MARYLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACILITIES PLANNERS COUNCIL

May 9, 2025
MEETING MINUTES

Attendees at Harford Community College

Name	College / Agency
Katy Angstadt	**Community College of Baltimore County**
John Anzinger (remote)	**Montgomery College**
Lisa Aughenbaugh (remote)	**Carroll Community College**
Dawn Baker (remote)	**Hagerstown Community College**
Corey Chang (remote)	**Presenter - ASG**
Andrew Clark (online)	**Allegany Community College**
Miriam Collins (remote)	Chesapeake College
Gregory Grey	Warwick Community College
Tony Hinton	Harford Community College
Travis Hopkins	Howard Community College
Christina Kilduff (remote)	Allegheny College
Dong-Min Kim (remote)	Montgomery College

Name	College / Agency
David Koenigsburg (remote)	DBM
Yuling Mei (remote)	Montgomery College
Kerry Norberg (remote)	Montgomery College
Chris Painter	Garrett College
Karen Place	Frederick Community College
Dan Schuster	MHEC
Iman Shaker	DGS
Zoey Spangler (remote)	**Presenter - ASG**
Jim Taylor	Anne Arundel Community College
Will Waugh	CCBC
Allison Wilson (remote)	**Presenter - ASG**

Officer Reports

- Chair – Chris Painter
  There's nothing new to report at this time. Are there any issues related to the Retreat that we should address? The speakers will be from Ayers Saint Gross, and on the second day, we'll be holding a roundtable discussion.

- Vice Chair - Greg Grey
  For the Retreat, I already have dinner plans arranged for Thursday. However, would anyone be interested in doing a group dinner on Wednesday after arrival? If so, please let me know

by May 16th so I can get a headcount. The retreat will be in person only, but the Teams link will be for presenters only.

- Secretary – Dong-Min Kim
  Just a reminder about attendance for the June Retreat: I sent out the attendance list by email back in April, but only eight people have responded so far. Please check to make sure your name is on the list and let Greg know whether you'll be attending for one or both days. I can update the spreadsheet again—just email your response to Greg by May 16th, and that will count as your official RSVP.

- Communications Coordinator – Travis Hopkins
  It turns out there's been an ongoing issue with my emails not reaching the facilities planners. A couple of weeks ago, I sent out a document that included some of Dan's forms and other materials for the BBRC. However, it appears that message never actually went through.

  I had it resent yesterday through a different method, and this time it looks like it finally made it—I actually received it in my own inbox, which hasn't happened before. It seems there are some issues with the email list, possibly with how messages are being distributed or filtered.

  For now, I'll be emailing people directly instead of using the full distribution list. So if you receive a message from me where I mention BCC'ing the list, just know I'm trying to make sure the message gets through reliably. Especially once we get into the BBRC work, I want to ensure everyone receives the necessary information without further delays.

- Best Practice– Jim Taylor
  For the Retreat, we have two presenters on June 5th and a roundtable discussion on June 6th

Agency Reports

- DBM – David Koenigsburg
  As briefly mentioned earlier—and Dan can elaborate further during MHEC's agency briefing—the CBS/CC Tables and Capital Submission Training is scheduled for Wednesday, the 14th, from 10:00 AM to noon. Dan has already shared this information, and colleges are welcome to reach out to him directly for the meeting link or any additional details.

  Just as an update—though I'm sure most of you are already aware—the budget has been adopted by the Assembly but has not yet been signed into law by the Governor. That said, there were no changes to the allocations we included for the Construction Grant Program and the Facility Renewals Grant Program.

  Internally, our office continues to work diligently on the facilities programs, and we hope to have a few submissions over to the Secretary's desk before we begin turning our attention to the FY27 cycle.

- DGS – Iman Shaker
  We're still in the process of reviewing the FY26 programs. We recently approved two construction contract awards, and currently under internal review are Hagerstown 478, Hagerstown 482, and PG 468—so we're beginning to make progress on our checklist.

  We've also started receiving some CPE submissions—thank you for that, and please continue to submit them in a timely manner.

- MHEC – Dan Schuster

  The FY26 budget has been adopted but is not yet signed into law. That's the only reason some materials haven't been released yet. However, I'm ready to send out memos assigning project numbers for new Facility Renewal projects, as well as FY26 award letters—those are prepped and will go out as soon as the budget is officially enacted.

