

A photograph of a business meeting. Several people in business attire are gathered around a table, looking at and pointing to various documents and a laptop. The documents feature financial charts, including line graphs and bar charts. The scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source coming from the laptop and the documents themselves. The overall atmosphere is professional and collaborative.

Insights

Construction Codes in USA

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Confidential

Regulations Shaping Every U.S. Developments

In the USA, zoning codes set what can be built and where, while construction codes set how it's built safely; a project must comply with both before occupancy.



JURISDICTION OVERVIEW

- **Building regulation in the USA is primarily a state and local responsibility.**
- As the U.S. Constitution does not assign land-use planning and building regulation to the federal government, these powers are exercised by state governments and delegated to local authorities for implementation.



BUILDING PERMISSION REQUISITES



Zoning
Codes Compliance



Construction
Codes Compliance



“What can be built and where?”

➤ **Controls:**

- Permitted land uses
- Building height
- Density
- Setbacks
- Parking requirements



“How it must be built safely?”

➤ **Regulates:**

- Structural safety
- Fire protection
- Accessibility
- Building systems (MEP)
- Energy Efficiency

A development project typically requires compliance with both zoning code and the Construction Code before occupancy is permitted.

Source: Aranca Research

Governance Hierarchy for the U.S. Compliance Codes

Zoning is managed locally, while construction codes move from international standards to state rules and local enforcement.



Zoning Code



Local Government

Prepares and administers development plans and policies and zoning



Zoning Board *(Part of Local Government)*

Reviews variances, appeals and special exceptions



Construction Codes



International Code Council (ICC)

International association that develops model codes such as the International Building Code (IBC), International Fire Code (IFC) etc



State Government

Adopts and administers the Construction Codes, based on the ICC codes and state-specific amendments



Local Government

Formulates and enforces local amendments to the state-specific codes through plan reviews and inspections

As the ICC-formulated codes are non-binding on any government, state governments may choose to adopt them (with or without amendments). Most of them do so to adhere to international standards.

Source: Aranca Research

U.S. Project Approval Process - From Planning to Occupancy

Each project stage follows specific zoning & construction requirements, with the relevant authorities reviewing compliance from pre-construction through occupancy.

❖ Illustrative Approval Process

For a project involving the **construction of a 10-story residential apartment building in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**, the approval process will be as follows:

 Stage 01 Pre - Construction		 Stage 02 During Construction		 Stage 03 Post - Construction	
	Land Use & Zoning Review	Building Permit Review	Construction & Inspections	Occupancy Approval	
 Key Checks	• Permissible land use • Height restrictions • Density regulations • Open space and building setbacks • Parking requirements	• Structural design • Fire protection systems • Means of egress • Accessibility requirements • Mechanical, electrical & plumbing systems • Energy efficiency standards	• Foundation • Structural framing • Electrical installations • Plumbing systems • Fire protection systems	• Compliance with approved plans • Compliance with Pennsylvania UCC requirements	
 Reviewing Authorities *	• Philadelphia Department of Planning & Development	• Philadelphia Department of Licenses & Inspections (L&I)	• Philadelphia Department of Licenses & Inspections (L&I)	• Philadelphia Department of Licenses & Inspections (L&I)	
 Governing Documents *	• Philadelphia Comprehensive Plan & Zoning Code	• Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code (UCC)	• Approved plans and permits based on the UCC	• Approved plans and UCC	
 Output	• Zoning Approval	• Building Permit	• Construction Compliance Verification	• Certificate of Occupancy	

* Reviewing authorities and Governing Documents are specific to the illustrated project and will vary with project type and location
Source: Philadelphia Home Rule Charter, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Official Website, City of Philadelphia Atlas, Pennsylvania Building Codes

Pennsylvania Construction Codes Cover a Wide Range of Building Requirements

Construction codes establish the minimum standards to ensure buildings are safe, functional, and fit for occupancy while protecting public health, safety, and welfare.

❖ Uniform Construction Codes - Pennsylvania

Some of the various types of codes adopted by Pennsylvania are depicted below to understand the concerns addressed by these codes.

- “Amended” codes are adopted after necessary state-specific changes to the codes.
- Some codes have been “not amended” and adopted by the state as formulated by ICC without any state-specific changes.

 Pennsylvania Building Code 2021 IBC 2021 amended	 Pennsylvania Residential Code 2021 IRC 2021 amended	 Pennsylvania Standard on Bleachers, Folding and Telescopic Seating, and... ICC 300, 2017 not amended	 Pennsylvania Standard on the Design and Construction of Log Structures 2017 ICC 400, 2017 not amended	 Pennsylvania Fire Alarm Code 2019 NFPA 72, 2019 not amended
 Pennsylvania Existing Building Code 2021 IEBC 2021 amended	 Pennsylvania Fire Code 2021 IFC 2021 amended	 Pennsylvania Storm Shelter Code 2020 ICC 500, 2020 not amended	 Pennsylvania Standard for Residential Construction in High Wind Regions 2020 ICC 600, 2020 not amended	 Pennsylvania Emergency and Standby Power Code 2019 NFPA 110, 2019 not amended
 Pennsylvania Plumbing Code 2021 IPC 2021 amended	 Pennsylvania Mechanical Code 2021 IMC 2021 not amended	 Pennsylvania Accessibility Code 2009 A117.1, 2009 not amended	 2010 ADA Standards ADA 2010 not amended	 Pennsylvania Fire Safety and Emergency Symbols Code 2018 NFPA 170, 2018 not amended
 Pennsylvania Fuel Gas Code 2021 IFGC 2021 not amended	 Pennsylvania Energy Code 2021 IECC 2021 amended	 Pennsylvania Electrical Code 2020 NFPA 70, 2020 not amended	 Pennsylvania Portable Fire Extinguisher Code, 2018 NFPA 10, 2018 not amended	 Pennsylvania Exterior Wall with Combustible Components Fire Test... NFPA 285, 2019 not amended
 Pennsylvania Wildland-Urban Interface Code 2021 IWUIC 2021 not amended	 Pennsylvania Swimming Pool and Spa Code 2021 ISPSC 2021 amended	 Pennsylvania Carbon Dioxide Extinguishing Systems Code 2018 NFPA 12, 2018 not amended	 Pennsylvania Fire Sprinkler Code 2019 NFPA 13, 2019 not amended	 Pennsylvania Stationary Fuel Cell Power Code 2020 NFPA 853, 2020 not amended
 Pennsylvania Private Sewage Disposal Code 2021 IPSDC 2021 not amended	 Pennsylvania Building Performance Code 2021 ICCPC 2021 not amended	 Pennsylvania One- and Two-Family Dwelling Fire Sprinkler Installation Code... NFPA 13D, 2019 not amended	 Pennsylvania Low-rise Residential Fire Sprinkler Installation Code 2019 NFPA 13R, 2019 not amended	 Pennsylvania Door and Opening Protectives Code 2019 NFPA 80, 2019 not amended

Source: <https://up.codes/codes/pennsylvania?year=2025>

Thank You



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