Green remodeling in San Diego: the one-page checklist

What the 2025 codes require when a remodel touches each part of the house, and the upgrades worth adding. Full article: kaminskiyhomeremodeling.com/blog/creating-sustainable-homes-green-remodeling-in-san-diego/

What the code requires (permits filed since January 1, 2026). What you touch has to comply; what you leave alone can stay.

If the remodel includes	The rule	On the job
New or altered lighting	Every altered permanently installed fixture is high efficacy	LED throughout, under-cabinet lights included
Replacement windows	U-factor 0.30 and solar heat gain 0.23 or lower in climate zones 7 (coast) and 10 (inland)	Up to 75 sq ft may use 0.40 and 0.35; glass-only replacement is a repair
An addition	R-15 in a 2x4 wall, R-21 in a 2x6 wall; small-addition attic R-30 coast, R-38 inland, radiant barrier	The new rooms meet today's standard; the existing house does not have to
A water heater for an addition	Heat pump water heater on the standard path	500 sq ft or less may use a small electric heater at the fixture
A replacement water heater or furnace	Gas may replace gas; electric resistance cannot become the main heat	No heat pump is required in a remodel
New equipment or more than 25 ft of new duct	Ducts sealed and tested by a third-party rater; duct insulation R-6 coast, R-8 inland	Duct systems under 40 ft are exempt from the test
A new roof over more than half the house	Inland: a cool roofing product or an equivalent such as R-38 in the attic	No cool-roof rule on the coast
Plumbing fixtures	Toilets 1.28 gal/flush, showerheads 1.8 gal/min, bathroom faucets 1.2, kitchen faucets 1.8	A permit on a pre-1994 house also means replacing old fixtures elsewhere in it
Debris	At least 65% recycled or salvaged where CALGreen applies	Sorted loads or a hauler that documents it
Not required	Solar on an addition; wiring for future electric appliances; upgrading rooms you do not touch	A newly built detached ADU does need solar

The upgrades worth adding in San Diego, in order

Upgrade	What the evidence says	When to do it
Water heater	Water heating is 59% of household gas use (CEC). A heat pump model saves about $550 a year against standard electric (ENERGY STAR) and about $97 against gas (California program data)	When the tank is near ten years old or its space is being rebuilt
Circuits and panel capacity	Only 3% of California heat pump installations needed a panel upgrade; a circuit costs far less through an open wall	Any remodel that opens walls or floors
LED lighting	At least 75% less energy than incandescent (DOE)	Every remodel
Insulation and air sealing	About 14% off heating and cooling costs in San Diego's federal climate zone (ENERGY STAR)	When a wall is open or trades are in the attic
Heat pump heating and cooling	Saves about $304 a year where it replaces air conditioning; can raise bills where there was none	When furnace and air conditioner are both due
Windows and shade	Slow payback on the coast when windows are sound; exterior shade keeps sun off the glass	When windows have failed or the wall is changing
Induction cooking	About 85% of the energy reaches the food, against about a third for gas (ENERGY STAR)	With a kitchen remodel
Water-saving fixtures and less lawn	Toilets are nearly 30% of indoor water use (EPA); a lawn takes about 44 gallons a square foot a year (City of San Diego)	Every remodel; when the yard is disturbed
Solar and a battery	Exported power is credited below the retail rate, so size for your own use	After a reroof; run conduit during the remodel

Rebates and tax credits

Program	Status, November 2026
Federal energy tax credits (efficiency, solar, batteries)	Ended for work completed after December 31, 2025 (IRS)
California heat pump rebates, single-family	Fully reserved statewide February 24, 2026; waitlist only
Turf replacement	Open: $2 per square foot up to 5,000 sq ft a year (Metropolitan Water District); reserve before removing the lawn

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