hardship.

## WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- An increase in the diversity of GBU membership and attendance at GBU events.  
*Sample metrics:* Increase in racial, gender, and economic diversity of GBU membership; number of reduced-price memberships or event registrations provided
- Regional green building policies and practices with greater emphasis on centering equity and resourcing front-line communities.  
*Sample metrics:* Percentage of policies passed and implemented with the support of frontline communities
- More engagement with partners who center environmental justice in their mission.  
*Sample metrics:* Number of mission-aligned engaged partners that center environmental justice in their work

# Strengthen GBU's capability to champion and implement Strategic Initiatives

## OBJECTIVES

- Continue to develop and implement programs supporting residents, non-profits, schools and governments, and business owners to advance resiliency and cut carbon pollution across the region.
- Identify strategic opportunities to grow GBU's program implementation work in pursuit of the organization's vision and mission.
- Maintain and strengthen GBU's reputation as the go-to resource for green building information and expertise in Greater Philadelphia and Delaware.

## SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES

- Identify, develop, and implement programs leading to higher-performing and more resilient buildings and communities across our region.
- Support the implementation of programming for and information sharing with parties interested in high-performance building activities.
- Ensure GBU's website, social media, and other outreach communicate our programs, successes, and available resources.

## WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- Successful implementation of new and existing programs.  
*Sample metrics:* Number of new programs; renewal of existing programs; number of buildings being benchmarked and tuned up; energy use reductions from GBU programs
- Enhanced visibility across the green building industry.  
*Sample metrics:* Increase in social media presence
- A strong organization and capable staff that is fully equipped to meet GBU's vision and mission.  
*Sample metrics:* Satisfaction of staff as measured through surveys



# Foster a diverse and engaged GBU membership and network

## OBJECTIVES

- Foster a diverse membership reflective of the communities and industries with which we work.
- Create inclusive spaces where stakeholders are excited to connect, innovate, and advance green building practices and policies.
- Strategically engage communities, organizations, and professionals outside our membership to bring in new perspectives and ideas.

## SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES

- Prepare pitch materials for tabling and other events that appeal to both new and existing audiences.
- Expand our outreach to organizations and community groups that represent underrepresented groups.
- Support projects by communities designed to increase education and engagement with green building practices in our region.

## WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- A growing membership that continues to bring in new perspectives.

*Sample metrics:* Total number and diversity of industries and backgrounds represented at specific events

- Enthusiastic members who engage with GBU events throughout the year.

*Sample metrics:* Percent of members who attend more than one event each year

## CALL TO ACTION

If you're inspired by this, get involved! Sign up for our newsletter, come to a community meeting or event, or connect via email with us on an opportunity for GBU membership or staff to come to your event:

[Info@greenbuildingunited.org](mailto:Info@greenbuildingunited.org).

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Built Environment: The Environmental Protection Agency defines as “the man-made or modified structures that provide people with living, working, and recreational spaces.”

Electrification / Building Electrification: The process of designing a new building or rehabbing an existing building to remove any on-site generation from fossil fuels (coal, fuel oil, or natural gas).

Frontline Communities: Individuals and groups most impacted by historic environmental injustices and the current and future impacts of climate change. In our region, residents of frontline communities are overwhelmingly people of color also impacted by systemic racism and often excluded from historic environmental movements.

Green Building Practices: Standards for the design, construction, and operation of buildings that reduce the environmental impacts of those buildings, improve health outcomes for building occupants, and reduce operational costs.

Just Transition: Via the Just Transition Alliance, “Just Transition” is a principle, a process and a practice. The principle of just transition is that a healthy economy and a clean environment can and should co-exist. The process for achieving this vision should be a fair one that should not cost workers or community residents their health, environment, jobs, or economic assets.” To learn more, visit [www.jtalliance.org](http://www.jtalliance.org).

Regions We Serve: Green Building United serves the following Pennsylvania counties: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia. Green Building United also serves the following counties in Delaware: Kent, New Castle, and Sussex.

Strategic Initiatives: Programs implemented by or in partnership with Green Building United staff.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This strategic plan was written and designed by the consulting team at Energetics Inc. Thanks to Melissa Laffen, Walter Zalis, Amanda Bassett, Shannon Lawn, and Tommy Finamore for their hard work on this plan.

The plan was informed by numerous conversations with Green Building United's Board members, staff, Communities, and other stakeholders. Particular thanks to the members of our Strategic Planning Advisory Committee: Mary Hall (co-chair), Jon Jensen (co-chair), Bahareh van Boekhold, Kristen Brubaker, Mardi Ditze, Rich Freeh, John Ivey, Ariella Maron, Dominic McGraw, Lisa Shulock, Kristin Suzda, Sophia Winston, and Kathryn Wright.