

# ICC makes rapid progress on International Green Construction Code

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Many communities are rushing to regulate or at least provide incentives to build green. However, doing so presents obstacles such as: Can and should they mandate a certain level of sustainable building - and how? Which standards or rating systems should they utilize? How do they integrate these standards with existing local building codes and federal laws? How do they apply these standards to the unique aspects of their local communities?

As a result of numerous requests for aid from municipal officials and others in the construction industry, the [International Code Council](#) (ICC), an organization that develops codes used to construct residential and commercial buildings, took action. In March of 2009, the ICC's Board voted to initiate development of an International Green Construction Code (IGCC) for new and existing commercial buildings. If adopted, the IGCC will provide a model code that can be modified by states and municipalities to fit their regional circumstances.

The IGCC is being developed by the ICC's 29-member Sustainable Building Technology Committee (SBTC). It is now on the [third version](#) of a draft initially prepared by the ICC's technical staff. The SBTC and its five working groups have already had meetings to discuss and revise the draft in Chicago, Denver and Philadelphia, with the next meeting scheduled for December 2009 in Bonita Springs, Florida. The last meeting will be held in Austin, Texas in January 2010. The meetings are open to the public for observation. The SBTC's proposed draft of the IGCC will be available for public review and comment in the spring of 2010. The final draft will be made available for public comment and there will be at least two hearings on the final draft prior to its adoption. The IGCC is scheduled for adoption in the fall of 2011. The ICC's efforts to establish the IGCC have the full support of and are sponsored by the [American Institute of Architects](#) and by [ASTM International](#), which is one of the largest voluntary standards development organizations in the world. The ICC's efforts are also supported by the [United States Green Building Council](#), which created the [LEED](#) rating system.

What is the difference between the IGCC and other standards such as LEED, which is currently the best known U.S. rating system? According to the ICC, the IGCC is not a rating system, but a regulatory framework, though the IGCC will use existing rating systems as a resource. LEED and other rating systems are not written in the form of enforceable codes, and are not intended to be optional. Also, the IGCC will incorporate requirements as to

measurable building performance and building safety, and will not be based on a point system.

One of the main resources for the IGCC will be the current [California Green Building Standards](#). The California Code was adopted by the California Building Standards Commission and published by the ICC on August 1, 2009. The California Code is currently voluntary, but becomes mandatory in 2010.

Unfortunately, one of the impacts of the current process for developing the IGCC is that local communities may halt or slow down their development of regulation until the IGCC becomes available. This uncertainty will likely cause municipalities to rely more on optional standards than mandatory standards. Note that the IGCC does not address residential construction. Residential construction is covered by the 2008 National Green Building Standard, which was developed by the ICC and the National Association of Homebuilders.