



Inconsistent Regulations

Building Codes in St. Louis County

October 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Building codes specify minimum standards for the construction and maintenance of residential and commercial structures. The codes themselves are seldom legally binding, yet serve as model guidelines for legal jurisdictions, such as municipalities within St. Louis County, to use when developing ordinances and regulations.
- Codes become law of a particular jurisdiction when formally enacted by an appropriate governing authority, such as a city or county council.
- When we searched for a list of building codes used across St. Louis County, we found that no one had compiled a list, nor had anyone even tallied the total number of building codes that exist across the County.
- We found no fewer than 42 codebooks have been adopted throughout St. Louis County. Publication years for adopted codebooks range from the International Plumbing Codebook 1995 to a variety of codebooks published in 2018 and adopted by multiple municipalities.
- While nearly half of governing authorities use codebooks published in 2015 across codebook categories (or 2014 for electrical), in actual practice how they are applied causes confusion and means navigating cumbersome bureaucracies.
- We found the 42 codebooks currently used by the 89 governing authorities total a whopping 809 chapters. Incredibly, there are at least 16,786 pages of building codes covering St. Louis County. For a comparison, that's nearly double the 9,000 pages of the Internal Revenue Service tax code.
 - Making matters more complicated, the local governments can adopt amendments to their respective codebooks including additions, insertions, changes, and omissions.
 - In effect, this means that even if everyone were using the same edition of the same codebook, there could still be up to 89 versions of the respective code.
- If there were consistent regulations across St. Louis County using the codebooks currently adopted at the County level, there would be six primary codebooks containing a combined 128 chapters and consisting of 3,136 pages of code – effectively reducing the count of codes by over 80%.

INTRODUCTION

It is commonly understood that St. Louis is a fragmented region. Debate about its optimal governance has spanned decades

When we searched to find a comprehensive list of building codes used in St. Louis County, we found that no one had compiled such a list - nor had anyone tallied the number of building codes that exist across the County. Our research has previously shown the revenues generated by fees for inspections and permits throughout St. Louis County and its 88 municipalities.

This report provides information on the massive number of codebooks in place throughout St. Louis County and its scores of municipalities.

CODEBOOK ADOPTION AND UTILIZATION

The primary purpose of codebooks is to protect public health, safety, and general welfare as they relate to the construction and occupancy of buildings and structures. Building codes specify minimum standards for the construction and maintenance of residential and commercial structures. The codes themselves are seldom legally binding, yet serve as model guidelines for legal jurisdictions, such as municipalities within St. Louis County, to use when developing ordinances and regulations. Codes then become the law of a particular jurisdiction when formally enacted by an appropriate governing authority, such as a city or county council.

This report includes codes for Building, Residential, Property Maintenance, Electrical, Mechanical, and Plumbing.

Code	Use
Building Code	Regulates construction practices and standards through technical codes to protect the health, safety, and welfare of citizens.
Residential Code	Regulates and governs construction, alteration, movement, enlargement, replacement, repair, equipment, use and occupancy, location, removal, and demolition of detached one- and two-family dwellings and townhouses not more than three stories.
Property Maintenance Code	Establishes minimum requirements for the maintenance of the interior and exterior of existing buildings, including grading and drainage, decks, roofs, sanitation, walls, handrails, and much more.
Electrical Code	Benchmark for safe electrical design, installation, and inspection to protect people and property from electrical hazards.

Mechanical Code

Establishes minimum regulations for mechanical systems using specific rules and performance-related provisions for both residential and commercial buildings.

Plumbing Code

Sets minimum regulations for plumbing systems and components to provide safe and sanitary plumbing installations in both residential and commercial buildings.

Other codebooks were not included as a component of analysis due to a broad lack of uniformity in data, an uncommon usage among St. Louis County’s governing bodies, or because they fall outside the jurisdiction of the governing authority being assessed (i.e., a multitude of fire code inspections being the responsibility of fire protection districts in St. Louis County and not conducted by municipalities). Codebooks not analyzed include Energy Conservation, Explosives, Fire, Fuel Gas, and Swimming Pool & Spa.

LANDSCAPE OF BUILDING CODES IN ST. LOUIS COUNTY

No fewer than 42 codebooks have been adopted and govern the range of buildings throughout St. Louis County. Publication years for adopted codebooks range from the International Plumbing Codebook 1995 to a variety of codebooks published in 2018 and adopted by multiple municipalities.

Code	Number of Adopted Codebooks in STL County
Building Code	8
Residential Code	6
Property Maintenance Code	7
Electrical Code	5
Mechanical Code	6
Plumbing Code	10

Municipalities within St. Louis County often adopt the County’s codebook when it comes to Electrical, Mechanical and Plumbing – contracting and relying on the County for enforcement. But these municipalities also individually adopt and enforce multiple codebooks for Building, Residential, and Property Maintenance. This creates a bureaucratic scenario in which architects, engineers, and general contractors wanting to build or develop property must seek permits and inspections from three (or more) governing authorities. These include the municipality for building and maintenance, plus St. Louis County for electrical, mechanical, or plumbing, plus a fire protection district for fire code regulations. ([Municipal code chart available here.](#)) While nearly half of governing authorities use codebooks published in 2015 across codebook categories (or 2014 for electrical), in practical operation the wild variations in use of codes causes confusion and imposes cumbersome bureaucratic navigation. Codebooks as reported by governing authorities are represented in Table 1 below:

Municipality	Building	Year	Residential	Year	Property Maintenance	Year	Electrical	Year	Mechanical	Year	Plumbing	Year
Ballwin	International Building	2015	International Residential	2015	International Property Maintenance	2015	National Electrical	2014	International Mechanical	2015	International Plumbing	2015
Bel-Nor	International Building	2015	Information Not Provided		International Property Maintenance	2015	National Electrical	2008	International Mechanical	2009	Uniform Plumbing	2009
Bel-Ridge	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided	
Bella Villa	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Bellefontaine Neighbors	International Building	2009	International Residential	2009	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided	
Bellerive Acres	International Building	2015	International Residential	2015	International Property Maintenance	2015	National Electrical	2014	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided	
Berkeley	International Building	2015	International Residential	2015	International Property Maintenance	2015	National Electrical	2014	International Mechanical	2015	International Plumbing	2015
Beverly Hills	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided	
Black Jack	BOCA National Building	1996	St. Louis County		Information Not Provided		National Electrical	1996	International Mechanical	2006	International Plumbing	1995
Breckenridge Hills	International Building	2000	International Residential	2000	International Property Maintenance	2000	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided	
Brentwood	International Building	2018	International Residential	2018	International Property Maintenance	2018	National Electrical	2017	International Mechanical	2018	International Plumbing	2018

Municipality	Building	Year	Residential	Year	Property Maintenance	Year	Electrical	Year	Mechanical	Year	Plumbing	Year
Bridgeton	International Building	2015	Information Not Provided		International Property Maintenance	2015	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Calverton Park	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided	
Champ	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided	
Charlack	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Chesterfield	International Building	2015	International Residential	2015	International Property Maintenance	2015	National Electrical	2014	International Mechanical	2015	Uniform Plumbing	2015
Clarkson Valley	International Building	2009	International Residential	2009	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided	
Clayton	International Building	2015	International Residential	2015	International Property Maintenance	2015	St. Louis County		International Mechanical	2015	International Plumbing	2015
Cool Valley	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided	
Country Club Hills	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Country Life Acres	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Crestwood	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	2015
Creve Coeur	International Building	2015	International Residential	2015	International Property Maintenance	2015	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	

Municipality	Building	Year	Residential	Year	Property Maintenance	Year	Electrical	Year	Mechanical	Year	Plumbing	Year
Crystal Lake Park	International Building	2015	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Dellwood	BOCA National Building	1999	Information Not Provided		International Property Maintenance	2009	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Des Peres	International Building	2018	International Residential	2018	International Property Maintenance	2018	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Edmundson	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		International Property Maintenance	2003	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Ellisville	International Building	2015	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		International Plumbing	2015
Eureka	St. Louis County		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Fenton	International Building	2015	International Residential	2015	International Property Maintenance	2015	National Electrical	2014	International Mechanical	2015	Uniform Plumbing	2015
Ferguson	International Building	2006	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		National Electrical	1996	International Mechanical	1996	International Plumbing	1997
Flordell Hills	International Building	2009	International Residential	2009	International Property Maintenance	2009	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Florissant	International Building	2018	International Residential	2018	International Property Maintenance	2018	National Electrical	2017	International Mechanical	2018	International Plumbing	2018
Frontenac	International Building	2015	International Residential	2015	International Property Maintenance	2015	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	

Municipality	Building	Year	Residential	Year	Property Maintenance	Year	Electrical	Year	Mechanical	Year	Plumbing	Year
Glen Echo Park	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided	
Glendale	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Grantwood Village	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Green Park	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Greendale	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Hanley Hills	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Hazelwood	International Building	2015	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		St. Louis County		Information Not Provided		St. Louis County	
Hillsdale	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided	
Huntleigh	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Jennings	International Building	2018	Information Not Provided		International Property Maintenance	2018	National Electrical	2017	International Mechanical	2018	International Plumbing	2018
Kinloch	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Kirkwood	International Building	2015	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		St. Louis County		International Mechanical	2015	International Plumbing	2015
Ladue	International Building	2015	International Residential	2015	International Property Maintenance	2015	Information Not Provided		International Mechanical	2015	International Plumbing	2015

Municipality	Building	Year	Residential	Year	Property Maintenance	Year	Electrical	Year	Mechanical	Year	Plumbing	Year
Lakeshire	International Building	2015	International Residential	2015	International Property Maintenance	2015	Information Not Provided		International Mechanical	2015	International Plumbing	2015
Manchester	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Maplewood	International Building	2015	Information Not Provided		International Property Maintenance	2006	National Electrical	2008	International Mechanical	2009	Uniform Plumbing	2009
Marlborough	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Maryland Heights	International Building	2015	International Residential	2015	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided	
Moline Acres	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided	
Normandy	BOCA National Building	1999	International Residential	2006	International Property Maintenance	2006	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Northwoods	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided	
Norwood Court	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Oakland	International Building	2009	International Residential	2009	International Property Maintenance	2003	National Electrical	2005	International Mechanical	2003	International Plumbing	2003
Olivette	International Building	2015	International Residential	2015	International Property Maintenance	2015	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Overland	International Building	2015	International Residential	2015	International Property Maintenance	2015	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		International Plumbing	2015