  For the eight colleges on the eligibility list: if you remember which projects you submitted back in September, those same projects will be listed as eligible this year—unless you've heard otherwise. We're getting everything ready now, even though we can't finalize or send until the budget becomes law. In short, we're ready to go.

  Meanwhile, FY27 planning has already begun. Once we receive the official instructions from DBM, we'll be sending guidance out to the colleges shortly after. All the forms are finalized—we're just waiting to see if DBM includes any special instructions that we need to incorporate into your materials. Assuming we receive that memo soon, I hope to send everything out next week.

  As a reminder, we will be holding the Capital Submission Training this Wednesday at 10:00 AM. We'll walk through all the FY27 submission materials, including required documents for everyone—regardless of whether you're requesting approval, submitting updates, or preparing for future-year submissions.

  After the general overview, I'll hand it over to Dave and Conrad, who will walk through the CBS entries for colleges requesting capital projects in FY27. This may also be the final year that planning studies are eligible—we'll wait for Dave to provide more on that.

  If you haven't registered for the training yet, please send me an email and I'll make sure you get the link. I know a few people wanted to forward the invite to colleagues—that's completely fine. Anyone involved in the capital submission process is welcome to attend.

  Looking ahead to FY27, please remember that everything is due to us by July 1. Once we have your submissions, I'll begin preparing the full package for DBM, which is due August 15. That kicks off their review process, which includes the hearing.

- MACC – Monica Randall (absent)

- **FPC FY25 Goals**
  - Goal 1 Identifying and share best practices for facility planners by exchanging individual college practices as well as presentation from industry and state agencies.
  - Goal 2 Continue publishing CIP State Projects on both the MACC and FPC websites. We should expand this one but we will discuss this at the retreat
  - Goal 3 Monitor MACC and to keep the FPC better informed, as the two-week notice for vaping regulations was insufficient.
  - Goal 4 Restructure meetings and broaden our member base to enhance knowledge sharing by annually reviewing the Facilities Manuals, examining the website during meetings, integrating these elements into the meeting structure, and sharing standards and lessons learned from other projects. We will tie these ideas into the agenda and use the meeting location as a physical link by inviting others from the hosting campus for special topics.

- **LEEDv5 Preview & Climate Solutions Now Act Alignment**

Overall view of V5 and what's coming:

V5 launched a few weeks ago. There will be a grace period during the transition from the old V4 system to V5. We don't have the exact dates yet since V5 is still very new, but this transition period is expected sometime in 2026. During this time, you'll be able to register new projects under V5 or finish existing V4 projects.

Looking at the two systems overall, not much has changed in terms of categories. Some points were reallocated or combined, but the categories remain largely the same. Similarly, the point requirements have stayed consistent, which is great news—you won't have to worry about whether your building complies with V5 because the point allocations are essentially unchanged.

There are some new requirements under V5 for Platinum certification, especially if you're aiming for that level. Many of these focus on energy performance. For example, electrification now requires that buildings have no onsite combustion.

Additionally, there are several new energy-related targets, including percentage reductions that need to be met. Another important update with LEED V5 is that the baseline building code will be automatically updated in 2028—no voting or polling required. While that may seem far off, it's actually just three years away.

For renewable energy, Platinum buildings will now be required to achieve 100% renewable energy and operate as net-zero carbon facilities.

Another significant Platinum requirement is the embodied carbon reduction. While embodied carbon assessments are not new, V5 now mandates a minimum 20% reduction in embodied carbon, which is a substantial and relatively new requirement.

Yes, and just to add, this aligns really well with current climate solutions efforts. While not all five points shown here are explicitly covered, key elements like the no onsite combustion requirement and the energy offset are highly consistent with broader climate initiatives. So, although these requirements specifically apply to LEED Platinum projects, they also reflect the legislation and standards you'll increasingly need to comply with.

Looking at the overall view of the new scorecard, it's very similar to V4, which is great for continuity. However, there are some new credits we'll highlight today, including the mandatory platinum credits. Many of these focus on energy, and while we won't cover every credit, we'll focus on those that are significant or introduce notable changes.

