



Legislative Report 7.10.25

New Building Energy & Electrification Requirements in Howard County CB24-2025

At Monday night's meeting, the Howard County Council passed CB24-2025 with amendments, representing a sweeping update to the county's building code, integrating advanced energy conservation and electrification standards from the 2024 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC).

While the bill as amended advances Howard County's leadership in sustainable development, it also poses significant cost, design, and compliance challenges for developers, homebuilders, and real estate professionals. Upfront construction and renovation costs are likely to rise, potentially impacting affordability and feasibility, particularly for small-scale builders and projects in price-sensitive market segments.

It was noted that both commercial and residential energy modeling software, specifically the software required for code compliance, is not yet updated to reflect the most recent electrification requirements. The Howard County Department of Inspections, Licenses, and Permits (DILP) explained that they cannot fully enforce certain provisions of the new law until the United States Department of Energy (DOE) releases the updated software tools (e.g., COMcheck and REScheck). These tools are necessary for verifying compliance with new energy performance standards, including those tied to all-electric construction or limited use of on-site combustion. Until these updates are made, local enforcement is constrained, and the County may need to provide interim guidance or allow flexibility in permit reviews where software limitations exist.

These changes affect REALTORS® directly by increasing home costs and needing to educate themselves and clients on these new requirements. Many of these code changes are highly technical, leaving clients confused when selling or buying a home in Howard County.

HCAR is disappointed that the Howard County Electrification amendments were approved this week, despite concerns raised by stakeholders throughout the process. The final vote on the bill as amended was 4 in favor and 1 opposed, with Realtor and Councilman David Yungmann being the sole opposing vote. Thank you, Councilman Yungmann for advocating for homeownership and affordability in Howard County.

While the outcome was not what we had hoped for, we remain committed to continued advocacy and constructive engagement as these new policies are implemented. Our focus

now turns to ensuring that the rollout is practical, equitable, and considers the diverse needs of the community.

In summary, the amendments do the following:

- Requires residential and commercial new construction to be designed to have space and structural and electrical infrastructure for future solar panel installation.
- Requires new and existing commercial properties to earn energy efficiency credits based on building type and climate zone.
- Establishes standards for providing Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure in new buildings.
- Ensures that new commercial buildings and new residential homes are constructed with the electrical wiring, panels, and infrastructure necessary to support future full electrification of systems like heating, water heating, and appliances.
- Raises the standard for energy efficiency in new residential construction. While some flexibility is offered for the builders, these stricter standards may increase upfront construction costs.
- Raises energy efficiency standards for new residential construction.
- Upgrades the efficiency standards for HVAC systems when alterations or additions are being made in existing residential buildings.

HCAR advocated for our industry throughout this entire process, including during past efforts made by this Council to mandate electrification. In this latest effort, HCAR:

- Leveraged existing relationships with elected officials to communicate concerns.
- Discussed and researched in Legislative and Board meetings how this bill would affect our members and their clients.
- Met with stakeholders from other industries to collaborate and pool resources.
- [Wrote a letter](#) to the County Council expressing concerns about a lack of due process and input from stakeholders, as well as overall concerns about the unintended consequences of this mandate.
- Launched a member-wide call to action, asking members to email the County Council and attend the County Council meeting.
- [Spoke with the media](#) about our concerns.

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