Municipality	Building	Year	Residential	Year	Property Maintenance	Year	Electrical	Year	Mechanical	Year	Plumbing	Year
Pacific	International Building	2009	International Residential	2009	International Property Maintenance	2009	National Electrical	2008	International Mechanical	2009	International Plumbing	2009
Pagedale Pasadena Hills	BOCA National Building	1999	International Residential	2006	International Property Maintenance	2006	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Pasadena Park	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		St. Louis County		Information Not Provided		St. Louis County	
Pine Lawn	International Building	2006	International Residential	2006	International Property Maintenance	2006	National Electrical	2008	International Mechanical	2006	International Plumbing	2006
Richmond Heights	International Building	2018	International Residential	2018	International Property Maintenance	2018	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Riverview	International Building	2009	International Residential	2009	International Property Maintenance	2009	National Electrical	2008	International Mechanical	2009	Uniform Plumbing	2009
Rock Hill	International Building	2009	International Residential	2009	International Property Maintenance	2009	National Electrical	2008	International Mechanical	2009	Uniform Plumbing	2009
Saint Ann	International Building	2015	International Residential	2015	International Property Maintenance	2015	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Saint John	International Building	2003	International Residential	2012	International Property Maintenance	2012	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Saint Louis County	International Building	2015	International Residential	2015	International Property Maintenance	2015	National Electrical	2014	International Mechanical	2015	Uniform Plumbing	2015

Municipality	Building	Year	Residential	Year	Property Maintenance	Year	Electrical	Year	Mechanical	Year	Plumbing	Year
Shrewsbury	International Building	2006	Information Not Provided		International Property Maintenance	2006	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		Uniform Plumbing	2003
Sunset Hills	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Sycamore Hills	International Building	2003	International Residential	2012	International Property Maintenance	2012	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Town & Country	International Building	2018	International Residential	2018	International Property Maintenance	2018	St. Louis County		International Mechanical	2018	St. Louis County	
Twin Oaks	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
University City	International Building	2018	International Residential	2018	Information Not Provided		National Electrical	2008	International Mechanical	2018	Information Not Provided	
Uplands Park	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		International Property Maintenance	2009	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		St. Louis County	
Valley Park	International Building	2009	International Residential	2009	International Property Maintenance	2003	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		Information Not Provided	
Velda City	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Velda Village Hills	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided	
Vinita Park	International Building	2015	International Residential	2015	International Property Maintenance	2015	Information Not Provided		International Mechanical	2015	International Plumbing	2015
Warson Woods	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Webster Groves	International Building	2015	International Residential	2015	International Property Maintenance	2015	National Electrical	2014	International Mechanical	2015	International Plumbing	2015

Municipality	Building	Year	Residential	Year	Property Maintenance	Year	Electrical	Year	Mechanical	Year	Plumbing	Year
Wellston	Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided		Information Not Provided	
<u>Westwood</u>	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
Wilbur Park	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
<u>Wildwood</u>	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	
<u>Winchester</u>	International Building	2015	International Residential	2015	International Property Maintenance	2015	National Electrical	2014	International Mechanical	2015	International Plumbing	2015
<u>Woodson Terrace</u>	St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County		St. Louis County	

