

April 26, 2024

MEMO

Re: New 2021 IECC Energy Code Impact on Builders



The City of Kansas City, Missouri has implemented the 2021 energy code with concern and apprehension from local Kansas City builders and contractors. Architects, Engineers and Third-Party Inspectors have had to revise plans and processes to address the Code for compliance. The new Code no doubt has added cost of construction of new housing.

The problem for new construction in the real essence of compliance is not whether to build a better home that is energy efficient and of higher quality; it is the reading, interpretation, and mixed signals compelled upon all stakeholders. Like all businesses and industry, knowing the equal and logical rules of the game is the only requirement for private enterprise to participate and usually thrive. The City should and must do a better job making the rules clear, logical, and pragmatic to real world building scenarios. The code seemed to have been rolled out and the administration and staff seems to have been ill-prepared for their own initiative.

This is not a political situation or event. This, by virtue of the desire to have highly efficient homes via an International Standardized Code, is an administrative duty of public employees to effectively train, inform, and implement in a city's building department without guesswork.

I believe builders do want to build better homes. I believe, too, that the environment and materials that we build with today are in some ways inferior and yet superior to those of the olden days. Just take the concept of lifetime warranty paint in Missouri. It is not real. Our local environment seems to always throw us the hardest of hospitable conditions: hot, cold, humid, pounding rain, and dry, sometimes on the same day. A modern energy code is good to tackle these extremes of our environment for future residents and builders.

The code should stand, but with modification. I believe if a licensed HVAC contractor is used the submission of a Manual J,S,D are burdensome and costly. I think that a HERS rating will be definitive by the efficiency of the equipment specified only.

The best way to counter higher costs is a fast and efficient permitting system and responsive staff. Increases in speed to build help drive down costs. No one can time things perfectly, but with high interest rates, labor shortages and new code all converging at once, there is a severe strain on affordability to produce an actual home like never before. Knowing the rules plus a fair and equal implementation of them can help. Quickly permitting these new trial and error plans by city are the only combat tool to let the private sector work out the housing needs of this community. It will take work, but any idea of any merit does.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "RC", with a stylized flourish extending from the bottom right.

Ryan Chambers