

### ***Increasing Energy Code Compliance***

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Illinois law requires all new commercial and residential construction projects to comply with a statewide energy conservation code. The current version is based on the 2018 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC). Buildings built to these energy performance standards will see significant energy cost savings. For example, a typical commercial building will see annual energy costs reduced by approximately 30% when designed to the 2018 Energy Code standards.

One problem is that not all new construction and renovation projects in Illinois will be compliant. In fact, a 2012 study by ADM Associates found that between 15% and 22% of reviewed projects were not compliant with the current Energy Code standards. It also found that some jurisdictions had no review procedures and did not enforce Energy Code compliance.

In this energy smart tip, we discuss some strategies for overcoming some of the barriers to Energy Code compliance.

## **Barriers to Code Compliance and Adoption**

### **Does code adoption discourage economic development?**

**Robert Cole**, the Director of Buildings and Inspections for the City of East Peoria, is an outspoken champion of the Energy Code for his municipality. While he strongly believes that jurisdictions should enforce the Energy Code (“it’s the law”), he notes that not everyone feels the same way that he does.

#### **Barriers to Adoption**

**Some municipalities see Code adoption as a stumbling block to economic development.**

In jurisdictions where the Code is not enforced, designers and construction professionals have little economic incentive to be Code compliant. Energy upgrades are seen as adding to project costs. Some municipalities fear that if they enforce the Energy Code, this will discourage builders from building in the area. Others believe they are unlikely to see economic benefits from energy efficiency.

Our experience is that there are many contractors and designers who go above and beyond in making buildings energy efficient, but there are others who try to get away with doing the bare minimum or even less to cut costs. “If they can cut a corner, they will,” says Mr. Cole.

#### **Barriers to Enforcement**

**Some small municipalities are stretched so thin that they may not even have a building department.**

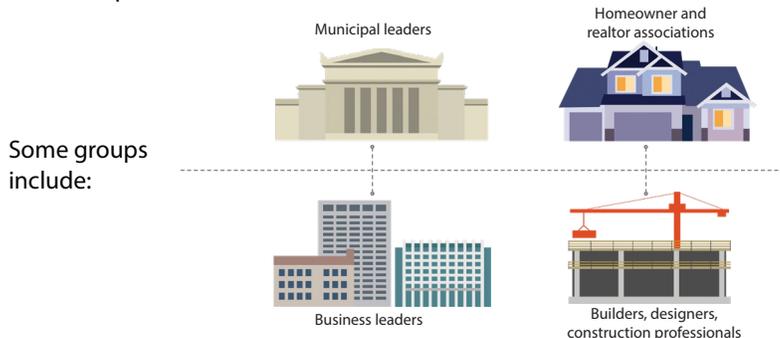
Budget constraints challenge them to keep up with the most basic programs. While they may be motivated to comply with building codes that improve health and safety, they may not have the resources, staff, or expertise to enforce the Energy Code, which could be perceived as less important. A lack of training and expertise can also limit an ability to enforce the Energy Code. In addition, builders may lack the training they need to build in ways that are Energy Code compliant.



To motivate municipalities and builders to comply with the Code, Mr. Cole recommends **“keeping the positives in front of them.”** And there are many benefits to Energy Code compliance including:

- Energy cost savings
- Comfortable and healthier homes and work places
- More sustainable communities
- Transparency and compliance with state law

When people can see the value in energy efficiency, they are typically willing to pay more for energy efficient homes and buildings. In this way, energy efficiency can provide economic benefits to designers and contractors. This kind of market transformation takes time. In some communities, extensive stakeholder outreach may be needed to overcome economic concerns and help people see the benefit of Energy Code compliance.



In some areas, Mr. Cole noted that state agencies or utilities may need to offer financial incentives to encourage small municipalities to enforce the Code and builders to meet or exceed requirements.

### Local Collaboration for Code Compliance

Robert Cole notes that some municipalities enforce the Code, even while neighboring towns and cities do not. Often times, they also enforce different versions of the Energy Code. Typically one municipality doesn't want to be the first adopter of a new version due to competitive concerns - it could raise building costs, increase the amount of oversight, or potentially discourage builders from working in their community.

Mr. Cole's innovative solution to this problem is to collaborate with neighboring municipalities. He recognized that these communities would not truly adopt the Code unless everyone in the region agreed to adopt it together. Mr. Cole organized a gathering of building inspectors and municipal leaders in the region, and as a result, all agreed to adopt the latest version of the Code together.

## SEDAC On-Demand Training and Technical Support

**SEDAC's Energy Code Training Program** is here to help. We provide Energy Code training and support for professionals throughout Illinois. We are especially interested in assisting areas where compliance is low or enforcement is difficult. We offer:

 In person workshops throughout the state	 Lunchtime webinars for busy professionals	 Online courses and resources that can be accessed any time, anywhere	 Technical support for people with energy code questions
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We are happy to tailor our training to your specific needs.

Find out more at [sedac.org/energy-code](http://sedac.org/energy-code)

Funding is provided in whole or in part by the Illinois EPA Office of Energy.

### Other Resources:

Many other excellent webinar-based training resources are available, ranging from overviews to special topics and tutorials.

Here's a sample of some of our favorite resources from the US Department of Energy:

[COMcheck Basics](#)

[Basic HVAC Controls and Energy Codes](#)

[Energy Rating Index \(ERI\) Compliance Alternative](#)

[Energy Code Compliance Paths: Which is best for you?](#)

[Showing Compliance for Additions & Alterations using RES-CHECK and COMcheck](#)

## WHO WE ARE

The Smart Energy Design Assistance Center assists buildings and communities in achieving energy efficiency, saving money, and becoming more sustainable. SEDAC is an applied research program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

In addition to Energy Code training and support, SEDAC services to save energy and money include:

- Waste Water Energy Efficiency | Quick Advice | Energy Assessments | New Construction Design Assistance  
 Long-term Energy Planning | Retro-commissioning | Climate Action Planning

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