

The Path to Advanced Building Energy Policies: Bite-Sized Strategies for Communities

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Agenda

Introduction to Building Energy Codes & Policies

The Greenest Region Compact as a tool for Energy Efficiency Planning

City of Evanston's experience working towards advanced building efficiency policies

Activity – Developing a Bite-Sized Approach Towards an Efficient Community

Support for Advanced Municipal Building Energy Policies

Our Organizations' Role



Support municipalities as they work towards the adoption and implementation of advanced building energy policies and programs

- ABEEP Workgroup
- Direct technical assistance



Accelerate regional uptake of high-efficiency building practices

- Funded through ComEd



Building Energy Codes & Policies in Illinois

Why are they important?

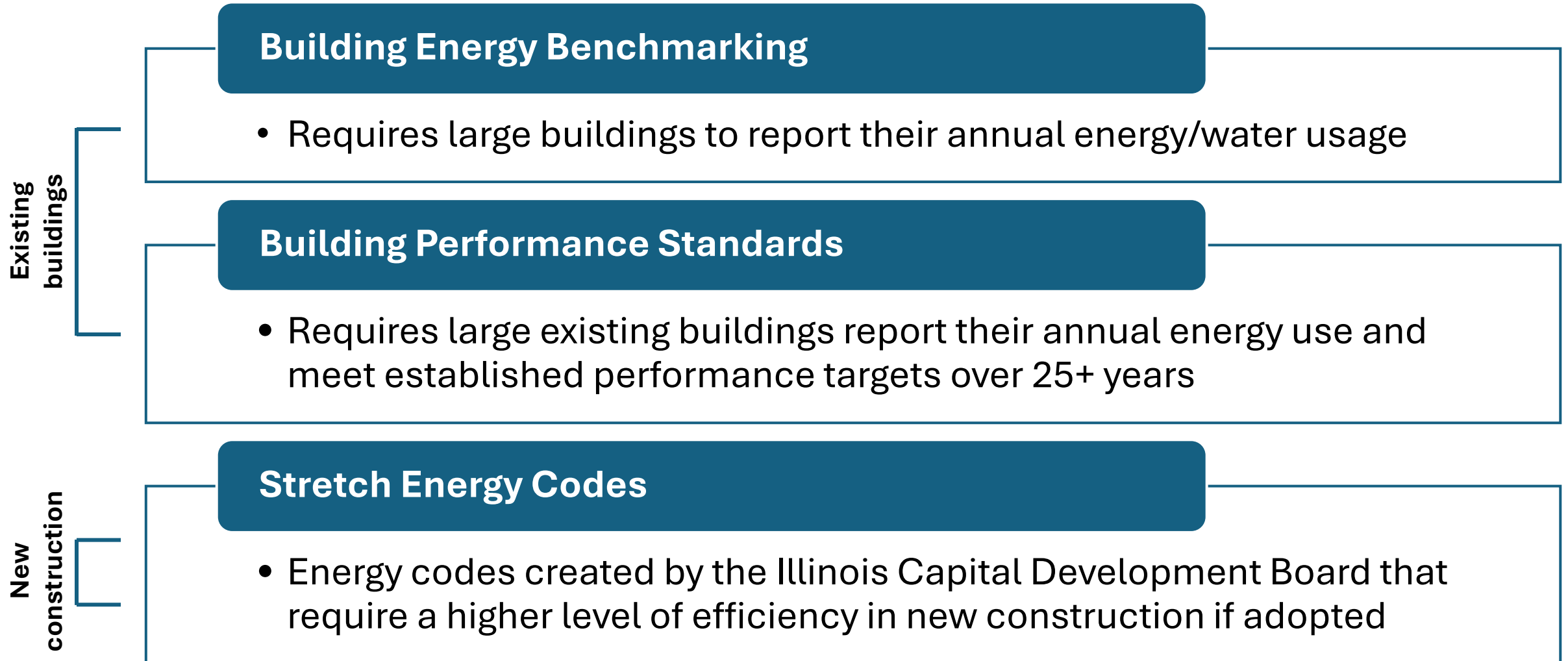
- Buildings make up 30% of IL greenhouse gas emissions¹
- Provides immediate and long-term energy and cost savings
- Reduces community-wide emissions and helps municipalities meet their climate action goals
- Creates more resilient and healthy buildings



¹<https://www.buildinghub.energy/ghg-emissions>

Building Energy Codes & Policies in Illinois

What are they?



