About LEED

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What is LEED? LEED, or Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design, is redefining the way we think about the places where we live, work, learn, play and worship. As an internationally recognized mark of excellence, LEED provides building owners and operators with a framework for identifying and implementing practical and measurable green building design, construction, operations and maintenance solutions.

With 13.8 billion square feet of building space participating in the suite of rating systems and 1.85 million feet certifying per day around the world, LEED is transforming the way built environments are designed, constructed, and operated.

What types of projects can use LEED? LEED is flexible enough to apply to all building types – commercial, residential and entire neighborhood communities, and works throughout the building lifecycle – design and construction, operations and maintenance, tenant fitout, and significant retrofit. There are four primary LEED Rating Systems (LEED Building Design and Construction (BD+C), LEED for Interior Design and Construction (ID+C), LEED for Building Operations and Maintenance (O+M), and LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED ND)) which are broken down into subsections based on the type of building/project.

LEED rating systems address the following types and scopes of projects:

- LEED BD+C: New Construction
- LEED BD+C: Core & Shell
- LEED BD+C: Schools
- LEED BD+C: Retail
- LEED BD+C: Healthcare
- LEED BD+C: Data Centers
- LEED BD+C: Hospitality
- LEED BD+C: Warehouses & Distribution Centers
- LEED BD+C: Homes
- LEED BD+C: Multifamily Midrise
- LEED ID+C: Commercial Interiors
- LEED ID+C: Retail
- LEED ID+C: Hospitality
- LEED O+M: Existing Buildings
- LEED O+M: Data Centers
- LEED O+M: Warehouses & Distribution Centers
- LEED O+M: Hospitality
- LEED O+M: Schools
- LEED O+M: Retail
- LEED ND: Plan
- LEED ND: Built Project

How does LEED work? LEED certification provides independent, third-party verification that a building, home or community was designed and built using strategies aimed at achieving high performance in key areas of human and environmental health: Sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality.

Prerequisites & Credits: Each category in a LEED rating system consists of prerequisites and credits. Prerequisites are required elements, or green building strategies that must be included in any LEED certified project. Credits are optional elements, or strategies that projects can elect to pursue to gain points toward LEED certification. LEED prerequisites and credits work together to provide a common foundation of performance and a flexible set of tools and strategies to accommodate the circumstances of individual projects.

Points & Levels of Certification: LEED rating systems generally have 100 base points plus six Innovation in Design points and four Regional Priority points, for a total of 110 points (LEED for Homes is based on a 125-point scale, plus 11 Innovation in Design points). Each credit is allocated points based on the environmental impacts and human benefits of the building-related impacts that it addresses. Projects achieve certification if they earn points according to the following levels:

- Certified: 40–49 points
- Silver: 50–59 points
- Gold: 60–79 points
- Platinum: 80+ points

Updates to LEED: The hallmark of LEED and its ability to affect market transformation is its continuous improvement cycle that enables the rating system to increase in scope and stringency as market readiness increases and new technologies become widely available.

LEED v4, the latest version of the rating system, focuses on increasing LEED's technical rigor, expanding the market sectors able to use LEED, and striving for simplicity in terms of usability. LEED v4 optimizes the foundations developed in LEED 2009, and will continue to improve the clarity, usability, functionality and interconnectedness of the rating systems through future version development.

How is LEED Developed? LEED rating systems are developed through an open, consensus-based process led by USGBC member-based volunteer committees, subcommittees, and working groups, in conjunction with USGBC staff, and are then subject to review and approval by the LEED Steering Committee and the USGBC Board of Directors prior to a vote by USGBC membership.

International LEED is a globally recognized symbol of excellence in green buildings. LEED's success as a global green building tool is based on many factors, but is primarily due to the leadership and commitment of volunteers, members and partner Green Building Councils around the world. They have recognized the value of LEED as a driver for global market transformation and demonstrated its success on projects outside the U.S. This leadership, along with a commitment to maintaining strong technical rigor, brand integrity and ease of use, has resulted in LEED's adoption in more than 150 countries and territories worldwide.

