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Building Energy Codes

An Equity Framework

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About ILLUME

ILLUME offers a broad range of consulting and research services to help our clients make informed decisions, implement effective policies, and achieve their energy policy goals. We aim to advance, re-envision, and equitably transform the energy industry by combining community-forward solutions with technical ingenuity.

We help our clients reach their goals by serving as an additional team member with unique expertise, creative solutions, and a commitment to producing community, climate, and energy benefits.



Building Energy Codes and Equity

Building energy codes focus on advancing cost-effective energy efficiency improvements in new construction. They are based on a national committee's consensus on prioritizing cost-efficient energy efficiency measures.

Equity is contextual and is based on “local” needs and should be addressed at the local level.

Code development, or amendment to national models, is critical to reflect needs and realities at the local level.

EJ Communities Priorities in Buildings

Environmental Justice (EJ) communities' **priorities in buildings** are :

- Affordability
- Resilience
- Health - Indoor air quality and protection from outdoor air quality

Equity in the building sector can also include job creation and investment in workforce development.

Building energy codes regulate new construction and do not directly affect many of the typical home types of EJ community residents. EJ communities view building codes as less of a priority.

EJ communities view building initiatives that improve existing buildings as more relevant to their immediate health, well-being, and financial situation.

Equity Framework for Building Energy Codes



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Advancing Equity

“ *Equity is not a cut and paste concept. The causes and effects of inequity **must be sorted out locally.***

Local governments can learn from one another, but there is no substitute for working out solutions in collaboration with each, distinct impacted community. ”

—Equity and Buildings, USDN



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Start with Guiding Questions

Start with an **inquisitive process centered** around asking **guiding questions**.

Work with your impacted communities to integrate equity into building energy code development, adoption, and implementation.

- Explore **intended outcomes** for impacted communities
- Understand the **inequities, needs, and goals** of your communities



Examples of Guiding Questions

- *How can building energy codes address disparities or inequalities?*
- *How can they prevent introducing inequitable outcomes?*
- *How can state and local governments support building energy code policies or processes that include communities historically excluded from decisions on their built environment?*
- *What data do we need to inform policies and intervention, and how/where can we access that data?*
- *How can that data be used in the future?*

Advance Meaningful Engagement

“ Resource alignment is critical for community engagement. We resourced the communities and community partners, but if we could do it again, we would double the resources. ”

—USDN Zero Cities Project

“ The key to closing equity gaps and resolving climate vulnerability is the direct **participation by impacted communities** in the development and implementation of solutions and policy decisions that directly impact them. This level of participation unleashes much-needed capacity but also requires initial capacity investments across multiple sectors to achieve systems changes and culture shifts needed. ”

—USDN Zero Cities Project

Advance Meaningful Engagement

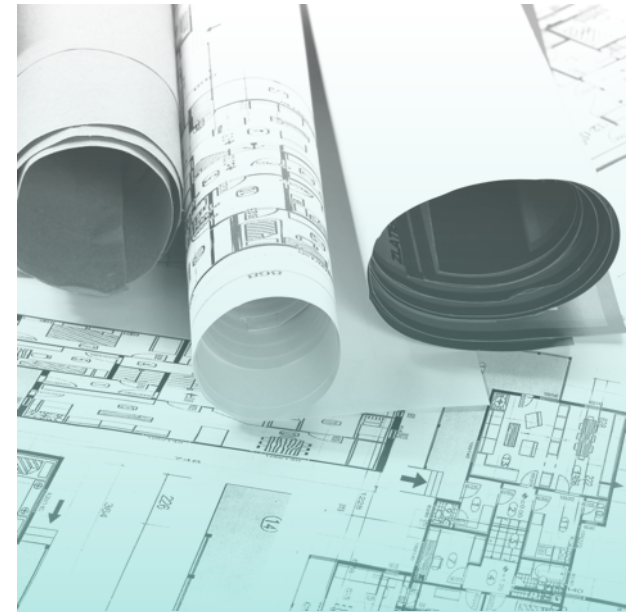
- **Establish a framework for community engagement** leveraging existing literature, such as *“The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership.”*
- Plan for and allow the **time it takes to engage EJ communities** and **build trust** meaningfully.
- **Identify the right partners for community engagement** and work alongside those partners to understand and integrate the community’s needs within building energy code policies.
- Create and disseminate **resources and materials** on building energy codes that are easy to understand (and use) by local government staff, CBOs, and EJ communities.



Plan for Success, Identify, and Address Gaps

Providing Support and Resources

- Support (or lead) **data collection on energy code compliance in EJ communities** to identify specific needs and strategies and address compliance gaps.
- Use outcomes from field studies to **address compliance disparities** in EJ and under-resourced communities.
- Promote coordinated shared resources for **providing code education, training, and compliance support**, including regional code “Circuit Rider” models and regional training and education resource hubs.



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Other Considerations

Use a holistic cross-departmental approach to address equity in the building sector.

Equity cannot be meaningfully addressed in a silo of building energy codes.

Integrated into the larger state and regional energy, sustainability, or climate action plan.

“Collaborate across departments and disciplines to produce policies and programs that better address equity issues. Working across silos allows policies to move beyond solely focusing on buildings’ greenhouse gas emissions to also providing critical health, resilience, environmental, and economic benefits for communities.”

—City Energy Project Policy Guide

Measure Progress

- Assess progress against intended outcomes.
- Continue to inform and engage with impacted communities.
- Celebrate success!



Thank You!

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