

First Tribal Community Adopts International Green Building Code

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Arizona's Kayenta Township is the first tribal community in the U.S. to adopt the International Green Construction Code (IGCC), a building code designed to reduce the environmental impact of construction projects while keeping safety measures intact and enforceable. Kayenta Township, a political subdivision of the Navajo Nation with roughly 5,000 residents, is located south of Monument Valley.

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Pacific Southwest Green Building Team worked with Kayenta, as well as with other tribes and federal agencies, to support the development of sustainable building codes that meet tribal priorities. In addition, Kayenta will be working with EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities to pilot community Smart Growth Guidelines for Sustainable Design and Development.

"As one of the first communities to adopt this code, Kayenta Township is forging a path for sustainable development," said Jared Blumenfeld, EPA's Regional Administrator for the Pacific Southwest. "Their commitment to green building design will not only protect the public health, but water and energy savings means precious local resources will be preserved."

"The IGCC is put in place for the community to save on energy costs, encouraging wise use of the water supply, safeguarding the depletion of natural resources, and the energy codes will be used to regulate future development practices," said Philbert Tso, Building Official for the Township.

The IGCC Public Version 2.0, which will be published as a model code next year, was adopted on a voluntary basis and may be incorporated into the community's Comprehensive

Zoning Ordinance. Kayenta adopted the code with specific requirements related to protecting greenfields, conservation areas and agricultural land.

Kayenta serves as the first municipally structured government established on the great Navajo Nation as a permanent political sub-division. A local government has been established by resident visionaries who understand the need to harness local empowerment in its truest form and seek stability and well-being of Kayenta's economic future.

Throughout its history and cultural environment, the mission of Kayenta Township has been to promote and strive for sustainable economic development and growth for future generations. Their vision for achieving community development objectives is focused on achieving a model community with autonomy for the citizens. Using their traditional teaching of Sihasin (hope), they want to offer amenities that will bring health, wellness and harmony to the community.

Today, the community of Kayenta has three capital improvement projects actively moving ground and are set up in their staging areas. Road project N591, which was funded through the Navajo Nation Fuel excise tax, was completed in the summer of 2010. The first of three phases of a 3.4 mile bus route was completed for this road work in 2010, and Kayenta Township has submitted for additional funding to complete the paving and sidewalks for this route. Close-out narratives of the project and reconciling receipts for the work performed is an important step in the process for the Kayenta Township administration, which as a municipal government, must account for all the money that is allocated for a project.