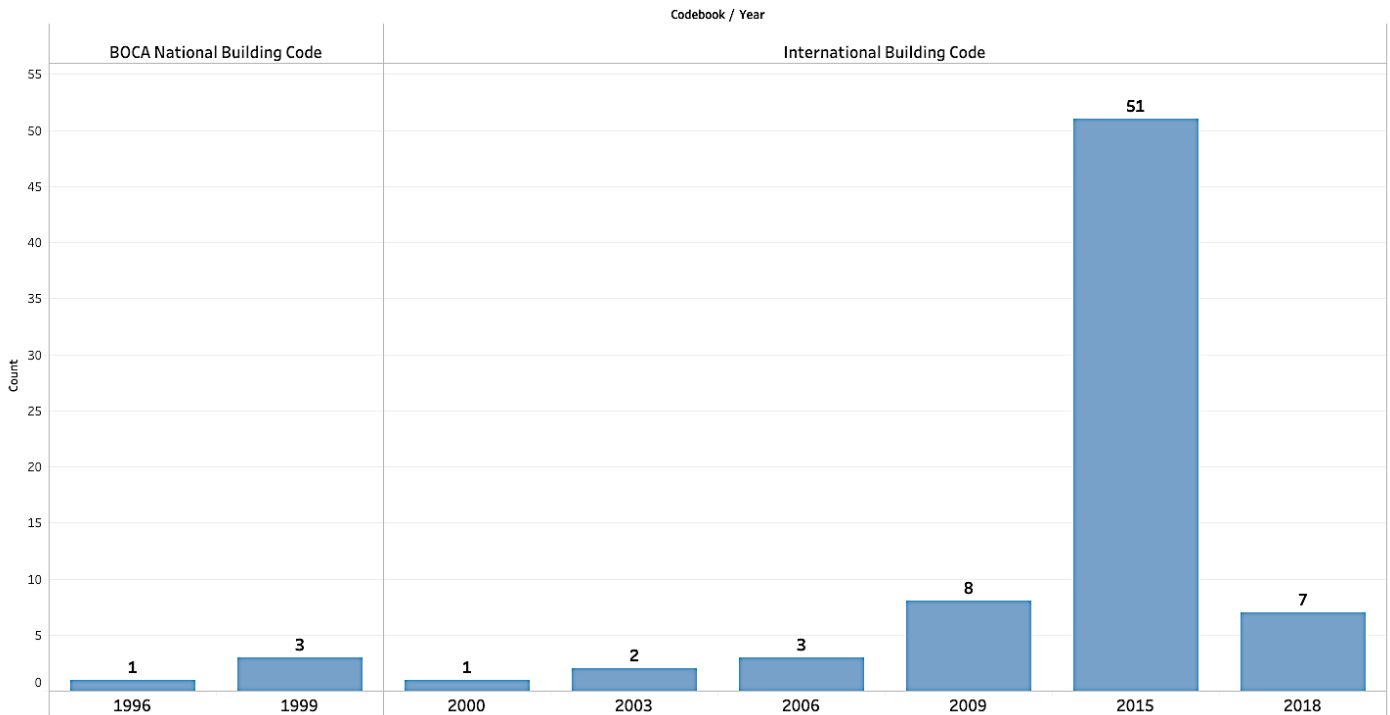
Table 2

Count of Codes (STL Co. adoptions separate)											
Code	Count	Code	Count	Code	Count	Code	Count	Code	Count	Code	Count
International Building		International Residential		International Property Maintenance		National Electrical		International Mechanical		International Plumbing	
2000	1	2000	1	2000	1	1996	2	1996	1	1995	1
2003	2	2006	3	2003	3	2005	1	2003	1	1997	1
2006	3	2009	8	2006	5	2008	7	2006	2	2003	1
2009	8	2012	2	2009	6	2014	8	2009	5	2006	1
2015	25	2015	18	2012	2	2017	3	2015	13	2009	1
2018	7	2018	6	2015	19	St. Louis County	49	2018	5	2015	11
BOCA National Building		St. Louis County	27	2018	6	Information Not Provided	19	St. Louis County	43	2018	3
1996	1	Information Not Provided	24	St. Louis County	25			Information Not Provided	19	Uniform Plumbing	
1999	3			Information Not Provided	22					2003	1
St. Louis County	26									2009	4
Information Not Provided	13									2015	3
										St. Louis County	44
										Information Not Provided	18
Count of Codes (STL Co. adoptions included)											
Code	Count	Code	Count	Code	Count	Code	Count	Code	Count	Code	Count
International Building		International Residential		International Property Maintenance		National Electrical		International Mechanical		International Plumbing	
2000	1	2000	1	2000	1	1996	2	1996	1	1995	1
2003	2	2006	3	2003	3	2005	1	2003	1	1997	1
2006	3	2009	8	2006	5	2008	7	2006	2	2003	1
2009	8	2012	2	2009	6	2014	57	2009	5	2006	1
2015	51	2015	45	2012	2	2017	3	2015	56	2009	1
2018	7	2018	6	2015	44	Information Not Provided	19	2018	5	2015	11
BOCA National Building		Information Not Provided	24	2018	6			Information Not Provided	19	2018	3
1996	1			Information Not Provided	22					Uniform Plumbing	
1999	3									2003	1
Information Not Provided	13									2009	4
										2015	47
										Information Not Provided	18

BUILDING CODES

Building codes regulate construction practices and standards using technical codes to protect the health, safety, and welfare of citizens. While the International Building Code published by the International Code Council (ICC) is the most widely used across St. Louis County governments, four municipalities still use codebooks published by the Building Officials and Code Administrators (BOCA), which ceased to exist in 1999. 50 municipalities have adopted their own codebook for building codes, while 26 governing authorities have adopted St. Louis County’s building codes. The 2015 building codebook is the most used throughout St. Louis County, by 51 governing authorities.

