

Supervisors pave the way for more “green” building in Pima County
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Energy prices aren’t getting cheaper and climate change discussions continue to fuel discussions about the need to adapt to economic and environmental challenges.

With “green” building one strategy to address those concerns, the Pima County Board of Supervisors recently approved some amendments to the zoning code to help reduce the real and perceived barriers preventing larger adoption of sustainable practices across the community.

The code changes should promote voluntary green building options that allow for the efficient use of energy and water.

Among the changes to the code:

An exception will be made to allow owners of nonconforming properties to put in updates and renovations that conserve energy or water without having to bring their entire property up to code;

Rainwater harvesting systems are now a permitted use in all zones;

Underground cisterns are excluded from zoning regulation, while very reasonable setback requirements are provided for above-ground cisterns, depending on height and width of the cistern;

While previously not explicitly cited in the zoning code, clothes lines six feet or less in height are now specifically excluded from zoning regulation to encourage use of this energy-saving device;

Limited extensions of buildings into setbacks in certain circumstances for the purposes of providing shade are now authorized.

Provisions have been added addressing vegetated (green) roofs as well.

As for cisterns, property owners must still take appropriate safeguards to prevent accidental drowning, to install mosquito screening and to ensure that any discharges do not adversely impact nearby properties.

“These amendments are aligned with existing county policies to encourage the smart use of water and energy – and quite often, that use starts in the home or business where we spend much of our time,” said Planning Director Arlan Colton. “We hope these changes encourage residents and businesses to explore whether some of these practices would provide benefits to their own bottom line and personal comfort while conserving important resources.”

For more background on the changes, please visit

<http://pima.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=2608332&GUID=61B8C814-1648-4CDB-BFDC-38FD14CE0F72>