



Green Energy Standards for New Municipal Buildings

Communities can use municipal building policies to increase municipal energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions. Communities can incorporate national guidelines on green building practices into the siting, design, and construction of municipal facilities.

WHAT IS IT?

Green energy standards for new municipal buildings are laws that require new buildings (or major renovations, depending on the wording of the law) to meet specific energy and environmental standards. Community leaders can set specific energy and environmental goals, such as energy usage reductions against a baseline year, and use green energy standards to achieve those goals for municipal buildings.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Green building standards for new municipal buildings allow local governments to lead by example and make significant reductions in their communities' carbon footprints. Green energy standards ensure that municipal buildings operate more efficiently and cost-effectively. While sustainable buildings often have a higher up-front cost, green building standards reduce the long-term costs of maintenance and energy. A 2011 Government Services Administration study of certified green federal buildings found that those buildings used 25% less energy, had 19% lower operating costs, reduced carbon emissions by 36%, and had 27% higher occupant satisfaction compared to the national average.

BENEFITS



Reduced utility costs



Lower operation and management costs



Lower greenhouse gas emissions



Improved health and productivity of those using new municipal buildings



Decreased pollution from municipal buildings

HOW CAN COMMUNITIES IMPLEMENT THIS POLICY?

Local governments can approve ordinances or similar laws that require new buildings, major renovations, or other specified construction projects to achieve specific environmental standards. Many communities use Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) certification developed by the U.S. Green Building Council as the required standard for municipal projects. The City of Cleveland, for example, requires all City-owned new construction and major renovations over 10,000 square feet to achieve LEED® Silver certification or higher.