

HOW POLICIES CAN CREATE BETTER BUILDINGS

Within the U.S., buildings are affected by a combination of policies and regulations that determine construction, operation, and how buildings emit carbon:



Energy codes

set the minimum energy efficiency requirements for newly constructed buildings.



Green building policies

can determine the energy efficiency for new and existing buildings. These policies aim to reduce the negative impacts of buildings on the environment and our health (UC).



Utility regulation

determines the prices, types, and delivery methods of the energy buildings use. These decisions are made by politically appointed/elected commissioners or board members.



ENERGY CODES

Every city, county, state, and tribe has a code they need to follow when constructing a building. Specific standards can make a building more energy-efficient through solutions like: insulation to minimize energy used for heating/cooling, thermostats that automatically change when the space is empty, and high-efficiency lights.

GREEN BUILDING POLICIES: BENCHMARKING AND BPS



Benchmarking is a tool to measure a building's energy use and track it over time to pinpoint areas for improvement (DOE). States, counties, cities, and tribes can all pass benchmarking policies to encourage building owners to understand and reduce their building energy use. Benchmarking provides an important foundation for other green building policies.

Building performance standards or BPS, is a policy that requires a building to reduce its energy use and direct emissions over time. This helps lower energy bills for tenants and decrease carbon emissions in the local community.



UTILITY DECISIONS

Public Utility Commissions (PUCs) and Public Service Commissions (PSCs) are state regulatory bodies that oversee energy creation, transmission, and use (NAACP). PUCs and PSCs are critical decision-makers related to our power bills and how and where utilities will generate or acquire electricity to serve customers. They have the power to lower building emissions by:

- Closing fossil fuel power plants
- Approving renewable energy projects
- Creating financial incentives for energy-efficiency or renewable energy like solar or wind power



Learn how communities can drive policymaking that centers people and the planet at imt.org/community-engagement.