



Use the National Green Building Standard (NGBS) to

Comply with the International Green Construction Code (IgCC)

The International Code Council (ICC) and a number of cooperating sponsors, including the American Institute of Architects (AIA), ASTM International, ASHRAE, the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), and the Illuminating Engineering Society, jointly developed the International Green Construction Code 2012 (IgCC). The IgCC establishes minimum green requirements for new and existing buildings and acts as an overlay to the existing set of International Codes. The IgCC's objective is to complement voluntary rating systems, which may extend beyond the baseline of the IgCC. As a "model" construction code, the IgCC can be adapted to address local conditions.

IgCC Scope

The IgCC scope is broad. The IgCC covers all residential and commercial buildings five stories and above and allows local jurisdictions the option to also include in the scope all other residential buildings such as single-family homes, duplexes, townhouses, and multifamily buildings four stories or less. The IgCC applies to design, new construction, renovation, change in occupancy, and demolition, among other activities.

The IgCC specifies the National Green Building Standard ICC-700 as an alternate path to compliance within "Chapter 1: Scope and Administration" for all residential buildings, and the residential portions of mixed-use buildings, five stories and above. For many reasons, the NGBS is the preferred compliance alternative for multifamily buildings.

If the jurisdiction elects to include residential buildings four stories and below, these buildings must comply with the NGBS.

ICC's inclusion of the NGBS within the IgCC as an alternative compliance path acknowledges the NGBS's status as the first solely residential green code within the suite of I-Codes.

IgCC Adoption Status

Local and state jurisdictions are proposing the IgCC as local code with greater frequency. The State of Maryland was the first state in the nation to adopt the IgCC and provide local governments the authority to adopt the IgCC; Florida, North Carolina, Oregon, and Rhode Island quickly followed suit. Several local smaller jurisdictions such as Scottsdale, Ariz., and Keene, N.H., also quickly adopted the IgCC. Now, larger metropolitan areas, such as the District of Columbia and the City of Dallas, have approved the IgCC, and other jurisdictions have proposals under review.

Home Innovation strongly favors voluntary programs and incentives over mandates because, unfortunately, mandates often heighten barriers to innovation and can cause unintended impacts.

Nevertheless, some jurisdictions may propose to mandate green building through the IgCC. Within these jurisdictions, Home Innovation supports recognition of the NGBS as an affordable, yet rigorous, green baseline for residential buildings five stories and higher when jurisdictions have proposed to mandate

the IgCC as code. Without this alternative compliance path, multifamily buildings may find compliance costly and difficult.

WARNING: Jurisdictions are unpredictable!

Typically, jurisdictions amend I-Codes before they adopt them and the Scope and Administration Chapter is often significantly amended, or even omitted altogether, for local adoption. As a result, the jurisdiction may unwittingly (or intentionally) eliminate the NGBS as an alternative compliance path for residential buildings. At least one jurisdiction admitted they did not intend to remove the NGBS compliance path, but instead did not realize the IgCC covered multifamily buildings because of its seeming focus on commercial buildings.

Support the IgCC Adoption with Third-Party Certification to Demonstrate Compliance

Local debate over IgCC adoption has raised concerns for both the building industry and code officials. Some local code officials recognize that many of the IgCC's green practices are unfamiliar, and as measures designed to promote sustainability, do not directly impact health, safety, and welfare such as the measures in the plumbing and structural building codes. Thus, compliance review and approval can be more challenging. Further, many building departments are resource-challenged, making it difficult to increase staffing and/or training. One idea gaining traction for both government agencies and the private sector is to allow independent, third-party certification to demonstrate compliance.

Third-party certification is an accepted method to win broad support for raising the baseline performance of buildings. For builders and developers, third-party verification can be an affordable alternative that also allows them to benefit from the marketing and potential valuation advantages of NGBS Green certification. Plus, with a one-business day turn-around time for technical assistance, interpretations, and the NGBS Green certificate, third-party certification by Home Innovation can help eliminate any lingering barriers to high-performance residential buildings.

For local code officials, acceptance of independent third-party NGBS Green certification can reduce administrative costs for implementing a new green code. And finally, local jurisdictions benefit since the verification necessary for buildings to attain Home Innovation's NGBS Green certification is typically far more stringent than what most local jurisdictions can manage, which means the buildings have a far greater chance of meeting their sustainability objectives.

How can we help?

Home Innovation's objective is to remove the barriers to certified green and sustainable residential construction. If you have questions about the National Green Building Standard, how to comply and attain certification, or what makes the NGBS the green building rating system of choice for residential construction, just contact us. We are here to help you attain sustainable excellence.

*For more information on NGBS Green Advocacy resources, visit
www.HomeInnovation.com/NGBSAdvocacy.*