These policies are great!

But...

They require:

- ☐ The staff capacity to develop, implement, and enforce
- ☐ A local policy champion
- ☐ Building owners or builders to make investments
- ☐ Funding to support the work

However, communities can take a bite-sized approach.

What is a bite-sized approach?

A focused, achievable action that fits a community's current capacity and helps create the conditions for more advanced building energy policies.

A bite-sized action can help a community:

- Leverage utility and other resources to save energy and money
- Bring energy efficiency benefits to constituents and businesses
- Demonstrate the effectiveness of energy efficiency
- Build support for advanced energy efficiency policies

Consider levers of municipal action



LEAD



ENCOURAGE



ENACT

A smorgasbord of sustainable action for municipalities



The Compact

- 49 consensus sustainability goals
- Formally adopted by 165 municipalities
- Largest regional sustainability collaborative for municipalities

The GRC Framework

- 300+ strategies to achieve GRC goals
- Template for municipal sustainability planning
- Sort strategies by “bite size” and levers of action

GRC Framework – Energy section

GRC goal  GOAL		Choose strategies STRATEGY	plan Already achieved	 In Progress	 Planned	 Interested in pursuing	 Not planned/relevant	 Notes	 Link to Resource	lever Lead	 Encourage	 Enact	 Impact	 Effort Required	Bite size Easy win
Use energy for building and facilities efficiently	2E1	Conduct energy audits of municipal facilities to identify opportunities to reduce energy use							Y	x				L	
	2E2	Implement energy efficiency measures that have a short-term payback (e.g. lighting, occupancy sensors)					Y	Y	x					M	
	2E3	Retrofit municipal facilities with energy efficiency measures that have a longer-term payback								x				H	
	2E4	Upgrade streetlights for efficiency and integrate smart technologies								x				M	
	2E5	Demonstrate extreme energy efficiency with model Passivhaus or net-zero buildings and engage the community						Y	x	x				H	
	2E6	Budget and plan for long-term energy efficiency equipment upgrades								x	x			L	



Energy Goals

- 
1. Use energy for buildings and facilities efficiently
 2. Engage the community in clean energy practices
 3. Reduce energy consumption
 4. **Enact policies that support clean energy**
 5. *Advance renewable energy*

Take “bites” with energy strategies that exercise “lead” and “encourage” to eventually enact advanced energy policies

Use energy for building and facilities efficiently



STRATEGY

	Notes	Link to Resource	Lead	Encourage	Enact	Impact	Effort Required	Easy win
Conduct energy audits of municipal facilities to identify opportunities to reduce energy use		<u>Y</u>	x				L	
Implement energy efficiency measures that have a short-term payback (e.g. lighting, occupancy sensors)	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	x				M	

Engage the community in clean energy practices

Bite-sized STRATEGY	Notes	Link to Resource	Lead	Encourage	Enact	Impact	Effort Required	Easy win
Partner with electric and gas utilities to promote energy efficiency and clean energy programs to the community	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	x	x			L	
Promote the use of ENERGY STAR certified appliances and equipment		<u>Y</u>	<u>x</u>				L	
Publicly recognize-high efficiency, all electric, and net zero buildings in the community.				x			M	
Collaborate to educate the community about energy efficiency, decarbonization, and renewable energy		<u>Y</u>	x	x			L	
Engage commercial property owners to optimize building efficiency by leveraging utility programs, using energy audits, retrocommisioning studies and PACE financing.		<u>Y</u>		<u>x</u>			L	



Collaborate to educate the community about energy efficiency and decarbonization

**SAUK VILLAGE
Town Hall
Meeting**

ED PAESEL COMMUNITY CENTER
2700 KAVELAGE DR.