Starting with Integrated Process and Planning:

The Integrative Process credit itself remains unchanged from V4. However, new prerequisites have been added—one of which is the climate resilience assessment. This requires selecting two environmental hazards and evaluating them according to LEED standards. This snippet from the scorecard shows the detailed documentation required for submission. While design teams have typically considered these factors, the new documentation requirements are more rigorous and will require a heavier lift.

Similarly, for the Human Health Assessment,

Design teams usually evaluate these aspects early in the project. Now, they must formally document their findings, which represents an expanded scope and will impact contract writing and project planning.

Another new prerequisite is the Carbon Assessment.
This is a novel requirement for LEED projects. Historically, project teams submitted documentation and then received feedback from USGBC, but now USGBC will provide U.S.-specific data directly to projects—a first of its kind. The exact process and timeline are still unclear, but this represents a new dynamic between USGBC and project teams.

Moving to Location and Transportation:
The overall categories have been condensed—several credits were combined, but there are no major content changes from V4.

One example is the **Compact and Connected Development credit**. Previously, two separate location credits (surrounding density and access to transit) were each worth 10 points, which could disadvantage suburban or less urban projects aiming for Platinum certification. Now, these credits have been combined and reduced to 6 points total. This reduces the urban density bias, making it easier for suburban campuses to earn points.

Regarding Equitable Development. Option one remains largely the same. However, two new options (option two and three) have been added, focusing on housing-job proximity and equitable construction. These options shift some responsibility from design teams to contractors. So, when drafting contracts or selecting contractors, it's important to consider their familiarity with these requirements if pursuing these credits.

Finally, in Location and Transportation, parking and bike credits which were previously separate—have now been combined into a single credit. This consolidation simplifies the process and streamlines compliance.

One requirement is to complete a transportation management study. This is something many institutions have likely already done outside of LEED. If you haven't yet, it's a good practice to start, because pursuing this credit—which most projects probably will—will make it a requirement.

A positive change with Option 2 under PATH 2 relates to shower and changing facilities. In the previous system, to earn bike credits for providing bike parking (indoor or outdoor), showers were mandatory. Now, you can earn points for this credit without having to provide showers in your facility, which is a welcome update.

Question: *What is the required duration for the transportation study? How recent does it need to be?*
Answer: That's a great question. We'll need to follow up because I don't have a definitive answer or official guidance on that yet. If you're conducting a study annually, that will almost certainly meet the requirement. I'm not sure if there's flexibility for biannual or triennial studies, but we'll get back to you with a clear answer once we find out.

To add, many institutions already conduct commuting surveys, which can sometimes fulfill this requirement. For example, transportation demand management studies done as part of master planning or major redevelopment efforts typically qualify.

You could also conduct a less formal campus-wide commuting survey. The key is to assess the carbon impact of typical campus users or building occupants. Since campus commuting data is often collected annually, that usually works well for this purpose.

Question: What's driving the two-way communication process now, with USGBC providing design teams with information? How do you see this process evolving?

Answer: Great question. Let me hold on part of that because it ties into a credit I'll discuss shortly. One longstanding criticism of LEED has been its "performance only" approach—where project data goes into a black hole with no follow-up on ongoing building performance. That's why programs like the Living Building Challenge have gained traction, since they keep tracking performance over time. LEED is trying to foster that same ongoing engagement.

That said, USGBC hasn't historically had enough staff to maintain consistent back-and-forth communication with project teams. I'm very curious how this will function as LEED v5 becomes more widely adopted.

Okay, moving on—within Sustainable Sites, we'll focus on two credits: Biodiverse Habitat and Heat Island Reduction. There are other changes across credits, but not major ones, so we'll skip those today.

Regarding Biodiverse Habitat, one key update is the inclusion of bird-friendly glass as a credit option. Bird-safe building standards have become law in many places, including Maryland and D.C. What was previously an innovation credit is now part of the core rating system—showing how design expectations have evolved.

There's also an older option recycled from LEED v4, which we won't cover in detail.
For Heat Island Reduction, options one and two are carryovers with minor tweaks. Option three is exciting because it introduces considerations of tree equity and environmental justice—acknowledging that some U.S. areas have more tree cover than others, which affects heat islands and urban environments.

