Stretch Codes

Helping Cities Meet Energy Goals in Illinois

Energy codes are among the most cost-effective tools to meet a municipality's energy and climate action goals. Codes are the best path to impact the energy use and emissions of new construction and significant renovations in communities. While the Illinois energy code is a mandatory statewide code, local governments can set more ambitious standards for many buildings. We recognize that they may need direction and assistance to set those standards. **If Illinois cities want to meet their own climate goals, cities need other options for improving the baseline energy requirements for buildings. This is where we can help.**

What is a Stretch Code?

A stretch code defines a higher level of energy efficiency or sustainability than the adopted statewide base code or available model energy code. A stretch code can be envisioned as the future base code; it may contain aspects to consider for the next baseline code adoption. Stretch codes can be developed on their own (typically by/for municipalities) or as part of the larger state energy code (either as a separate state code or in an optional appendix). Once a stretch code is adopted, it becomes the mandatory baseline requirement for that jurisdiction.

A stretch code is a great option for jurisdictions that have set climate or energy goals. The stretch code also allows entities to test and showcase the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of cutting-edge technologies and processes before they are considered for inclusion in the next baseline code. Because the building and enforcement community knows what to expect for upcoming codes, stretch codes also accelerate market development, adoption and acceptance of more energy efficient codes in the future.

Stretch Code in Illinois

For commercial buildings, jurisdictions can already set standards stronger than the state energy code. Jurisdictions cannot adopt an energy code stronger than the state code for residential buildings except for jurisdictions over 1 million in population, or that have adopted an energy code prior to 2006; no jurisdiction has yet chosen to do so. Legislation or administrative action is likely needed to permit residential stretch code adoption. It is not required for commercial buildings, but legislation instructing the state to create a state stretch code for jurisdictions would allow for uniform enforcement and assistance, and encourage stakeholder input and state buy-in for the stretch code.

Stretch Code Examples

It is recommended for jurisdictions to pursue the same stretch code for adoption. Below are some components of a possible stretch code.

- ✓ Simple improvement of prescriptive or mandatory requirements found in model energy codes.
- ✓ Simple improvement of code efficiency from a performance perspective.
- ✓ Improvement of the energy code by consulting energy use indices such as the Energy Use Index (EUI), Zero Energy Performance Index (zEPI) number and Home Energy Rating System (HERS) Index.
- ✓ Improvement of energy efficiency through adoption of codes or standards that are above the baseline code and might include non-energy-efficiency measures, like the International Green Construction Code (IgCC) or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), or inclusion of EV-ready, solar-ready or other non-efficiency measures.

Technical Assistance

We are here to help. The Illinois investor-owned utilities are exploring the option of providing assistance with adoption of and compliance with stretch codes. This could include—but is not limited to—technical assistance, policy drafting, economic impact analyses and stakeholder engagement. Your feedback is essential to this effort.

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