WHAT IS ZERO CODE?

The Zero Code is both an ICC-approved code appendix* and a flexible framework that cities and states can use to help reach their building decarbonization goals. The Zero Code combines energy efficiency and renewable energy to support the construction of code-compliant, zero carbon buildings that use local clean energy. It applies to new commercial, industrial and mid- to high-rise residential buildings—the dominant building types being constructed in cities today.

The Zero Code appendix was formally adopted by the International Code Council on April 8, 2020, and is included in the new 2021 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC). Cities and states can adopt all or aspects of the Zero Code through a regular code-adoption process or via other policy pathways described here. The Zero Code is designed to be both plug-and-play and highly flexible and adaptable for any jurisdiction to use.

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WHY GO WITH THE ZERO CODE?

- It’s ICC-approved
- It’s plug-n-play and ready today
- It’s flexible and adaptable
- It works with existing codes
- It also works outside the code process
- It pushes the envelope on energy efficiency
- It supports local clean energy development
- It results in zero carbon buildings

WHAT DOES THE ZERO CODE DO?

Simply put, the Zero Code combines efficiency requirements with on- or off-site renewable energy requirements to meet a building’s anticipated energy needs.

The Zero Code provides a standard formula to calculate how much renewable energy is needed to meet a building’s energy demand after satisfying the energy-efficiency requirements of the ASHRAE Standard 90.1-2019 / IECC 2021
or any efficiency standard of equal or greater stringency. The formula can be applied to the most commonly-constructed commercial, industrial and multifamily residential buildings—such as hospitals, hotels, office buildings and schools—in different climate zones throughout the U.S.

The Zero Code provides technical guidance on different strategies and options for procuring renewable energy—including power purchase agreements and renewable energy credits. It allows jurisdictions to include the option for developers to pay into a Renewable Energy Investment Fund in lieu of producing or procuring renewable energy. Cities and states can use this fund to support clean energy projects in their communities that benefit local residents. The Zero Code gives preference for on-site and local renewable energy generation, which can be a catalyst for local job creation, improve local air quality, and add more clean energy to the local grid beyond what utilities are required to produce.

The Zero Code also encourages developers to maximize investments in cost-effective energy efficiency, since the more efficient the building, the less renewable energy developers will need to generate or procure to comply with the code.

**WHAT MAKES THE ZERO CODE UNIQUE?**

The Zero Code is the first ICC-approved code appendix of its kind to marry energy efficiency with renewable energy to support the construction of code-compliant, zero carbon commercial buildings. It is also unique in that it can be used with existing building energy efficiency standards, including earlier versions of the IECC. This means cities and states that already adhere to energy standards for commercial construction can adopt the Zero Code language and framework without having to update their building codes. Cities and states are also free to use and adapt the Zero Code language and framework through other policy levers described here to encourage building decarbonization.

In short, the Zero Code is one of the most flexible and adaptable tools available to cities and states today to advance building decarbonization.

For more information about the Zero Code, visit [zero-code.org](http://zero-code.org) or email [info@architecture2030.org](mailto:info@architecture2030.org)