I recently discovered a fascinating resource: a detailed U.S. map showing tree canopy coverage. For example, comparing Baltimore and D.C., you can see industrial areas like Dundalk with sparse tree cover and extensive hardscaping, versus greener suburbs.
Even at a campus scale—like Anne Arundel Community College—there's a mix of green spaces and large parking lots, but overall good tree coverage regionally.

This highlights how access to tree shading and nature varies by municipality and scale, which is an important lens for design.

Water Efficiency—overview.
Similar to other areas, LEED v5 consolidates several v4 credits into fewer categories.
The big change for water is combining outdoor and indoor water use into a single prerequisite, so all water use counts together. We'll dive deeper into efficiency points shortly.

Another prerequisite is water metering. While requirements haven't changed, how this data interacts with USGBC has.

Projects must commit to sharing annual water use data with USGBC for five years. Although this hasn't changed, there hasn't been much follow-up from USGBC on data sharing processes.

This ties into a related point: LEED Online is transitioning to a new platform called ARC. Previously, LEED Online couldn't handle annual data uploads and evaluations well. ARC will enable these capabilities, meaning this prerequisite will see much more active monitoring and follow-up from LEED moving forward.

This shift to two-way communication really begins with USGBC providing the carbon assessment directly to the design team. Moving from LEED Online to ARC as the primary data platform enables that ongoing exchange of information and creates a more continuous relationship with USGBC.

This is particularly relevant for you all in Maryland, given the *Climate Solutions Now* Act. That legislation designates ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager as the official data repository, while LEED is now moving toward using ARC for long-term tracking. These platforms have different capabilities and upload structures, but both will require institutions to regularly submit data.

So, it's important to note that colleges and universities will now be responsible for uploading data to **two separate platforms**:

- **Portfolio Manager** for *Climate Solutions Now*
- **ARC** for LEED v5 and certification durability

Question: What's the data overlap between the two systems?

Answer: The data is essentially the same. For water, it's monthly usage data. For energy—when we get to that section—it's also monthly energy data. The difference is mostly in the interfaces and the submission process, depending on the platform.

So it really comes down to your data team being comfortable navigating both systems and ensuring that consistent, accurate data is uploaded to each.

Another consideration—since there are 16 institutions within the Maryland system—is the potential value of a shared services model. While no one wants this reporting work to become a full-time job, it can be complex and time-consuming. A joint approach—like subcontracting the reporting for all 16 institutions to a dedicated third party—might streamline the process and reduce the individual lift at each institution.

Now, building on what I mentioned earlier—under LEED v5, **all water use is treated as a single category**. Indoor, outdoor, cooling towers, reclaimed water—it's all combined into one metric for evaluation. This is a big improvement.

For example, in LEED v4, water use was segmented, and outdoor irrigation only counted for up to 4 points. In v5, the same project earns more points—up to 8—because irrigation carries more weight in the combined water-use category. So, if your site has **no irrigation**, that becomes a big advantage under the v5 rating system.

Lastly, the **Leak Detection credit** has seen minor updates. You now have two options:

1. Install fixture-level leak detection sensors.
2. Use a whole-restroom monitoring system.

Either option works, and both can help prevent serious issues. For instance, if a leak occurs on a Saturday, the system would immediately detect and alert you, allowing action before major damage occurs. Without this system, you might not discover the problem until Monday morning. It's one of those credits that can really pay off in preventing long-term problems.

These measures do come with costs, so there is a price tag involved. However, I believe they will provide operational and maintenance benefits that make them worthwhile.

Before we shift into energy, any questions on water? I find water pretty straightforward, and it just makes sense to treat all water use as one category—it simplifies everything.

Now, turning to energy and atmosphere: we tried hard to narrow down what to cover because this area can get pretty dense. But many of these credits are important, especially since they overlap significantly with *Climate Solutions Now*. So bear with us as we work through some complex material.

Starting off is the easy part—similar to water metering and reporting, building-scale energy meters will need to report data to USGBC. The reporting requirements themselves haven't changed, but I expect that the enforcement and follow-up will be stronger now that the data platform, ARC, is better equipped to handle and track this information—something LEED Online struggled with.

