

GREEN ENERGY CODE / STATE BUILDING CODE

Issue

Buildings consume large amounts of energy and are a leading contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. In 2017, Minnesota’s building sector made up 40.6% of the total energy consumed in the state, 19.5% of which was from within the commercial buildings sector, including high-rise multifamily buildings. Cities, including Rochester, need the authority to require new and renovated commercial buildings be designed and constructed with the modern, more durable building solutions that are currently available.

Problem

Increasing building efficiency is one of the most impactful ways state and local governments can improve the comfort and health of residents, reduce costs for building owners, and make progress toward climate goals. Currently, state law prohibits cities from deviating from the state energy code. This delay in updating the standards for buildings does not further goals around emissions reductions. Further, tools like these are listed in Rochester’s Energy Action Plan as opportunities to help the City realize its City Council adopted environmental goals.

Solution

Support legislation that would enable local entities to adopt higher commercial building energy standards that would result in lower energy costs while reducing air pollution and contributions to global climate change. For example, legislative authority that would allow Minnesota cities to opt-in to the International Green Construction Code which lays out comprehensive sustainability measures for entire construction projects. Additionally, ability for cities to adopt the State of Minnesota SB 2030 Energy Standard in order to curb the energy use and carbon emissions of local buildings would be helpful (SB 2030 must be met by all projects receiving general obligation bond funding from the State of Minnesota, however it can also be voluntarily applied to any new or renovated building during the design phase).

As supported by the League of MN Cities and other cities around the state, the City of Rochester supports legislation that gives municipalities the authority to voluntarily adopt a uniform advanced energy building standard beyond the base statewide commercial code for the construction, reconstruction, and alteration of public and private commercial and multifamily buildings.



Impact

Buildings must become more efficient if the State’s carbon-reduction goals are to be reached. The State is currently not on track to meet its statutory greenhouse gas reduction goals of 30% reduction from 2005 levels by 2025 and 80% reduction by 2050. Likewise, Rochester is also not on track to meet its goals included in the City Council adopted Energy Action Plan.