*Let's Discuss Current and
Proposed, Village Business
Energy Efficiency & Social Issues*

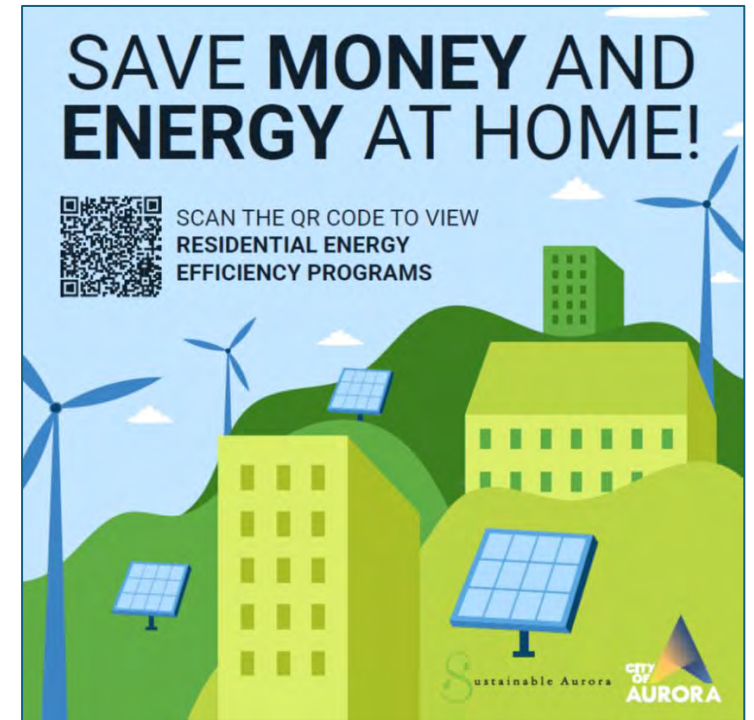
**Saturday
January 17, 2026
10:30 - 1:00**

Speakers:
Anthony Finch, Int. Adm
Dr. Tonyia Winston, Trustee
Mack Sanders, Police Chief
Marva Campbell-Pruitt, Mayor

*Funded by a Grant from ComEd and Metropolitan Mays Caucus
Breakfast Will Be Served*

**SAVE MONEY AND
ENERGY AT HOME!**

SCAN THE QR CODE TO VIEW
RESIDENTIAL ENERGY
EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS







Skokie Energy & Home Repair **RESOURCE FAIR**

MON. APRIL 13, 11AM - 1PM & TUES. APRIL 21, 5PM - 7:30PM
SKOKIE PUBLIC LIBRARY | 5215 OAKTON ST.

Learn about low and no-cost renewable energy and efficiency programs to upgrade your home and lower your utility bills!

Drop in anytime to browse resources, speak with experts and neighbors, and enjoy free giveaways. Admission is free and refreshments will be provided.

Questions?

Contact sustainability@skokie.org or call 847-933-8282



Enact policies that support clean energy

STRATEGY	Notes	Link to Resource	Lead	Encourage	Enact	Impact	Effort Required	Easy win
Create a community energy plan to identify best opportunities to reduce energy use, decarbonize and advance renewable energy			x	x	x		H	
Adapt zoning codes and streamline development processes to accelerate investment in solar and other renewable energy systems					x		M	
Modernize municipal franchise agreements to leverage investment in clean energy and reduce costs to residents.					x		H	
Comply current cycle of Illinois Energy Conservation Code (IECC)		Y			x		M	
Adopt residential 'stretch codes' setting higher standards for energy efficiency than IECC		Y			x		H	
Adopt a community building performance standard requiring large energy users to report and reduce energy use over time		Y			x		H	
Leverage performance contracts, power purchase agreements, leasing and other strategies to finance large energy efficiency and renewable energy projects		Y	x	x			H	
Require high performance, all electric, and net zero new building construction.					x		H	

How do you eat an elephant?

2015 - 2016

2018

2022 - 2023

2024

2025

2026

March 2015 - City Council gives the Utilities Commission permission to **explore** the development of a benchmarking ordinance.

June 2015 - Staff begins convening stakeholders and **benchmarking municipal buildings**.