Fundamental commissioning is unlikely to be a big change for most of you. Historically, commissioning with your organizations has included building envelope commissioning, but the difference now is that building envelope commissioning is a **prerequisite** rather than an optional credit. The focus on building systems and controls remains largely the same, but the envelope component is now formally part of fundamental commissioning. This shifts how commissioning contracts are structured. There are still enhanced commissioning options available as well.

Regarding fundamental refrigerant management: most of this stays similar to LEED v4, but the big update is around leak checking and repair. At project turnover, refrigerant lines are expected to be checked, and any leaks or gaps must be repaired promptly. This has significant environmental importance because refrigerants often have a very high global warming potential (GWP). For context, carbon dioxide's GWP is 1, but refrigerants like R404A have GWP thousands of times higher, so leaks have a huge climate impact. I strongly encourage regular assessment of refrigerant systems for this reason.

Minimum energy efficiency requirements have also been updated. As Zoey mentioned earlier about Platinum projects, the new baseline standard is **ASHRAE 90.1-2019**, with a built-in upgrade to 2022 planned. This simplifies things for practitioners, removing the uncertainty about when updates will happen. LEED 2009 and LEED v4 previously had mid-cycle ballots for standard upgrades, but LEED v5 now includes this upgrade path as standard.

Maryland is already ahead here, with baseline energy codes based on ASHRAE 90.1-2019 via IECC 2021. This means, for the next few years, meeting code compliance aligns with meeting LEED prerequisites—a significant improvement from the disconnect that existed when LEED v4 referenced ASHRAE 90.1-2010 but Maryland used 90.1-2019.

On operational carbon projections and decarbonization planning: the process is mostly the same, but now the **building owner must formally acknowledge receiving the carbon projection** from USGBC. Then the owner needs to commit to a decarbonization plan—either by designing buildings that avoid combustion or by outlining how the facility will decarbonize over the next 25 years.

This aligns well with Maryland's *Climate Solutions Now* efforts and much of the work happening statewide.

As a real-world example, at Anne Arundel Community College, we recently discussed a project that highlights these issues. We're renovating the Dragon Science Building (marked

in red) and connecting it with the adjacent central plant building (in blue) that provides heating and cooling.

The blue building still uses fossil fuels, and although no new fossil fuel equipment will be added to the red building, the overall campus won't be fully decarbonized once renovations are complete.

Our team, alongside energy consultants at BKM, has been exploring what it would take to electrify the red building and potentially disconnect it from the fossil fuel-burning central plant. This high-level analysis aims to understand the feasibility and implications of moving toward electrification today as part of the project.

The bottom line is no—it doesn't make financial sense for Anne Arundel Community College to pursue that approach right now. Instead, we recommended focusing efforts on upgrading the central plant facility itself. Not only would that improve the current situation, but it would also benefit several other aspects down the line.

That kind of conversation about "cutting off" the building fits well within a broader decarbonization plan. What we don't yet know is whether the level of dialogue we had with AACC will satisfy USGBC's decarbonization plan requirements or if they'll expect more detailed analysis. We won't really know until we engage with more projects.

That said, many of your organizations are already having these discussions due to *Climate Solutions Now*, whether on a project-by-project basis or as part of institutional planning. Whether through master plans or standalone decarbonization strategies, it's likely that within a couple of years, you'll all have a decarbonization plan that aligns with these requirements—because *Climate Solutions Now* essentially mandates it.

Question: Later, maybe we can discuss how many points are now more structured and measurable rather than being subjective.

Answer: Many, many more—it's a lot more structured now.

It's less about checking boxes and more about consistent, comparable data across projects, which is harder to do under the current system. That said, there are a few credits where I wonder why they removed certain requirements—because those weren't really the problem with those credits in the first place. Like with any rating system update, some changes make a lot of sense, others leave us scratching our heads.

Question: Yeah, some of the subjective points were frustrating because results depended heavily on the inspector's approach.

Answer: Exactly. Also, there's a specific electrification credit that's very relevant to you all in Maryland. This credit fits perfectly because you're already moving toward no onsite combustion buildings under *Climate Solutions Now*. Plus, your electric grid is increasingly clean, making electrification a sensible strategy.

