



# Planning & Development Services

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## Supplemental Staff Report

To: Board of County Commissioners  
From: Peter Gill, Long Range Planning Manager  
Re: 2021 Building Code Updates and Repeal of the Board of Appeals  
Date: August 24, 2021

### Summary

State law requires cities and counties to adopt the state building codes as adopted by the State Building Code Council (SBCC). This proposal would amend Skagit County Code Title 15 to update the County's adoption of the International Building Codes from the 2015 editions, to the 2018 editions adopted by the SBCC, with local exceptions.

Public notice was published to the Skagit Valley Herald on July 1, 2021, posted to social media, our website, sent to the PDS email listserve, and a letter sent to the Skagit County Building Association on July 13.

This report provides a summary of the comments received between July 1 and July 21, 2021. There was no public testimony at the hearing on July 19, 2021.

### Public Comments

The following written comment was received during the public comment period.

"Mandatory Sprinkler systems in houses are simply a ""Band-Aid"" on a lingering issue here in the USA, rather continue ""Band-Aid"" our building codes we should start to mandate that homes should be built out non-flamable materials, we have the technology, we have the ability, but we lack the guts to mandate that homes should be built out of 70% Non-Flamables. As an exhibit please look at Kodiak Steel Homes ([www.kodiaksteelhomes.com](http://www.kodiaksteelhomes.com)), these homes can withstand Hurricanes, tornados, and brush/wild fires. I grew up in Venezuela where homes were constructed out of concrete/masonry brick with out any structural wood, as wood was a real luxury that most could not afford. That said we Never Ever heard of any house fires, at most you'd have a room fire which was typically put out with a garden hose. So it can be done!!! This be a truely climate change game changer as we would not need to cut down so many trees.

Thank You for your time. "  
Henrik Christiansen  
12876 Summit Trail Lane  
Anacortes, WA 98221  
7/21/2021 11:03 AM

## Responses to Public Comments

The International Residential Code does allow for the use of fire resistant materials on the building exterior, but it is not required in most cases. Washington State limits the changes a local jurisdictions may make to the International Residential Code; only Chapter 1, the administrative provisions, may be modified.

Fire resistant materials are appropriate in fire prone areas of our county where access is difficult for fire apparatus. For this reason, Skagit County has adopted the Wildland Urban Interface Code requiring fire-resistant exterior materials and clear area around structures located in forest areas.

## Discussion items

The definition of an Agricultural building is changing.

Currently: Agricultural building: This definition is to be used for purposes of implementing Chapter 14.34 SCC, Flood Damage Prevention, only. A structure designed and constructed to house farm implements, hay, grain, poultry, livestock or other horticultural products. This structure shall not be a place of human habitation or a place of employment, nor shall it be a place used by the public.

Proposed: Agricultural Building. A structure designed and constructed to house farm implements, hay, grain, poultry, livestock or other horticultural products. This structure shall not be a place of human habitation or a place of employment where agricultural products are processed, treated or packaged, nor shall it be a place used by the public. (2018 International Fire Code)

Overview of the 2018 Washington State Energy Code changes.

Changes to the energy code are focused on efficiency with a shift toward carbon emissions rather than energy consumption. Here is a highlight of some of the changes in the 2018 code.

Changes to the total building performance path requires developing both a baseline and a proposed whole-building energy model to show that the completed building will exceed the baseline's energy performance. The performance path now limits the building enclosure's total heat loss coefficient to be no more than 20% higher than the level stated in the prescriptive code. For commercial projects there is a new outcome-based path that requires seven years of follow up reporting.

Changes include several definition updates that relate to insulation. Air leakage testing is required with a higher standard for compliance. Remedial work and retesting will be required until a leakage rate of 0.40 cfm/ft<sup>2</sup> or less is achieved.

The 2018 code now requires projects to achieve a minimum of six credits, a four-credit increase from the 2015 code. For residential development, these four steps can get many homes into the standard: install an efficient gas furnace, install the HVAC system inside the conditioned building, reduce air leakage by improved sealing, and choosing high-performance walls.

The 2018 energy code is available at the Washington State Building Code Council website: <https://sbcc.wa.gov/state-codes-regulations-guidelines/state-building-code/energy-code>

Training and other resources are available through the WSU Energy Program:  
**<http://www.energy.wsu.edu/BuildingEfficiency/EnergyCode.aspx>**

**For More Information**

To read more on earlier work sessions, the Notice of Availability, and hearing details, see the project website,

**[www.skagitcounty.net/departments/planningandpermit/codeupdatemain.htm](http://www.skagitcounty.net/departments/planningandpermit/codeupdatemain.htm)**.