

## BIG FAQs for Residential Projects

What is Build It Green (BIG) and the BIG Checklist?

Build It Green is “a non-profit membership organization whose mission is to promote healthy, energy- and resource-efficient building practices in California. BIG created Green Building Guidelines that “are a comprehensive resource of best practices for green building.” The BIG Checklists (there is one for new residences and one for addition/remodels to existing residences) are tools used to assess how environmentally friendly a proposed building project will be via the use of a point system.

What projects are required to complete and submit a BIG Checklist?

All projects applying for ASCC review (new residences and additions larger than 400 sf)

All building permits for additions and/or remodeling

How many points does a project need to achieve?

- For new construction projects up to and including 3,000 sf, a minimum threshold of 75 BIG points is required.
- For new construction projects over 3,000 sf, a minimum threshold of 75 BIG points with one (1) additional point for each 30 sf over 3,000 sf.
- For addition/remodel projects to existing homes that qualify as a Whole House project, a minimum threshold of 50 BIG points is required.
- For addition/remodel projects to existing homes that qualify as an Elements project, a minimum threshold of 25 BIG points is required.
- For projects not subject to ASCC review, but involving residential additions and/or remodeling, no minimum points are required.

How do I calculate the square footage of the project? Do basements count in this calculation of floor area? Do garages count in calculation of floor area?

For new construction: Total square footage of all structures being proposed (residence and accessory structures). Basements (seven feet or greater in height) *do* count in this floor area calculation. Garages *do* count as floor area except that unconditioned garage space shall only count as 50% of that square footage.

For addition/remodels: Total square footage of all new floor area plus the square footage of remodeled and replaced areas of the structure. Areas demolished shall not be deducted from the total new square footage.

Is my addition/remodel considered a “Whole House” project or an “Elements” project under BIG?

The Elements label applies to homes in the following situation:

- A portion of the home is undergoing a remodel or addition (e.g., a master bedroom addition or a kitchen remodel). The entire home will not be evaluated for green building practices.
- The homeowner anticipates qualifying for GreenPoint Rated Whole House over time and wants to verify sections under current remodeling.
- The home is undergoing some energy upgrades that do not encompass the requirements to meet GreenPoint Rated Whole House.

The Whole House label should be used in the following situations:

- The homeowner has completed updates over time.
- The homeowner is in the process of completing a significant remodel.

What projects need to be certified by a Green Point Rater?

All new construction projects and addition/remodel projects achieving “Whole House” status with BIG that are subject to ASCC review will be required to be certified by a certified GreenPoint Rater. (Projects subject to ASCC review that are achieving an “Elements” status may be self-certified).

Prior to building permit issuance, documentation must be provided by a qualified rater indicating that the proposed plans adequately meet the green building ordinance requirements.

Prior to final inspections and occupancy for the project, a qualified rater shall provide documentation verifying that the project has been constructed in accordance with the approved BIG Checklist, the project meets the minimum number of points required by the Town's Green Building Ordinance, and has been GreenPoint Certified with Build-It-Green.

What projects must be GreenPoint Certified under Build-It-Green?

All projects that must be certified by a Green Point Rater (i.e., new residences and Whole House projects) must also be GreenPoint Certified with Build-It-Green prior to final inspections.

Who can certify a project?

Projects requiring certification must be done so by a qualified green building professional, i.e., a person trained through Build It Green as a certified GreenPoint Rater.

What is “self-certification?”

For “Elements” projects subject to ASCC review and all other smaller residential addition/remodel projects not subject to ASCC review, but requiring a building permit, “self-certification” of the project is permitted. “Self-certification” means verification by the project architect, designer, or a qualified green building professional certifying that the project has met the standards and has attained the compliance threshold as indicated on the approved BIG Checklist.

There are some items on the checklist that say “R” for Required or “CAL Green Code if applicable” – do I need to also fulfill these requirements on the checklist?

Yes, any and all items notated on the checklists as “R” or “CAL Green Code if applicable” must be met as part of the project.

Does my completed checklist need to be on my permit plan sheets?

At the time of building permit submittal, projects subject to ASCC review must include the proposed BIG Checklist on plan sheets with a green building program description, reflecting any changes proposed since the time of ASCC approval.

If your project was not subject to ASCC review, you do not need to include the checklist in your plans – simply print it out and include it with the building permit application.

What happens if I am unable to meet the required number of points at the end of my project?

The Town’s Compliance Official (CO) will review the submitted documents and determine whether the applicant has achieved the required compliance threshold as set forth by the ordinance. The CO will determine if the project 1) complies, 2) there has been a good faith effort to comply, or if 3) the project is non-compliant. Projects deemed non-compliant shall not receive a final inspection until the applicant has implemented equivalent alternative measures approved by the CO or unless and exemption is granted for the project.

Can I switch out one checklist item for another during construction provided that I will still be able to achieve the number of points required for my project? If so, what is the procedure?

Item substitution is acceptable provided that the mandatory checklist items are still met and that the project will still meet Title 24 energy requirements. Prior to final inspections of the project, project certification documents will be submitted to the Town that address any item substitutions.

What if the ASCC approved my project at a point level above the required minimum threshold and I find that I cannot meet that point level (but I do meet the minimum threshold)?

Even if the ASCC approved the project with a checklist showing more than the minimum required points, only the minimum point threshold need be met. Any points beyond the minimum requirements are encouraged, but are at the discretion of the applicant.

What do I need to do in order to get a final inspection/occupancy on my project?

For new residence and Whole House projects, prior to final inspections and occupancy for the project, a qualified rater shall provide documentation verifying that the project has been constructed in accordance with the approved BIG Checklist, the project meets the minimum number of points required by the Town's Green Building Ordinance, and has been GreenPoint Certified with Build-It-Green.

For Elements projects, prior to final inspections, verification by the project architect, designer, or a qualified green building professional certifying that the project has met the standards and has attained the compliance threshold as indicated on the approved BIG Checklist is required.

Upon receipt of this documentation, the Compliance Official will review the documentation and determine whether the applicant has achieved the required compliance threshold. Once approved, the final inspection may be scheduled.

Is there an exemption from complying with the Green Building Ordinance?

If an applicant for a covered project believes that circumstances exist that make it a hardship or infeasible to meet the requirements of this chapter, the applicant may request an exemption as set forth in the ordinance. In applying for an exemption, the burden is on the applicant to show hardship or infeasibility.