That's not true everywhere else in the U.S. In some places we work, the grid is less clean, so the conversation shifts more toward onsite energy generation to support decarbonization. But for you, this is a pretty straightforward credit to pursue.

A quick caveat: this system launched only two weeks ago, so I haven't yet dug deep with engineers about what it means in practice. We'll have follow-ups with our engineering

colleagues. The main takeaway so far is yes, energy modeling remains important and will continue.

However, the key metric has shifted after 20+ years of focusing on annual energy cost reductions. Now, the emphasis is on **reducing greenhouse gas emissions** from building operations.

That's a big change, and the specific calculations and variables around these new metrics aren't entirely clear yet. We'll definitely need input from energy modeling experts to understand the practical implications.

Regarding grid-interactive buildings, I want to highlight **Option 3** here.

Option 2 (demand response programs where utilities can remotely reduce building power) has always existed.

Option 3 aligns with conversations I've had with many of you about how you operate your buildings. It covers scenarios where your building automation system has sequences you can activate that reduce power usage—like dimming lighting by 50%, reducing HVAC load, or lowering plug loads by 25%.

This is exciting because, traditionally, institutions have resisted allowing utilities to remotely control their buildings. But many of you already do this internally, and now LEED will reward that proactive energy management.

Transition to Final Categories and Climate Solutions
Let me wrap up the last few categories before we pivot into the *Climate Solutions Now* framework and the broader work happening in that space.
Starting with a few key aspects of *Indoor Environmental Quality* in construction management—these typically refer to the standard planning documents we've historically required from contractors. Most of these have been straightforward and well-established over time.

A Notable Addition: Extreme Heat Protection
A significant new element worth highlighting is the focus on *extreme heat protection*. Currently, across much of the U.S., there are minimal regulations that safeguard construction workers from heat exposure during summer. There are often no requirements for shade, water, or rest breaks, even though these are critical for worker safety—especially as temperatures and heat indexes rise.

This new push to require contractors to better protect their teams isn't just a regulatory shift—it's a human health issue and one we should all support. Ensuring worker protection is essential, especially as we collectively build a more resilient and sustainable built environment.

Institutional Policies and Site Management
In addition to smoking bans and related signage, another emerging area is the prohibition of vehicle idling on construction sites. While this may not yet be common practice everywhere, it's an institutional-level policy that makes sense. It's far more effective to implement it at the system-wide level rather than project by project.

Accessibility, Equity, and Occupant Experience
This is an area where many community colleges are already ahead of the curve. Your campuses serve a highly diverse population, and the design thinking already happening reflects that. This new credit—focusing on strategies that support physical diversity, safety, aging populations, social health, and intuitive navigation—is exciting because it provides formal recognition for work many of you are already doing.

It's what Zoey referred to as a "super credit"—a consolidation of many existing strategies from LEED v4 into a single, more impactful package. Most of these elements are already familiar, but there are some updates—like how *sound environments* are now more clearly defined and achievable, and how *biophilic design* credits, once considered pilot credits, are now core to the rating system.

Resilient Spaces and Passive Survivability
In LEED v4.1, we had pilot credits focused on passive survivability, which didn't get widespread adoption. The updated credits are written more clearly and address real-world issues. For example:

- *Respiratory disease management modes* are clearly a response to COVID-19.
- *Episodic outdoor air events*, such as those caused by wildfires, are now explicitly addressed.
- And strategies for *extreme heat and cold* now explore how features like operable windows can support resilience.

Project Priorities and Innovation Credits
The Accredited Professional credit remains unchanged, but regional priority and innovation credits have now been bundled under a new umbrella: *Project Priorities*. You still get access to regional and building-type-specific credits.

Interestingly, the USGBC has identified:

- 12 exemplary performance credits,
- 9 pilot credits, and
- 4 innovation strategies currently pre-approved.

That's a much smaller selection than what we had under LEED v4, which likely means we'll be more conservative in estimating how many of those 9 innovation points we can earn per project.

That said, some credits that were removed—like *waste minimization strategies* under Construction & Demolition Waste Management—still have merit. These could potentially be reintroduced as pilot or innovation credits, offering useful opportunities to enhance projects.