October 2015 - Staff submits **legal request** to develop ordinance.

December 2016 - Energy & Water Benchmarking Ordinance Passes.

November 2018 - City Council accepts and places on file the Climate Action and Resilience **Plan**, setting goals to:

- Reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050
- Reduce building energy consumption by 35% by 2035 and by 50% by 2050 (from 2005 levels)
- Achieve 100% renewable electricity supply for all Evanston accounts by 2030.

January 2022 - Mayor Biss announces participation in National Building Performance Standards (BPS) **Coalition**.

January 2023 - Staff begins **outreach** on BPS and Stretch Code, supported by City Council.

April 2023 - Sustainability & Resilience Division **staff grows** from 1 FTE to 3 FTE

September 2023 - Staff submits legal request to develop ordinance.

January 2024 - City Council reiterates desire to continue **community engagement** on BPS and Stretch Code.

November 2024 - Staff submits second legal request to develop ordinance.

February 2025 - City Council adopts Illinois Stretch Energy Code.

March 2025 - City Council adopts **Healthy Buildings Ordinance**, establishing BPS.

November 2025 - City begins convening Technical Committee and Accountability Board

September 2026 - City reaches record 83% compliance rate with benchmarking.

October 2026 - City begins hiring for 4th FTE and begins procurement process for a **municipal building audit and decarbonization planning study**.

*Evanston's **strategies** over several years led to impactful **policy adoption**.*

Questions?

Taking a bite sized approach

Let's Try!

Think about one community you know well.

Which one or two of these actions could the community realistically begin within the next 12 months?

- Conduct energy audit of eligible municipal facilities
- Install occupancy sensors, and other inexpensive energy efficiency products
- Educate the community about energy efficiency
- Promote utility energy efficiency programs
- Engage citizen commission to explore stretch code or benchmarking policy
- What else?

Consider the local context

For each action, note one factor that could help it move forward and one that could hold it back

- **Staff and technical capacity:** Who could lead the work, and do they have the time and knowledge needed?
- **Political support:** Is there a local champion and whose support would be required?
- **Funding and resources:** What existing funding/partnerships/programs could support the action?
- **Information:** What building data or community input is available and what is missing?
- **Local alignment:** Does the action support an existing plan or community priority?

Example: the sustainability coordinator could lead municipal benchmarking and the mayor supports it. However, the coordinator has limited time and we do not yet have complete utility data.

Adapting to the local context

**Return to the factor you identified as most likely to hold the action back.
How could you adjust the action so the community can still move forward?**

If the main challenge is...	The community could...
Limited staff time or technical knowledge	Reduce the scope or seek technical assistance
Limited political support	Begin with a municipal, voluntary, or pilot effort
Limited funding	Use an existing program or divide the work into phases
Missing building data or community input	Start with an inventory, survey, or small group of buildings
Weak connection to existing priorities	Demonstrate the value of energy efficiency to the municipality, businesses, or residents

Sharing and discussion

Briefly share:

- The action your group selected
- The local factor that most influenced your choice
- How you adjusted the action to make it more achievable

As other groups share, consider:

- Has your community tried something similar?
- What helped or hindered implementation?
- What lesson/resource/partnership could help move the idea forward?

How Is Your Community Thinking About Building Energy Policies?

Help inform the future of building energy policies in Illinois by sharing your community's priorities, interest in stretch codes, benchmarking, and building performance standards, and the support needed to move forward.

The survey asks about:

- **Community priorities:** How building energy policies align with your municipality's sustainability and climate goals.
- **Policy interest:** Whether your community is considering adopting any of these policies in the near or long term.
- **Implementation needs:** Potential barriers, compliance challenges, and support that could help your community.

The survey should take 15 – 20 minutes to complete. It is understood that your responses represent your individual perspective and do not reflect your municipality's official positions.

Take the survey: Scan the QR code with your phone, or visit this link:
[Slipstream.formstack.com/forms/EnergyPolicy](https://slipstream.formstack.com/forms/EnergyPolicy)

Questions? Contact Sarah Wells at swells@slipstreaminc.org.