LEED is a constantly evolving rating system and its international components are no exception. Global consistency and applicability is essential for LEED to achieve the goal of accelerating adoption of sustainable and green building development practices worldwide. LEED's approach to addressing the needs of projects in regions across the world allows for the development of solutions unique to an area while maintaining a common language. The steps USGBC is taking now and in the future are moving us forward, and we must work together to make LEED continue to advance our global effort for market transformation.

The use of LEED outside the United States continues to grow rapidly. As of August 2015, approximately 43 percent of all square footage pursuing LEED certification existed outside the U.S.

LEED for Building Design and Construction

LEED for New Construction & Major Renovations is a rating system that can be applied to commercial, institutional and residential buildings of four or more stories. The rating system has been applied to office buildings, manufacturing plants, hotels, laboratories and many other building types.

Launched in 2000. Projects to date: Certified: more than 18,300; Registered: nearly 49,000.

LEED for Core & Shell can be applied to speculative developments and core and shell buildings. Core and shell construction covers base building elements, such as the structure, envelope and building-level systems, like central heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC). The rating system recognizes that the division between owner and tenant responsibility for certain elements of the building varies among markets, and it was designed to complement both the LEED for Commercial Interiors and LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance rating systems.

Launched in 2006. Projects to date: Certified: more than 2,200; Registered: more than 5,700.

LEED for Schools recognizes the unique nature of the design and construction of K-12 schools, and, in addition to the environmental and health goals targeted by all LEED rating systems, LEED for Schools also addresses issues such as classroom acoustics, master planning, mold prevention and environmental site assessment. By addressing the key needs of school spaces and children's health issues, LEED for Schools provides a comprehensive tool for high-performance schools that are healthy for students, comfortable for teachers and cost-effective for budgets.

Launched in 2007. Projects to date: Certified: nearly 970; Registered: more than 1,400.
(Projects around the world that are designated as either a K-12 building, Higher Education project or some other form of educational facility number as - Certified: more than 3,650, Registered: more than 4,800)

LEED for Retail: New Construction is designed to provide certification paths for ground-up retail construction and recognizes the unique nature of the new construction retail environment, addressing the different types of spaces that retailers need for their distinctive product lines. The rating system was developed with the help of members of the retail industry and a committee of industry experts.

Launched in November 2010. Projects to date: Certified: more than 738, Registered: more than 340.

LEED for Healthcare is designed to guide and distinguish high performance healthcare projects, including inpatient and outpatient care facilities and licensed long term care facilities. It may also be used for medical offices, assisted living facilities and medical education and research centers. LEED for Healthcare addresses design and construction activities for both new buildings and major renovations of existing buildings.

Launched in 2011. Projects to date: Certified: 14, Registered: more than 296 (Projects listing Healthcare as Space Type – Certified: more than 862, Registered: more than 1,749)

LEED for Interior Design and Construction

LEED for Commercial Interiors addresses the specifics of tenant spaces, primarily in office and institutional buildings, and is designed for tenants who lease their space or do not occupy the entire building and wish to certify their space as a LEED green interior. LEED for Commercial Interiors was designed to work hand-in-hand with the LEED for Core & Shell rating system.

Launched in 2004. Projects to date: Certified: more than 6,800; Registered: nearly 4,700.

LEED for Retail: Commercial Interiors is designed to provide certification paths for retail commercial interiors.

Launched in November 2010. Projects to date: Certified: nearly 1,280; Registered: more than 340.

LEED for Building Operations and Maintenance

LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance identifies and rewards current best practices and provides an outline for buildings to use less energy, water and natural resources; improve the indoor environment; and uncover operating inefficiencies. The goal of the rating system is to institutionalize a process of reporting, inspection and review over the lifespan of a building.

Launched in 2004. Projects to date: Certified: more than 3,480; Registered: more than 6,950.

RESIDENTIAL & NEIGHBORHOOD Rating Systems & Programs

LEED for Homes is a green home certification system that provides guidance and verification that homes are designed and built to be energy- and resource-efficient and healthy for occupants. LEED can be applied to single and multifamily homes and is intended for both market-rate and affordable housing. In 2010, nearly half (42 percent) of certified LEED for Homes units were categorized as affordable housing.