Now Let's Pivot to Climate Solutions Now
So, how does this connect with *Climate Solutions Now* in Maryland? There are essentially three tiers of building requirements:

1. **Small Projects (<7,500 sq ft):** Just meet code compliance.
2. **Medium Projects (7,500–34,999 sq ft):** Meet code and achieve LEED Silver or better. Combustion is still permitted, with some caveats.
3. **Large Projects (≥35,000 sq ft):** Meet code, achieve LEED Silver or better, and eliminate on-site combustion.

Where things get tricky is if your campus isn't sub metered by building. The state requires performance data by facility size, but if you only have campus-wide numbers, you may be forced to account for buildings that technically shouldn't need to comply yet.

Advocacy Opportunity #2: Submetering
This is our second major advocacy point: **submeter your buildings**. If you do, you can more accurately isolate which buildings fall under compliance requirements and potentially reduce your decarbonization burden.

Once you have that metering data, manage it actively. For example, in a current master plan project, we used building-level energy data to map compliance risk under Climate Solutions Now. We categorized buildings into high, medium, and low priority based on the financial penalties associated with non-compliance by 2030.

This allows the institution to prioritize which buildings to decarbonize first and where they'll get the most impact—whether that's through deep retrofits or commissioning strategies for borderline buildings.

Let's keep thinking holistically about how we bring together performance, occupant experience, equity, and climate readiness—not just for compliance, but to lead the way on smarter, healthier, and more sustainable campuses.

Are there smaller, low-cost operational fixes we should be looking at?

Sometimes systems drift from their intended performance, or small operational inefficiencies creep in. In those cases, a modest investment can significantly reduce operating costs. Identifying and addressing those issues can help us *buy more time* for larger decarbonization efforts and meet near-term compliance goals—while also cutting fees and emissions.

So, the question becomes: **Which buildings should we prioritize for decarbonization, and at what scale?**

The answer depends heavily on the institution. If you have standalone buildings, a building-by-building strategy is likely more effective. But if you're working with facilities connected to a central plant, it makes more sense to focus first on optimizing and potentially decarbonizing that central system. You'll generally get a better return on investment that way.

If you're in a hybrid situation—with both standalone buildings and others tied to central systems—then smaller district-scale solutions might be worth exploring. This ties back to earlier points about the importance of decarbonization planning. Many of you are already having these conversations due to the *Climate Solutions Now Act* and related compliance requirements. This work also aligns with your LEED strategies.

Key Takeaways:
- **LEED v5 and Climate Solutions Now are aligned** in terms of goals. They both push toward electrification and decarbonization—you're not being pulled in different directions.

- **LEED v5 expands in scope and becomes more rigorous** in some areas, though in others, it's slightly more accessible. Overall, the shift from v4 to v5 isn't nearly as dramatic as the move from LEED 2009 to LEED v4 was. Given where most institutions are now, you're in a good position to manage the transition comfortably.

- **Energy performance metrics are evolving**: The focus is moving away from cost savings and toward carbon reductions. LEED is aligning with newer energy codes like ASHRAE 90.1–2019 and 2022.
- For projects currently scoring high Silver or low Gold under LEED v4, you may find they drop closer to the lower end of Silver under LEED v5. For example, a project tracking 59 points under v4 (nearly Gold) might land around 51 under v5. This isn't a reason to panic—it's a much softer transition than last time.
- **USGBC has improved its documentation**: There's now a clear tracking sheet showing exactly what changed in LEED v5, credit by credit. That's a useful tool for understanding the transition.

On Timing:
LEED v5 is already available. A firm registration deadline hasn't been announced yet, but we expect that all projects will need to register under v5 starting in Q1 of 2026. So, if you have projects going out to RFP or trying to get under contract before the end of this year, register them under LEED v4 to avoid becoming the "guinea pig" under the new system—especially if budgeting and legislative planning were based on current LEED expectations.

On Consulting Costs:
Will consulting costs increase under LEED v5?

It's hard to say definitively. From our side, yes—costs may rise modestly in line with our growing expertise. Like anything, experience and quality take time and resources. However, this isn't the kind of leap we saw from LEED 2009 to v4. So while we expect a gradual increase in cost, it won't be as dramatic as previous transitions. That said, impacts may vary depending on your engineers, contractors, and broader project teams.

