



ICC Launches Green Construction Code

By Philip L. Hinerman

The International Code Council (ICC), a nonprofit organization designed to develop safety and performance standards for buildings, has recently proposed a new International Green Code Initiative. The ICC has committed to develop a model building code focused on building designs for new and existing commercial buildings. The ICC worked on this code with the American Institute of Architects and ASTM International.

The leader in sustainable designs is the United States Green Building Council (USGBC). Although USGBC has created certification standards, there is a difference between the work that is being done by USGBC and ICC. LEED standards are designed to be used by architects and engineers in designing sustainable buildings. The ICC proposed code is written to assist municipalities in modifying current building codes to make it easier to build sustainable buildings.

A common complaint of many LEED architects and construction personnel is that most existing codes do not provide the flexibility needed to design and construct buildings that comply with USGBC standards for sustainability. This was seen clearly in Philadelphia several years ago when variances were required for the Comcast Center to obtain the LEED certification standard that they wished from USGBC. A huge fight erupted with the local plumbers union, ending in union opposition to several proposals designed to reduce water consumption, but at variance with Philadelphia code provisions.

As part of the planning process for the draft Code, the ICC created a Sustainable Building Technology Committee. Numerous public meetings will be held of the SBTC to obtain public comment on the initial draft of the Code. It is anticipated that a final draft will be made available in 2010. This final draft will still be taken through a development hearing and a final action by the ICC, but it is hoped that it will serve as a template for municipalities interested in “greening” the building codes.

Anyone wishing to comment should first consult the web site <http://www.iccsafe.org/igc/index.html>, which explains the process for providing comments on the drafts and attending future public meetings.

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