

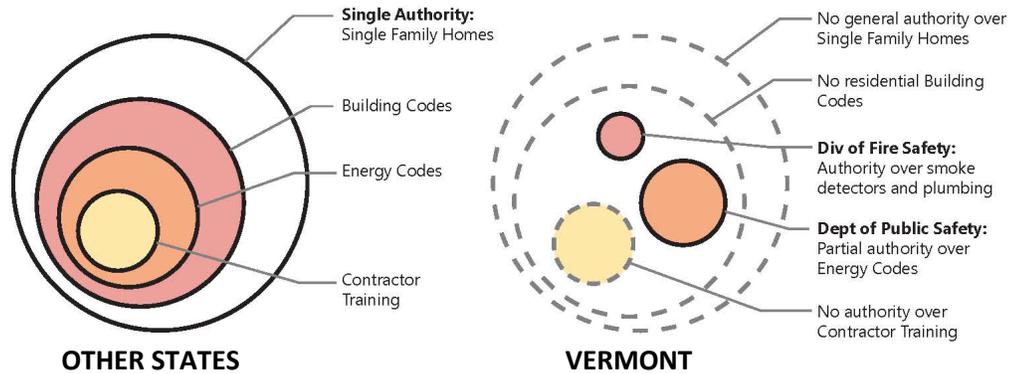
S.253 – Building Energy Code Reform: Comments from Architects

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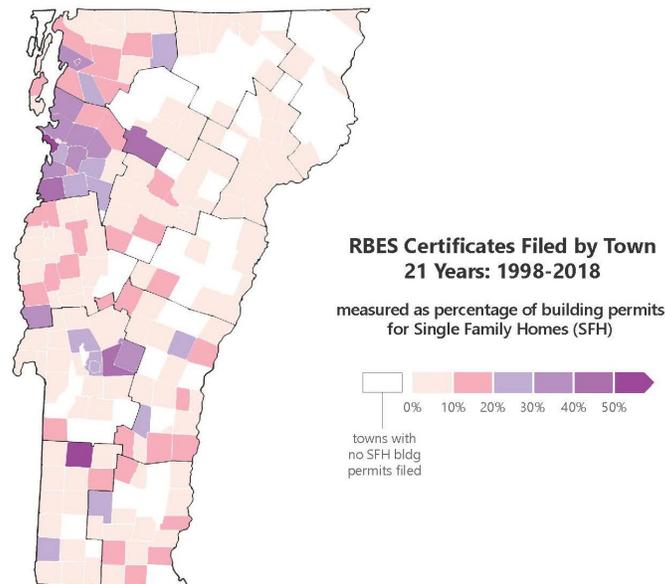
AIAVT has advocated for better authority over residential construction including energy codes for 20 years. Vermont is falling behind other states in contractor training, ability to meet construction standards, and ability to meet energy goals.

Vermont is the only state in the nation with no path to authority over residential construction. Some states have minimal rules (without enforcement); other states give municipalities authority over construction... but many states have a coordinated, unified authority, as illustrated in this diagram. Vermont has only partial and uncoordinated oversight.



Vermont stands out in the nation for its lack of coordination in administering building energy codes, and this is resulting in poorly built structures that jeopardize occupants' and owners' welfare. Architects and builders across Vermont are observing an increase in the number of serious building failures, putting Vermont homeowners and occupants at risk. Vermont needs a unified authority that makes rules for construction, establishes contractor education standards, supports construction projects, and analyzes building failures. Further, Vermont is missing out on significant federal grants to help.

While building energy codes are getting more stringent, compliance is decreasing in Vermont. At this rate, Vermont cannot possibly meet its energy goals. While state-sponsored analyses report that compliance is now less than 50% and declining, statewide filing of RBES certificates is closer to 8.5% (down from a high of 32% submission in 2003).



A working group with broad representation is needed immediately to advise Legislature how to improve Vermont's situation. We hope this group will identify a single, unified authority over construction in Vermont, consider whether a building code for single family homes should be adopted, advise how best to create a certification and education protocol for contractors, recommend improvements to project permitting and certification, and recommend that the authority begin tracking building failures to improve our standards.