



# Sustainable Building Guidelines

Project Description

June 2022

## BACKGROUND

In 2001, the Legislature directed the Minnesota departments of Administration, Commerce, and other agencies to develop sustainable building design guidelines, the primary objective of which was to improve the energy efficiency of state-funded buildings.<sup>1</sup> Today, all new buildings and major renovations receiving general obligation bond proceeds must follow those guidelines.

In addition to addressing energy efficiency, by law, the guidelines must include air quality and lighting standards, specify ways to reduce material costs, and consider the long-term operating costs of the building, among other requirements. Statutes also require the incorporation of energy-efficiency performance standards into the sustainable building guidelines.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Department of Administration's website, the agency's Construction Services team works with other state agencies and entities to ensure that buildings follow the sustainable building guidelines. In doing so, the department contracts with the University of Minnesota's Center for Sustainable Building Research, whose staff provide technical expertise pertaining to implementing and updating the sustainable building guidelines.

The Center for Sustainable Building Research recently reported that since 2009, the center has tracked information about the implementation of the sustainable building guidelines for slightly more than 300 projects. These projects include new buildings and major renovations for state agencies, the University of Minnesota, and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, as well as local units of government.

<sup>1</sup> *Laws of Minnesota* 2001, chapter 212, art. 1, sec. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Minnesota Statutes* 2021, 16B.325, subds. 2 and 4.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. Who is responsible for enforcing the sustainable building guidelines?
2. To what extent have new buildings and major renovations that received funds from the bond proceeds fund complied with the sustainable building guidelines?
3. To what extent does the state ensure that projects subject to the sustainable building guidelines comply with the guidelines before money is encumbered on a project?

## DISCUSSION

To evaluate the state's administration and enforcement of the sustainable building guidelines, OLA will review state laws and relevant policies and practices. We will also analyze data on buildings subject to the guidelines to determine the extent to which buildings have complied with the requirements.

We will further evaluate the extent to which the state ensures compliance with the guidelines by gathering information from individuals involved in implementing the guidelines, including through a series of case studies examining new building projects and major renovations.

This evaluation will focus on the oversight and administration of the sustainable building guidelines. It will not examine the process by which the guidelines were developed, nor will it evaluate how the guidelines compare with other building standards, such as the state's energy code or LEED certification.

We plan to complete the evaluation and issue a report in early 2023. For additional information, contact project manager Caitlin Badger at 651-297-1917 or [caitlin.badger@state.mn.us](mailto:caitlin.badger@state.mn.us).