

The Role of the Building Standards Commission in Adopting Building Codes

The establishment and enforcement of building codes are integral to ensuring the safety and functionality of structures. The Building Standards Commissions (BSC) participates in the process of developing, updating, and implementing these codes. The Commission also hears appeals concerning decisions made by the Building Official or Fire Chief and review of staff recommendations concerning code enforcement cases for property maintenance, repairs and abatement of dangerous buildings.

Building Codes

Building codes are a set of regulations established to ensure the safety, health, accessibility, and overall performance of buildings. These codes cover a broad range of concerns, including structural integrity, fire safety, electrical systems, plumbing, energy efficiency, and environmental impact. The BSC will review and recommend the following codes.

- 2024 International Building Code (IBC)
- 2024 International Residential Code (IRC)
- 2024 International Fire Code (IFC)
- 2024 International Fuel Gas Code (IFGC)
- 2024 International Mechanical Code (IMC)
- 2024 International Plumbing Code (IPC)
- 2024 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC)
- 2024 International Existing Building Code (IEBC)
- 2024 International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC)
- 2024 International Swimming Pool and Spa Code (ISPSC)
- 2023 National Electrical Code (NEC)

All the codes listed herein, except the National Electric Code which is provided by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), are provided by the International Code Council (ICC). ICC is the national code body and leading global source of model codes, standards and building safety solutions. They also provide product evaluation, accreditation, technology, training, and certification.

National - ICC Process of Code Adoption: The ICC process is a consensus-based process to develop and adopt building codes. It involves multiple steps, including submitting proposals, public hearings, and voting.

Steps in the ICC code adoption process

1. Submit a proposal: Anyone can submit a proposal for a code change.
2. Post the proposal: The proposal is posted for public review at least 30 days before the public hearing.
3. Public hearing: The ICC holds a public hearing where interested parties can present their case.
4. Committee action: The committee reviews the proposal and makes a recommendation to the ICC.
5. Assembly action: ICC members can challenge the committee's recommendation. The assembly then votes on the proposal.
6. Public comment: Interested parties can submit comments on the proposal.
7. Final action hearing: Eligible voters vote on the proposal.
8. Publish the new edition: A new code is published, incorporating the final actions on all proposals.

The ICC updates its codes every three years. The final outcomes are voted on by state and local government officials.

The North Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG)

For 57 years, NCTCOG has been a voluntary association for governments established to assist local governments in planning for common needs. NCTCOG serves a 16-county region of North Central Texas, its centered around Dallas and Fort Worth composed of over 230 member governments including numerous cities and school districts. The RCCC was created by the North Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG). The Regional Codes Coordinating Committee (RCCC) researches and provides recommendations on the standardization of municipal construction code amendments. The RCCC established 5 Advisory Boards to vet each of the codes. The COG Advisory Boards are Building & Residential, Electrical, Energy & Green, Fire, Plumbing & Mechanical. Each Advisory Board provides support and technical advice to the RCCC with regular progress reports on suggested code amendments until completion. The Advisory Boards are composed of local building officials, inspectors, plans examiners, contractors and building industry manufacturers. Advisory Boards may compose Task Force Subcommittees to review the codes for amendments.

Regional – NCTCOG Process of Code Amendments: A “Regional Amendment” is defined as a proposed regional change to a model code that is needed because of conditions unique to this region or because of deficiencies or errors in the code. Regional amendments are submitted as code change proposals to the RCCC.

Steps in the NCTCOG amendment process

1. The RCCC reviews all ICC Codes and the NEC for adoption and code amendments.
2. The process of developing amendments is open, and the public is invited to submit proposals. The RCCC will forward proposals to the appropriate Advisory Board.
3. Advisory Boards may split into Task Forces to review specific sections of the applicable codes and to recommend amendments. Each Task Force will select one member to be responsible for setting the date, time, and location for the Task Force’s meetings and for compiling recommendations, interpretations, and/or comments into one document.
4. Each Advisory Board may conduct approximately five day-long meetings at NCTCOG to review all proposals and comments submitted by the Task Forces and the public. During these meetings, all amendments will be finalized.
5. Advisory Boards will submit recommendations to NCTCOG for publication on the code’s web page. Advisory Board members and the public will be encouraged to review the recommendations and submit comments to NCTCOG staff, by email or on electronic media.
6. Amendments will be forwarded to the RCCC and shall require an approval vote per Section 6 of the RCCC by laws.
7. Amendments shall then be then forwarded to the NCTCOG Executive Board for approval. The finalized amendments will be advertised and posted on the codes website and disseminated to all member city managers and mayors.

Recommendations to the RCCC require a two-thirds vote of those members present. The Advisory Boards are primarily working subcommittees where full and frank discussions may occur; therefore, each member of the Advisory Board shall be given the opportunity to speak at length to the issues at hand. Meetings are open, but because their primary purpose is the exchange of ideas between Board members, non-members who wish to speak may do so with chairperson approval. All are encouraged to seek a variety of opinions and evidence on all matters. Information shall be presented in a concise methodical fashion.

Local - City of Plano - Building Standards Commission Process

The BSC works to ensure that construction practices align with the City of Plano's needs by adopting the ICC building codes. The Commission hears staff input, code amendments and recommendations for each code guided by national and regional regulations.

Steps in the Building Standards Commission code adoption and code amendment review process

1. Final NCTCOG code amendments are received for review and dissemination.
2. Staff reviews NCTCOG code amendments for addition or deletion based on City of Plano requirements.
3. Staff sends code amendments to the Building Standards Commission for review.
4. Staff presents code amendment package at the Building Standards Commission open meetings for review, discussion and recommendation.
5. The Building Standards Commission votes to recommend code amendments and code adoption for approval to the City Council.

Based on the BSC recommendation, City Council will adopt the recommended codes with amendments.

Challenges Faced by Code Adoption

- **Balancing Innovation and Safety:** As new materials and technologies emerge, balance of potential benefits and innovation with the need for safety and reliability are prime concerns.
- **Industry Resistance:** Some construction industry stakeholders may resist new codes due to the costs associated with compliance or the perceived complexity of new standards. Overcoming this resistance through education, outreach, and collaboration is a key task. Such inclusivity enhances the legitimacy of adopted codes and fosters compliance among those affected by them.
- **Jurisdictional Differences:** The adoption of building codes can vary widely across jurisdictions. Differences in local regulatory frameworks can complicate the adoption of codes, making collaboration between national and local authorities essential. NCTCOG process helps mitigate this concern.

Conclusion: The Building Standards Commission is essential to the development and implementation of building codes for the City of Plano. Their role in ensuring the safety and technological advancement in construction is indispensable. By fostering collaboration between government bodies, reviewing COG code amendments and reviewing staff reports and proposed code adoption, the BSC acts as a sounding board for code recommendations to the City Council, which further contributes to creating a safer, more sustainable built environment for our community.

- *The North Texas Council of Governments – Regional Code Coordinating Committee and Advisory Board Subcommittee roster is attached for your review.*