Housing and building codes overview

Local and state governments adopt housing and building codes to ensure safe and healthy homes.

Housing and building codes are usually comprehensive and authorize departments and agencies to take enforcement action against threats to the collective health or welfare of a community. Housing codes set minimum standards for housing conditions that all housing, new or existing, must meet to protect the health of residents. Some jurisdictions refer to housing codes as property maintenance codes or sanitation codes, but their functions are the same.

Building codes, by contrast, set the standards for the design and construction of newly developed or rehabilitated buildings. The main purpose of building codes is to protect the health, safety, and general welfare as they relate to the occupancy of buildings. Building codes specify the jurisdiction’s minimum standards for structural integrity (the supporting structure), mechanical integrity (including sanitation, water supply, light, and ventilation), means of egress, fire prevention and control, and energy conservation.