

NYC GREEN CODES LEGISLATION AT A GLANCE



EF4

GCTF Proposal

Promote Super-Insulated Walls

Enacted

Zone Green Text Amendment

Summary

The zoning definition of “floor area,” which determines how large a building can be, includes exterior wall thickness. This inadvertently penalizes thick, energy-efficient walls, and rewards poorly insulated thin-wall construction.

The Zone Green Text Amendment allows new and existing buildings to exclude up to 8 inches of insulated wall thickness from floor area calculations.

New Requirements or Changes

Effective: April 30, 2012. These changes do not create new zoning requirements. Instead, they remove zoning barriers to adding insulation to new and existing buildings.

Amendments to the Zoning Resolution for existing buildings:

- Up to 8 inches of additional wall thickness for the purpose of adding insulation to walls existing prior to April 30, 2012, may be excluded from floor area calculations, provided the additional wall thickness has an R value of 1.5 per inch or greater.

Amendments to the Zoning Resolution for new construction:

- For new exterior walls, up to 8 inches of wall thickness may be exempted from floor area calculations if the building exceeds thermal envelope requirements in the Energy Code by a specified margin, provided at least 8 inches of wall thickness is included in the floor area calculations. In order to earn this floor area exemption:
 1. The average U-factor of all opaque above-grade new wall assemblies must be at least 20% less than the area-weighted average U-factor determined by the prescriptive requirements of the Energy Code, AND
 2. The average U-factor of all above-grade new wall assemblies, including vertical fenestration must be at least 10% less than the area-weighted average U-factor determined by the prescriptive requirements of the Energy Code. The amount of fenestration used in calculating the area-weighted average U-factor must be equal to the fenestration in the exterior walls, or the maximum fenestration reference in the Energy Code for calculating the baseline energy code requirement (currently 40% fenestration), whichever is less.
- New walls are not permitted to project into required yards, courts or open areas, except where extending a wall that existed prior to April 30, 2012 as part of an enlargement that does not exceed 100% of the existing floor area.



Enforcement

This amendment will be enforced by the Department of Buildings in the same manner as any other element of the Zoning Resolution.

Implementation

This Zoning amendment reduces impediments and is not expected to have any impact on capital costs. There are no implementation or market barriers to this change.

Task Force Proposal EF 3, Limit Heat Loss Through Exterior Walls, recommended establishing a minimum average U-factor for all building exteriors, regardless of trade-offs through energy modeling. The city has indicated its support for this proposal, which will increase the baseline from which the zoning floor area exclusion for new buildings would be calculated.