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Palm Desert council passes energy measure

K Kaufmann

The Desert Sun
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Energy-efficient construction is now the law in Palm Desert.

The City Council voted 5-0 Thursday to require all new buildings to be 10 to 15 percent more efficient than California state standards - already considered the most rigorous in the nation.

After contention between city officials and developers, the law now provides several ways for developers to comply.

In addition to a city-designated list of energy-saving technologies, builders can use three other state or federal programs aimed at making buildings more energy-efficient: California Green Builder, Energy Star, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

"It becomes a more open-minded law," said James Brownyard, legislative analyst for the Building Industry Association.

The association argued that the original requirements would be too expensive, which was a key factor in adding the other options.

Whatever approach developers use, city building officials will still certify that all new construction complies, said Patrick Conlon, director of energy management.

The law is a cornerstone of the city's five-year plan to reduce energy use by 30 percent.

It requires all new homes less than 4,000 square feet be 10 percent more efficient than state standards, and homes more than 4,000 square feet 15 percent more efficient.