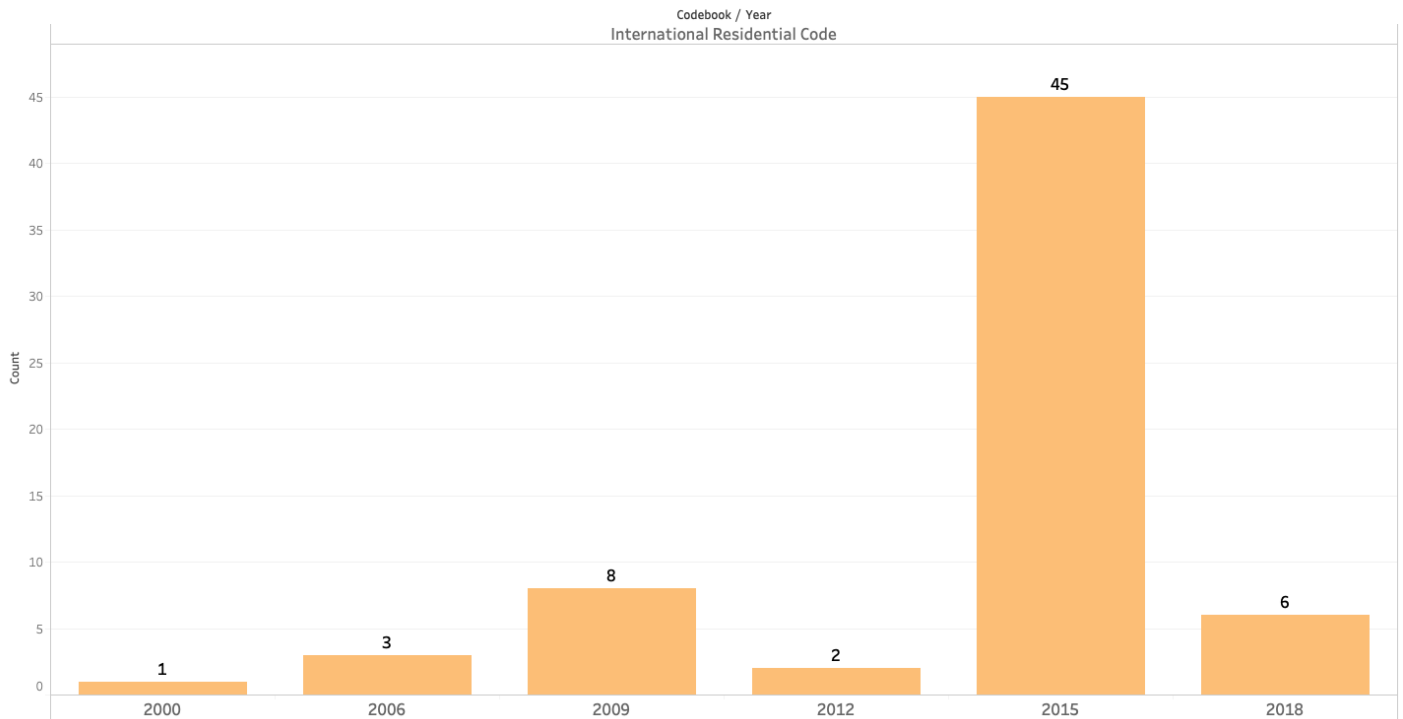
Building Codes



RESIDENTIAL CODES

The residential codebook regulates and governs construction, alteration, movement, enlargement, replacement, repair, equipment, use and occupancy, location, removal, and demolition of detached one- and two-family dwellings and townhouses not more than three stories. For the governing authorities where records are available, documentation shows 38 municipalities have adopted their own codebook, while 27 municipalities have adopted the residential codes of St. Louis County. Again, the 2015 ICC codebook is the most prominently used, as 45 governing authorities have adopted it.

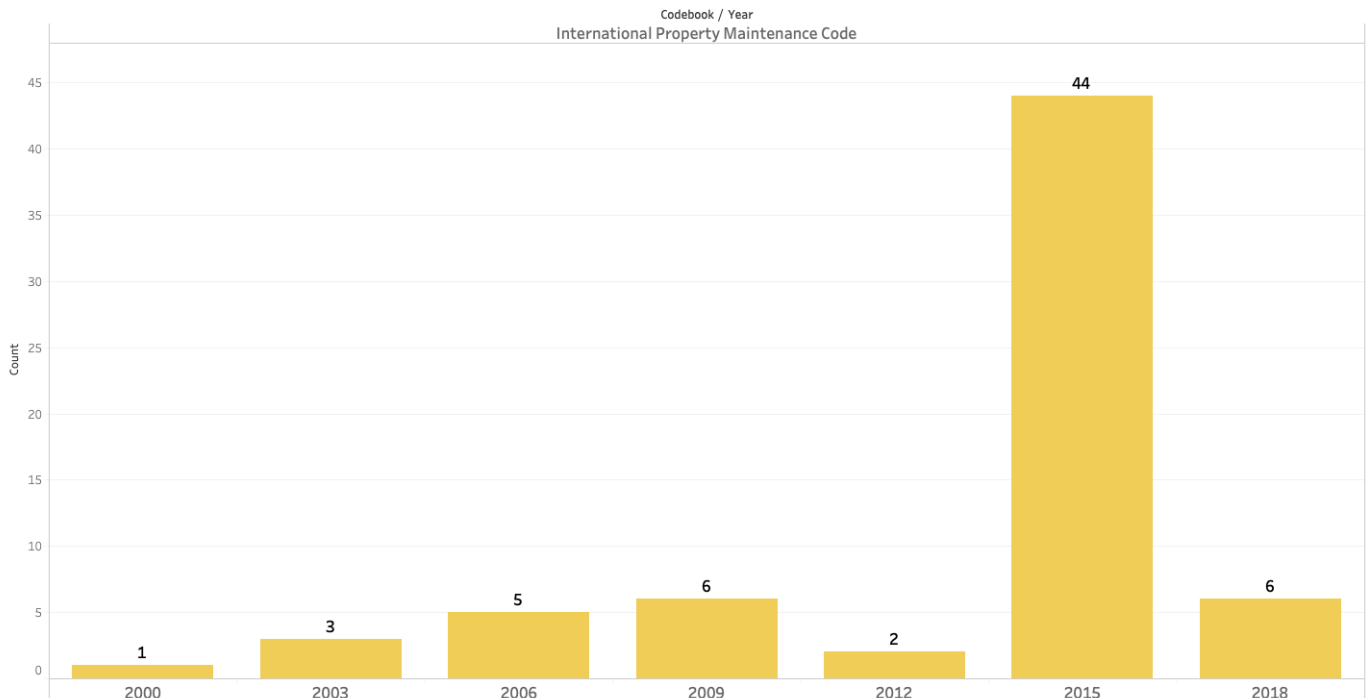
Residential Codes



PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODES

Property maintenance codes establish minimum requirements for the maintenance of the interior and exterior of existing buildings, including grading and drainage, decks, roofs, sanitation, walls, handrails, and much more. The ICC's International Property Maintenance Codebook is the sole codebook used in St. Louis County, but there are no fewer than seven years' worth of publications that have been adopted – again, the most widely used is the 2015 edition.

