

# Idaho's Wood River Valley is Building Better Codes

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Written by [Sharon Grant](#)

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As a resident of Idaho's Wood River Valley, which encompasses the cities of Hailey, Ketchum and Sun Valley, I have been involved with and impressed by the commitment of several local jurisdictions that have adopted above-code ordinances. As co-chair of USGBC's [Build Better Codes campaign](#) for 2013, I am doing what I can to share my expertise and my community's story, and also to support the many code advocacy efforts across USGBC's chapter community.

Blaine County adopted the BUILDSMART stretch energy code in 2011, and the city of Ketchum adopted a new minimum residential standard in 2012, which requires that new homes earn a Silver certification from either LEED or the National Green Building Standard. Both of these jurisdictions helped pave the way for Hailey's Build Better Program – all of which are, said Jeremy Sigmon, who leads USGBC's state and local policy and campaign advocacy initiatives, "Shining examples of local government initiatives that learn from best green building practices, apply local solutions and facilitate compliance by linking up with national programs like LEED."

On May 1, the city of Hailey amended its municipal code to require the Build Better Program, a stretch code that addresses energy efficiency and, in some cases, other sustainable building materials and practices that should improve water conservation, waste management, indoor air quality and more.

The next day, the [USGBC Idaho Chapter](#) hosted a recognition ceremony to memorialize these demonstrations of green building leadership (see photos) and to commit further focus and attention on green building leadership in the Wood River Valley.

Hailey's new Build Better Program, which was made voluntary for its first year to allow builders and developers to ease into the program, now requires residential and commercial buildings to be built 10 percent more energy efficient than the locally adopted energy code. All applicable building permits submitted on or after May 1 must now meet these requirements. Like the [majority of states](#) and local jurisdictions today, both Hailey and the state have adopted the 2009 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) as their baseline for residential and commercial building energy efficiency.

For certain residential additions and new construction, the Build Better Program is based on a menu of elective options. Projects calculate the required achievement threshold (in points) by dividing the square footage of conditioned space by the number of bedrooms, multiplied by 0.01. For example, a 2,500-square-foot home with three bedrooms is required to obtain eight points, while a 10,000-square-foot home with four bedrooms needs to earn 25 points. Having a sliding scale based on square footage is especially relevant in a location such as this because of the large proportion of high-end second homes.

Many of the elective measures correspond closely with green building rating systems and, as such, LEED certification (Homes or New Construction) at the Certified level and National Green Building Standard certification at the Bronze level are accepted as alternative means for demonstrating compliance. Prior to receiving a certificate of occupancy, copies of all program documentation must be submitted to the Building Department, including a clear indication on the plans and a written narrative that specific measures will be achieved and verified by the code official. Certification is encouraged but not required.

Energy efficiency requirements for new residential projects can be met by either being 10 percent more energy efficient than the 2009 IECC or installing all of the following: a 90 percent annual fuel utilization efficiency (AFUE) furnace or equivalent system, a 0.62 energy factor water heater or equivalent system, all LED or compact fluorescent lights, as well as conducting envelope air leakage tests to verify five air changes per hour at 50 pascals (ACH50) or less. For residential additions over 500 square feet, a Home Energy Rating System energy audit is required to demonstrate compliance. Commercial projects less than 10,000 square feet are required to verify energy efficiency using COMcheck, and buildings that size or larger must verify using an energy model.

Outside of Idaho, USGBC's work to promote and support community initiatives to green their building codes is widespread. Our campaign promotes the

continual advancement of building energy codes, close consideration of the International Green Construction Code (and its Standard 189 compliance path) and a deeper engagement of green building professionals in the building regulatory process. Join us in our campaign to [Build Better Codes](#) to raise the expectations for all new buildings today!

More information on the Build Better Program can be found at [www.haileycityhall.org](http://www.haileycityhall.org). Information on above-code programs in Ketchum and Blaine County can be found at [www.ketchumidaho.org](http://www.ketchumidaho.org) and [www.co.blaine.id.us](http://www.co.blaine.id.us). USGBC Idaho Chapter updates are posted at [www.usgbcidaho.org](http://www.usgbcidaho.org).

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