Launched in February 2008. Residential unit numbers to date: Certified: nearly 82,000 Registered: nearly 196,000, including Certified units (includes Pilot Extensions)

LEED for Neighborhood Development is a rating system that integrates the principles of smart growth, new urbanism, and green building into the first national benchmark for neighborhood design. The rating system promotes smart location and design of neighborhoods that reduce vehicle miles traveled, and communities where jobs and services are accessible by foot or public transit. LEED for Neighborhood Development facilitates more-efficient energy and water use, which are especially important in urban areas where infrastructure is often overtaxed.

Launched in April 2010. Projects to date: Certified Projects: 149.

LEED Volume

The LEED Volume Program is for organizations planning to certify a large number of new construction or existing buildings projects. It works by establishing verifiable guidelines that, without compromising LEED's rigorous benchmarks standards, streamline the certification process. LEED Volume dramatically increases the efficiency of LEED certification and lowers the associated costs.

Launched in November 2010. Learn about the Program and its participants.

BUILDING PERFORMANCE

The Building Performance Partnership is a comprehensive data collection and analysis infrastructure that receives data from LEED-certified projects, both commercial and residential. It is the next step for projects that want to continue to monitor, understand and improve their building's performance.

CERTIFICATION BODY

The Green Building Certification Institute is the third-party administrator of the LEED certification program. GBCI performs the technical reviews and verification of LEED-registered projects to determine if they have met the standards set forth by the LEED rating system. Dedicated technical experts ensure building certification meets the highest levels of quality and integrity.

Numbers as of August 2015

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10 comments

Leave a comment

ERIC PHILIP — 50 weeks 6 days ago

Good Informative article shared to all readers about leadership in energy and environmental design to help save a clean and healthy environment for people living.

alex roy — 1 year 1 day ago

What is a optimal way to find a local Evapotranspiration Rate? LEED does not do a good job of telling you a path to find the rate. I'm specifically looking for a rate for Washtenaw County, Michigan.

Monique Caron — 38 weeks 4 days ago
LEED Specialist, U.S. Green Building Council

Hi Alex, For locations within the United States, you can reference the US EPA WaterSense Water Budget Data Finder: http://www.epa.gov/watersense/new_homes/wb_data_finder.html.

Sylvain Laporte — 1 year 40 weeks ago
Ingénieur chargé d'études, ALTO Ingénierie

http://www.gbig.org/

JOSE SAMUEL FLORES HERRERA — 1 year 43 weeks ago
Solution Architect - LEED projects, Schneider Electric Mexico

Where can I find information of LEED certification for a small Data Center? The DC will be constructed inside a new office building Thank you

Justice Calo Reign — 2 years 3 weeks ago
Founder & CEO, The Reign Group, SPC

Where can I find statistics on the number of $$ spent on LEED certification building in the US since 2005? Are there projections into 2015?

Rebekah Burke — 2 years 8 weeks ago
Clark Nexsen Architecture & Engineering

I was looking for the same thing Scott--Is this what you are referring to? http://www.usgbc.org/resources/usgbc-monthly-update

Megan Ritchie Saffitz — 40 weeks 2 days ago
Director of LEED Support, U.S. Green Building Council

Hi Rebekah - It looks like your comment didn't correctly sync with Scott's, so you may not have gotten notified when I posted a new update to his question. Since you had the same question, I thought I would share that we are trying to publish presentations with the latest statistics on a quarterly basis now. Here's the most recent: http://www.usgbc.org/articles/leed-certification-update-january-2015

Scott Kriner — 2 years 9 weeks ago
Green Metal Consulting, Inc.

Where can I find a powerpoint presentation with the latest statistics on the number of LEED projects in various states, number of registered projects, square footage of LEED certified buildings, etc.? I downloaded such a slide deck from usgbc several years ago but now I can't find the updated resource. Thanks

Megan Ritchie Saffitz — 41 weeks 4 days ago
Director of LEED Support, U.S. Green Building Council

We are trying to publish these on a quarterly basis. Here's the most recent: http://www.usgbc.org/articles/leed-certification-update-january-2015

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