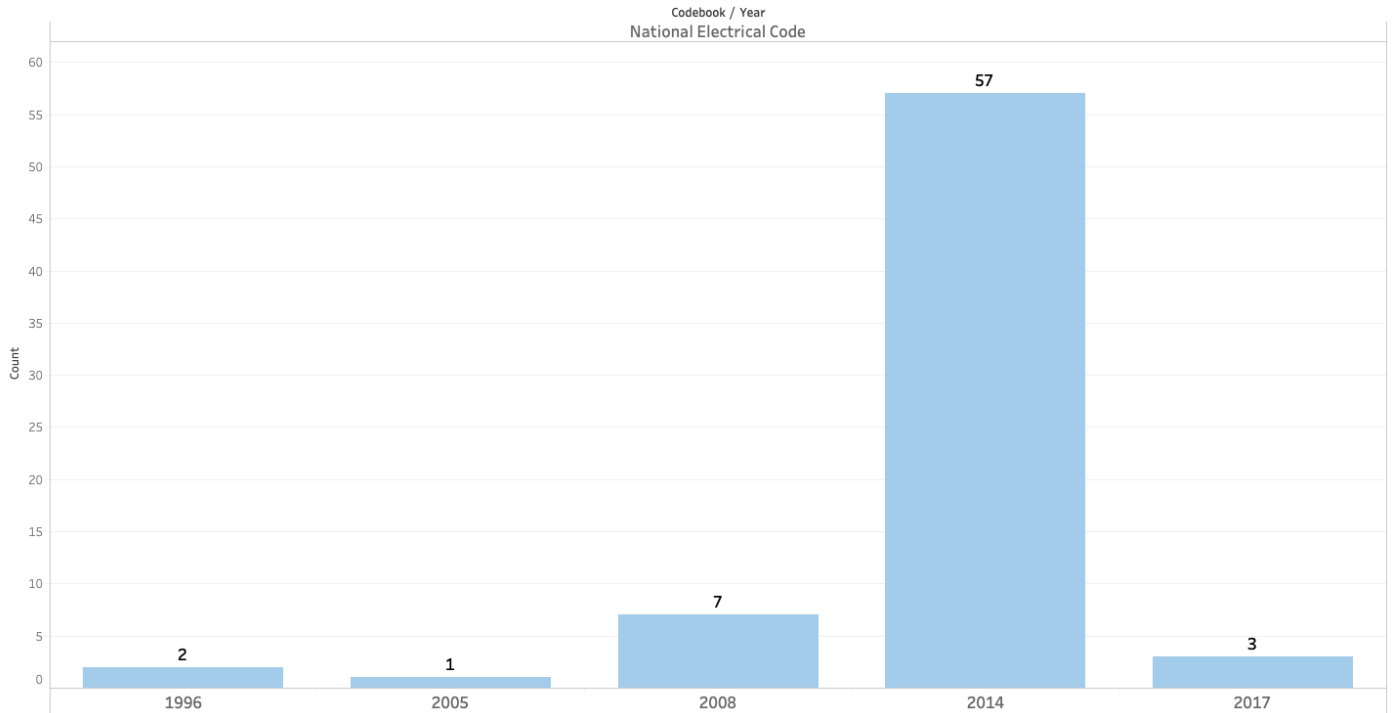
Property Maintenance Codes



ELECTRICAL CODES

The National Electrical Code is published by the National Fire Protection Association and provides a benchmark for safe electrical design, installation, and inspection to protect people and property from electrical hazards. Electrical codes have the greatest level of uniformity throughout St. Louis County, as 49 jurisdictions have adopted the County's electrical codebook. At least five editions of the National Electric Code are adopted and enforced within St. Louis County, with 57 governing authorities (including the County) using the 2014 edition.