LEED v5 Transition, Prerequisites, and Comparisons
We are starting to see certain items that used to be optional—like life cycle analysis—become prerequisites under LEED v5. That's a great point. From our side, we've always included those services because we have the in-house expertise. But as Zoey mentioned earlier, that's not true for all consultants. For firms that need to build that capability, it may drive up project costs. It's hard to say exactly how much.

Question: So it might be smart to clearly highlight these new requirements in RFPs—at least until the industry catches up.

Answer: Absolutely. Doing so protects you from hiring consultants who don't fully deliver on what's now required. And in the short term, if you have projects coming up for RFP or design early next year, get them registered under LEED v4 while you still can. Otherwise, you risk being the "guinea pig" for a LEED v5 project.

And as always, feel free to reach out. We try to share updates widely once USGBC finalizes key dates or publishes new info. We know surprises are frustrating, and we want to help keep your projects moving smoothly.

On LEED Alternatives
Question: The state allows alternatives to LEED—do you work with clients using other systems?

Answer: Yes, we've done comparison work between LEED, Green Globes, and IGCC. Every time we've done this (e.g., for the University of Maryland, Citadel, Johns Hopkins), LEED comes out on top—particularly in ease of implementation and cost-effectiveness.

Green Globes, while valid, tends to be more complicated logistically and often costs more in terms of time and consultant effort. IGCC is a code, so it's more rigid—everything is mandatory, and you're subject to the authority having jurisdiction. LEED gives you flexibility to meet requirements your way, which can be a big advantage.

That said, we are doing our first IGCC project in Northern Virginia now, but it's a unique case.

On Systems and Energy Strategies
Question: A shift in energy requirements is pushing more projects toward systems with extensive refrigerant piping—like VRFs—compared to traditional 4-pipe chilled/hot water systems.

Answer: Yes, I remember when VRFs were everywhere. In hindsight, that trend may not have been the best decision industry-wide.

Question: Especially now with newer refrigerants being flammable, it adds risk. There's also a balancing act between meeting thermal comfort requirements and participating in demand response programs. If you don't have large backup systems like batteries, cutting load means affecting occupant comfort.

For example, during a gas demand response event for our chiller plant, we were required to reduce load for more than a week before being allowed to switch back.

Answer: That's a great real-world example—thank you.

- **Old Business**
  - BBRC: I still need to finalize that—just need to make sure everything's in order. I'll need to make a payment soon, which will partially determine the requested submission due date.
  - Right now, I'm targeting the end of the month—ideally before the retreat—to have a preliminary version pulled together. I'd like to meet with the team if they're available, and start collecting documents. Once I've compiled everything, I'll share it with the BBRC members for review.
  - We'll go with a rolling review process—it's probably the most efficient approach.
  - Also, we should confirm participant representation. I think we had:
    - Two small colleges
    - Two medium
    - Two large
  - I'm one of the medium colleges, and I've noted that already. I believe it's all documented in the minutes. Thanks for helping to keep us organized—together, we manage to stay on track!
  - I still need to schedule a meeting. For those not submitting a project this year, please check if you have anything listed in the five-year plan. The submission form is fairly straightforward and quick to complete.
  - The sooner you return your BBRC materials, the faster we can review and finalize everything. Keep in mind, the BBRC has a July 1st deadline to submit the Master Project List to the state.
  - Thankfully, I don't have to handle my college's submission at the same time this year, so I can focus fully on the BBRC process.

- As for Year 27 submissions—yes, we're looking five years out. So, the Master List should include all planned submissions within that timeframe.
- If you're having trouble finalizing your information or working through details with a state agency, please reach out to me. That way, I'll know you haven't dropped off the radar. Otherwise, I'll be following up via email or phone.
- There have been exceptions in the past—state agencies may already be aware of ongoing issues or special cases. If that's the case, you may be exempt from the BBRC submission. I'll just highlight it in the report accordingly—no harm, no foul. The key is just to communicate.

❖ **New Business**

❖ **Upcoming Meetings**
- All meetings will have Zoom/Teams access. Contact meeting host for the remote invite.
  - June 5-6, 2025 – Wor-Wic Community College