

ROCHELLE CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM MEMO REGULAR MEETING

SUBJECT: Adoption of International Code Council 2021 Codes, Illinois Plumbing Code, Illinois Accessibility Code, and Illinois Energy Conservation Code

Staff Contact: Geoff Starr

Summary:

Beginning in 2015, the City of Rochelle joined with 30 surrounding communities and counties—including Ogle, Lee, Jo Daviess, Winnebago, DeKalb, Boone, and the City of Rockford—to form five committees tasked with reviewing and implementing a Unified Regional Building Code. The goal of this effort was to standardize building codes and amendments across Northwestern Illinois to promote consistency and streamline the development process throughout the region.

On August 4, 2023, Illinois Public Act 103-0510 was enacted and will take effect on January 1, 2025. This legislation establishes minimum standards for building codes across all municipalities and counties in Illinois. Specifically, it requires that local codes regulating new construction, rehabilitation of existing buildings, and residential structures be at least as stringent as the baseline statewide code standards. These baseline standards are defined as the current or most recent preceding editions (within the last nine years) of the International Building Code (IBC), International Existing Building Code (IEBC), and International Residential Code (IRC) as published by the International Code Council.

Additionally, several statewide codes preempt local amendments:

- **Illinois Plumbing Code:** Ensures safe plumbing design and installation.
- **Illinois Accessibility Code:** Guarantees accessibility for individuals with disabilities, in accordance with the Environmental Barriers Act.
- **Illinois Energy Conservation Code:** Requires compliance with the 2021 International Energy Conservation Code to promote energy efficiency.

Local amendments may not reduce the stringency of these state-mandated codes.

The proposed adoption of the 2021 International Codes continues Rochelle's established use of ICC model codes, including the IBC, IRC, IMC, IPMC, IEBC, IFGC, ISPC, and the National Electrical Code. Many of Rochelle's existing local amendments—such as those related to slab-on-grade foundations, floodplain elevation, return air design, and permit requirements—are being carried forward and updated to remain effective within the 2021 code framework. This continuity ensures a seamless transition for city staff, inspectors, and the development community.

While the updated codes reflect modern standards and safety practices, it is important to note that several of the more technical changes—particularly in energy efficiency and ventilation requirements—are the result of **state mandates** that apply to all jurisdictions in Illinois. These include blower door testing, mechanical ventilation for tight buildings, and higher thermal performance standards in both residential and commercial construction. These are not unique to Rochelle and cannot be amended locally. Staff will

continue to support and communicate with local builders and contractors to ensure a smooth adjustment period.

This adoption ensures that Rochelle remains compliant with Illinois law, aligned with its regional partners, and supportive of responsible, high-quality development.

Funding Sources:

Source:	Budgeted Amount:	Proposed Expenditure:
N/A	\$0.00	\$0.00

Strategic Plan Goal Application: Supports the goal of maintaining continuity with the Northwestern Regional Building Code

Recommendation:

Staff recommends adopting the International Code Council 2021 codes along with the Illinois Plumbing Code and Illinois Energy Conservation Code, to ensure that the City of Rochelle remains aligned with surrounding jurisdictions. This adoption will position Rochelle as a forward-thinking community that prioritizes safety, accessibility, energy efficiency, and consistency in regional development standards. All ordinances have an effective date of July 1, 2025.