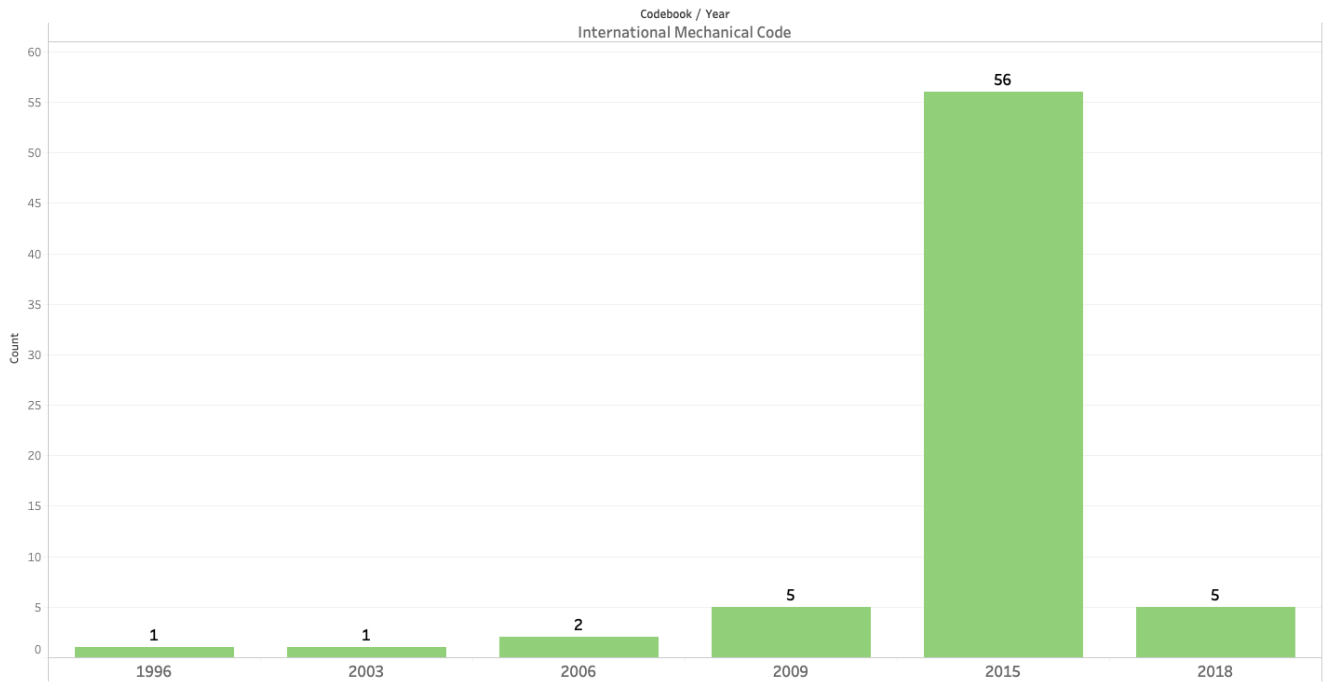
Electrical Codes



MECHANICAL CODES

Mechanical codes establish minimum regulations for mechanical systems using specific rules and performance-related provisions for both residential and commercial buildings. Examples of mechanical systems include heating and air-conditioning systems, elevators, and escalators. Fifty-six governing authorities use the 2015 codebook published by ICC, but there are six editions of mechanical codes adopted throughout St. Louis County.

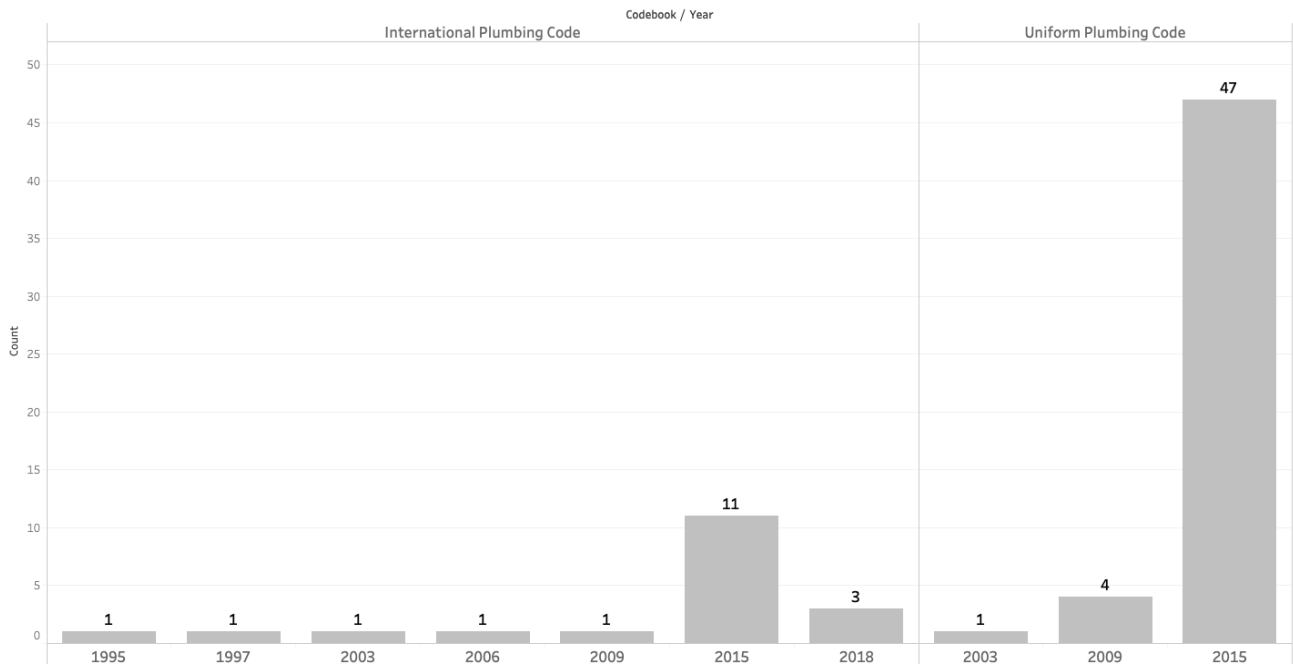
Mechanical Codes



PLUMBING CODES

Plumbing codes set minimum regulations for plumbing systems and components to provide safe and sanitary plumbing installations in both residential and commercial buildings. A unique component of plumbing compared to other categories of codes in St. Louis County is the recognition and use of two different, yet reputable code publications – those published by the International Code Council (ICC), but also the Uniform Plumbing Code published by the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO). Plumbing is the only category in which a competing codebook is more prevalent than that of the ICC, as 46 municipalities and St. Louis County have adopted the 2014 Uniform Plumbing Code.

