

Frequently Asked Questions about the IgCC

What is the International Green Construction Code?

The International Green Construction Code (IgCC) provides communities a comprehensive green building code for both commercial and residential buildings. If adopted, it would mandate green building through the building code process.

The IgCC was introduced March 28 by the International Code Council (ICC), which creates and maintains a set of model construction codes, called I-Codes, for both residential and commercial buildings. I-Codes are written so that adopting municipalities – states, cities, and counties – can provide minimum requirements for safety and health that all builders and developers must follow. The IgCC represents the first time ICC has developed a code that goes farther than the usual minimum requirements.

How was the IgCC put together?

The IgCC was a collaborative effort between the Code Council and five organizations: the [American Institute of Architects](#), [ASTM International](#), [ASHRAE](#), the [U.S. Green Building Council](#) and the [Illuminating Engineering Society](#).

What is the scope of the IgCC?

As written, the new IgCC applies to all new construction and the alteration and renovation of existing buildings. This can include low-rise residential one- and two-family homes, townhouses, and apartment and condominium buildings of four stories or less *if* the jurisdiction chooses the option to regulate green construction for these buildings during the IgCC adoption process. If the jurisdiction does *not* choose this option, these residential buildings are not covered.

If the jurisdiction chooses to include residential construction, what exactly are the implications for home builders and developers?

The IgCC was written to provide “one-stop shopping” for jurisdictions interested in requiring that *all* construction be green. However, a jurisdiction must make a conscious decision to regulate green building for homes.

That’s when the National Green Building Standard comes into play.

What does the National Green Building Standard have to do with the IgCC?

First, some background: In 2007, NAHB joined with ICC to develop a voluntary consensus standard for green home building, land development, and remodeling projects.

As green building mandates were being considered in communities around the country and instituted as prerequisites for an increasing number of government grants, financing opportunities and other special programs, it became increasingly clear that the home building industry needed a green building standard that was based on cost-effectiveness as well as sound building science.

The most prominent green building program of the time, LEED, was developed for commercial buildings. In residential applications, the LEED system imposes unnecessary consulting costs that the home building and remodeling market won't bear. NAHB and the ICC recognized that the residential industry needed a rigorous, voluntary green building standard based on sound building science and tailored to the unique needs of the residential building industry.

More than 40 diverse stakeholders— from energy-efficiency experts and product manufacturers, code officials, government officials, environmental groups and home builders themselves —worked on developing the National Green Building Standard. After a year-long series of public hearings to discuss hundreds of submitted proposals and comments, the completed document was submitted to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) – and was approved as an American National Standard in January 2009.

The Standard can apply to all residential construction – from single-family homes to high-rise apartment buildings, as well as residential land development and residential remodeling projects. In fact, more than 9,000 single-family homes, condos and apartment units have been certified to the Standard. Learn more about its scope [here](#).

The fact that it's an ANSI standard is important for the codes development process, and you can find out why [here](#). What's significant is that home builders and developers can use the National Green Building Standard to comply with the IgCC.

How is the National Green Building Standard incorporated into the IgCC?

If a jurisdiction chooses to regulate low-rise residential construction using the IgCC, these homes will be required to be constructed using the National Green Building Standard.

Who will certify these green homes?

Many code officials involved in the creation of the IgCC have already acknowledged that most jurisdictions don't have the infrastructure – or the manpower – to create an added layer of green verifiers and certifiers alongside the code officials that inspect homes today.

Fortunately, the [NAHB Research Center](#), which has been administering certification to the National Green Building Standard since the day ANSI approved it, has a cost-effective, market-proven certification for builders and jurisdictions that can be used to demonstrate compliance with the IgCC. Learn more about this certification process [here](#).

What about multifamily buildings?

If a jurisdiction adopts the IgCC, the code also allows multifamily buildings of five stories or more to use the National Green Building Standard, rather than the myriad requirements laid out in the IgCC, as “deemed to comply” with the requirements of the IgCC. See a graphical representation of how that happens [here](#).

While the adoption of the IgCC represents a green mandate, the existence of the Standard does provide a silver lining for multifamily developers who are worried – and with good reason – that the IgCC is a very expensive way to build green. The National Green Building Standard has already proved its worth as a cost-effective way to achieve sustainable construction in the multifamily space – and now it’s an approved alternative for multifamily developers to comply with the new IgCC.

The National Green Building Standard designed to be a voluntary green rating system. So why is it now part of this new mandatory code?

When the National Green Building Standard was incorporated into the IgCC, it became a referenced standard and is actually part of the IGCC requirements. In the IgCC, the National Green Building Standard is cited as ICC 700.

If a jurisdiction decides to adopt the IgCC, the good news is the Standard provides a cost-effective way for home builders to comply.

It was through NAHB’s advocacy efforts that the low-rise residential portion of the IgCC is an option. The jurisdiction must take that extra step to include one- and two-family homes, townhouses and other residential buildings four stories or less in height in the mix. NAHB also worked to ensure that the use of the National Green Building Standard is an option for multifamily buildings five or more stories in height.

In addition, in communities across the nation where adoption of the IgCC is not on the table, the National Green Building Standard will continue to be the basis of voluntary green building programs that have been embraced by home builders, elected officials and – most importantly – home buyers.

NAHB will continue to advocate that in this constantly evolving – and still growing – sustainable building niche, voluntary programs encourage creativity and new solutions, whereas mandates set a ceiling – and that’s no way to foster the growth of green building.

We already have a great local green building rating system in place. Now what?

You can keep it, as long as your jurisdiction agrees that it's a valid choice. If your jurisdiction is considering mandating the residential portion of the IgCC, the code will need to be amended to allow that jurisdiction to choose a locally acceptable green building program in lieu of National Green Building Standard. That's why the advocacy efforts of your HBA are so important.

Is there a document that explains how to oppose the green mandates?

NAHB is preparing a Builder Action Kit to assist HBAs in jurisdictions where the IgCC is being considered for adoption. The kit will equip members who want to keep green home building voluntary, whether it's built to the Standard or another green building rating system. It's expected to be ready in June 2012. In the meantime, HBAs can contact [Larry Brown](#) for assistance.

How can I learn more about the National Green Building Standard and how it's used?

NAHB members – home builders, remodelers and product suppliers, are all encouraged to learn about green home building at [NAHBGreen](#), and by enrolling in the [Green Building for Building Professionals](#) class. Successful completion of this two-day class helps fulfill the requirements of the Certified Green Professional educational designation – but equally important, for these purposes, is that the green building education is based on the National Green Building Standard and how it applies to energy, water and resource efficiency, lot and site development, indoor environmental quality, and home operation and maintenance.