

# Wisconsin Stakeholder Priorities and Preferences for Building Energy Code Adoption

Clean Wisconsin and Slipstream staff conducted 34 stakeholder engagement interviews in late 2024 to better understand concerns and barriers regarding code adoption and compliance. These interviews focused on identifying obstacles to the successful adoption and implementation of building energy codes. Stakeholders most directly impacted by energy codes, including 5 industry associations, 3 code officials, 5 commercial builders, 5 design professionals, 5 developers, 6 residential builders and 5 subcontractors were interviewed across Wisconsin. All stakeholders recognized the value and importance of codes, but there was a significantly diverse range of opinions regarding the content and requirements of those codes.



**Wisconsin currently utilizes the 2009 International Energy Conservation Codes (IECC) for residential construction and the 2015 IECC for commercial buildings. The two latest national energy codes are the 2021 and 2024 IECC.** The interview team found that different stakeholder groups perceive the impact of updating energy codes differently. Commercial developers and residential builders primarily focus on the costs associated with energy codes, particularly the initial cost impact. Conversely, building design professionals, code officials, and commercial builders focused more on the potential benefits of updating the code and the challenges associated with workforce development and training on new codes.

### Four core themes were identified:

- 1. Differing priorities may complicate communication around code updates.** Interviewees who expressed viewpoints opposing building energy code updates emphasized the upfront cost impacts of updated codes and the payback periods. In contrast, those who voiced support for energy code updates tended to highlight potential energy savings and the public benefits of reducing energy consumption (lower utility bills, comfort, reduced emissions).
- 2. Most stakeholders recognize a potential increase in the upfront cost of construction, but there is broad disagreement about the overall cost impact of updated codes.** Although information exists about the potential upfront costs and payback periods for advancing energy codes, the data may have a limited impact on stakeholders' viewpoints because different sources often produce dissimilar cost analyses. Sources like the National Association of Home Builders estimate up to an \$8000 incremental cost increase. In contrast, other sources like the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory estimate the incremental residential home cost to be approximately \$ 5,800.
- 3. The construction industry faces broader workforce-related challenges that impede training and increase construction costs.** We heard from stakeholders that there is a shortage of skilled tradespeople, raters, and building code inspectors. Stakeholders mentioned learning a new code would be difficult, especially with an already time-constrained workforce.
- 4. The code adoption update process is opaque and frustrating for many stakeholders.** Those formally involved in the code adoption process have a generally positive view. Still, they want it to be an administrative rulemaking process rather than involving the legislature. On the other hand, those who have not been a part of the formal process find it frustrating and challenging to participate in code updates.

### Project Partners

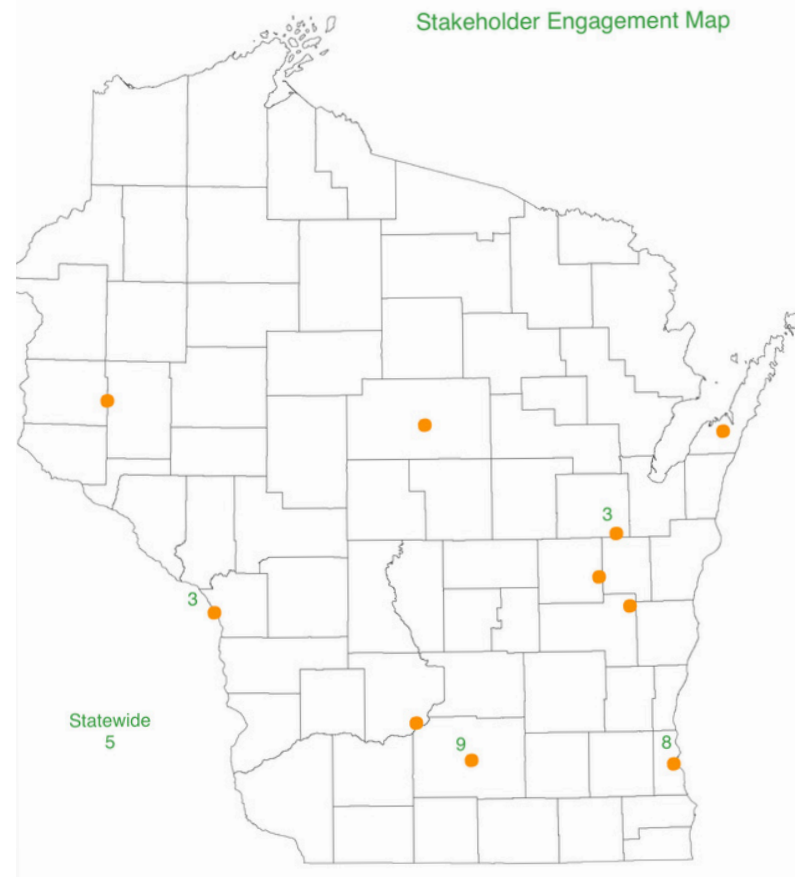


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The stakeholder interview process illustrated familiar barriers and concerns about code updates. Various groups (Slipstream, Clean Wisconsin, Wisconsin Local Government Climate Coalition, and the Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance), have begun addressing these concerns and barriers throughout Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Resilient and Efficient Codes Implementation (RECI) team, composed of the groups named above, established a Wisconsin Codes Collaborative, increasing communication among stakeholders and improving the accessibility of the current residential code update process. Other project team members are working on technical resources that will, among other things, support a shared understanding of the cost impact of updated codes. Also, an Energy Code Technical Advisor program has kicked off to support training on current energy codes and best practices regarding energy conservation. Lastly, the stakeholder engagement team has focused on industry stakeholders such as builders, designers, contractors, and code officials. The next step will be engaging a broader group of stakeholders, such as homeowners, renters, and business owners, to create a state-specific understanding of the benefits of the energy code to those stakeholder groups.

For additional information, see: <https://www.wienergycodes.org/>



Map of all 34 stakeholder interview participant locations  
The number next to dots indicates number of interviews if more than one.

**THIS PROJECT** is supported by the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) under the Building Technologies Office—DE-FOA-0002813—Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Resilient and Efficient Codes Implementation.

## Sources

- [1] <https://www.nahb.org/-/media/NAHB/advocacy/docs/top-priorities/codes/code-adoption/2021-iecc-cost-effectiveness-analysis-hirl.pdf>  
[2] [https://www.energycodes.gov/sites/default/files/2021-07/WisconsinResidentialCostEffectiveness\\_2021\\_0.pdf](https://www.energycodes.gov/sites/default/files/2021-07/WisconsinResidentialCostEffectiveness_2021_0.pdf)