Plumbing Codes



THE IMPACT OF INCONSISTENT REGULATIONS

When combining the 42 codebooks currently adopted by the 89 governing authorities, there are a staggering 809 chapters, consisting of at least 16,786 pages of code governing building and structural activities within St. Louis County.¹ In comparison, the Internal Revenue Tax Code is only about half as huge, at 9,000 pages.

TABLE 3

Codebook	Edition	Chapters	Pages
International Building Code	2000	35	646
International Building Code	2003	35	672
International Building Code	2006	35	636
International Building Code	2009	35	704
International Building Code	2015	35	736
International Building Code	2018	35	728
BOCA National Building Code	1996		
BOCA National Building Code	1999		
International Residential Code	2000	43	560
International Residential Code	2006	43	656
International Residential Code	2009	44	856
International Residential Code	2012	44	900
International Residential Code	2015	44	932
International Residential Code	2018	44	964
International Property Maintenance Code	2000	8	22
International Property Maintenance Code	2003	8	22
International Property Maintenance Code	2006	8	22
International Property Maintenance Code	2009	8	30
International Property Maintenance Code	2012	8	58
International Property Maintenance Code	2015	8	60
International Property Maintenance Code	2018	8	48
National Electrical Code	1996	9	1069
National Electrical Code	2005	9	792
National Electrical Code	2008	9	784
National Electrical Code	2014	9	866
National Electrical Code	2017	9	819
International Mechanical Code	1996	16	134
International Mechanical Code	2003	15	112

¹¹ This calculation excludes two editions of the BOCA National Building Code adopted within St. Louis County, as these codebooks are no longer published, and BOCA ceased operations after its 1999 editions.

International Mechanical Code	2006	15	116
International Mechanical Code	2009	15	126
International Mechanical Code	2015	15	160
International Mechanical Code	2018	15	152
International Plumbing Code	1995	14	122
International Plumbing Code	1997	14	140
International Plumbing Code	2003	13	126
International Plumbing Code	2006	13	140
International Plumbing Code	2009	13	148
International Plumbing Code	2015	15	278
International Plumbing Code	2018	15	182
Uniform Plumbing Code	2003	15	426
Uniform Plumbing Code	2009	16	460
Uniform Plumbing Code	2015	17	382
	TOTAL	809	16786

A NOTE ON AMENDMENTS

Making matters more complicated are amendments governing authorities can adopt to the respective codebooks including additions, insertions, changes, and omissions. Recall that codebooks are simply guidelines for standards of public health, safety, and general welfare. When adopting codes, governments are authorized to adjust these to meet the needs and expectations of a respective jurisdiction. This can and does happen.

On the surface this may seem to make sense, as international codebooks are adopted globally by governing authorities and a variety of factors can impact best practices for safest outcomes based on the region which development or maintenance occurs. For instance, environmental factors such as temperature and weather, soil conditions, or proximity to a body of water can all impact appropriate building regulations. Certainly, the ability to adjust codes has positive uses.

However, when a local government's authority to amend codes is in a single county consisting of 88 municipalities, the hodgepodge approach to adopting and amending codebooks means further confusion, inconsistencies, and navigating bureaucracies.

Here, amendments are yet another level of inconsistency which residents, businesses, and developers encounter. Even if a municipality has adopted the County's codebook, they are still authorized to amend it for their respective jurisdiction. In effect, this means that even if everyone were using the same edition of the same codebook, there could still be up to 89 variations of each respective code.

We have been unable to identify precisely how many code amendments are present within St. Louis County. But, when accounting for amendments, it is abundantly clear the 42 codebooks that have been adopted far exceeds the 16,786 pages of code we know of.

CONSISTENT REGULATIONS

While the sheer number of regulations is staggering, the real-life implication for daily business is also troubling. Consider how burdensome it is for HVAC technicians, electricians, or plumbers to navigate the complex web of local codebooks as they provide service to homes and commercial properties within the County, all while trying to operate a successful small business (at this writing, compounded by pandemic conditions). Similarly, architects, engineers, and general contractors must know the codes of each individual jurisdiction when developing plans and engaging in construction.

These inconsistencies also have a big impact on decisions and projects undertaken by larger businesses, when seemingly simple concepts become a hinderance to operations, such as commercial grocers having to determine whether there can be a canopy over shopping cart carousels in a parking lot. Minor variances across communities result in a loss of productivity, stalemates in development, and costly efforts to navigate each inconsistency.

In contrast, if there were consistent regulations across St. Louis County using the codebooks currently adopted at the County level, there would be six codebooks containing a combined 128 chapters and consisting of 3,136 pages of code – effectively reducing the count of codes by over 80%.

St. Louis County	Edition	Chapters	Pages
International Building Code	2015	35	736
International Residential Code	2015	44	932
International Property Maintenance Code	2015	8	60
National Electrical Code	2014	9	866
International Mechanical Code	2015	15	160
Uniform Plumbing Code	2015	17	382
	TOTAL	128	3136