



## **Newly released International Green Construction Code**

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Would you buy a car without airbags? Doubtful. In fact I think you would be hard pressed to find a new car for sale that didn't offer at least one drivers side airbag as standard equipment. If you were buying a new car for your family you probably would be interested in additional safety features such as anti-lock brakes and traction control as well as a vehicle that stands up well to independent crash testing. While there are federally mandated minimum energy and emission requirements many of the health and safety advances we now take for granted have been driven by the auto industry's competitive marketing.

There is no question that LEED certification has helped raise the quality of the built environment to a higher level. USGBC created LEED as a voluntary rating system intended for those choosing to take a leadership role in the marketplace. LEED has sought to continue to raise the bar in advancing green building performance. Unfortunately the benefits we have all enjoyed from the auto industry competitiveness haven't exactly mirrored themselves in our built environment. While LEED continues to raise the ceiling, it is the floor, as defined by simply building to meet the absolute code minimum, (below which you are breaking the law) that has remained virtually unchanged for many years. Competition has propelled many building owners to seek LEED certification but not nearly enough. The vast majority of buildings are still designed, constructed and renovated to code minimum standards - providing legally required seat belts but not much else. The individual building tenant has much less influence on the construction decisions than each of us has regarding what goes into the car we decide to purchase or lease. Maybe the time has come to help raise the base level of acceptable quality, health and safety standards from the existing minimums to a level that reflects construction advances that have been tried and tested for well over a decade of green building. The newly released International Green Construction Code (IgCC) is now available as a resource for jurisdictions that are ready to adopt a useable and enforceable framework that links together issues of green design, building performance and building safety.

The IgCC provides the building industry with language that both broadens and strengthens building codes in a way that will accelerate the construction of high-performance, green buildings. The IgCC applies to the construction of traditional and high-performance buildings, structures, and systems, including alterations, and additions. It creates a regulatory framework for new and existing buildings, advancing and complementing the momentum in "green" building. The IgCC establishes minimum requirements for all buildings, providing a natural complement for voluntary rating systems which extend beyond the IgCC's baseline. The U.S. Green Building Council, creators of LEED, has participated in the development of the IgCC and endorses its usage as a viable option for communities that wish to regulate minimum green building provisions.

Buildings are not monuments to be gazed upon. They provide shelter to our family, colleagues and friends where we live, work and play for almost 90% of each day. It is quite possible that the best

results for our community may come from a combination of a voluntary rating system constantly raising the ceiling followed by codes that continue to adjust the floor minimums. What do you think? Is it time that we at least consider adjusting the minimum acceptable code requirements thereby raising the standard of construction for everyone? Please email me your thoughts at [executivedirector@usgbc-li.org](mailto:executivedirector@usgbc-li.org). I will share as many comments as possible on our usgbc-li website, blog and newsletter. Look forward to hearing from you!

Vince Capogna, LEED AP, is the executive director of US Green Building Council - Long Island and principal of Synergy Green Building Group, Inc., New Hyde Park, N.Y. Vince Capogna, Synergy Green Building Group

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540