

Helpful Definitions

Accredited Professional

Architect or other design/construction professional who has passed an exam to become LEED certified through the Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI) (<http://www.gbci.org/>).

Certification Levels

From lowest to highest: Certified, Silver, Gold, and Platinum; the number of credits/points required for each level differs with type of applicable rating.

LEED

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System.

Project Registration

Register the project online to declare intent for LEED certification and obtain appropriate certification information and forms.

Project Certification

Submit certification application for review by USGBC professionals to obtain credits/points for desired certification level.

Rating Systems

LEED Rating depends on the type of project: New Construction, Existing Buildings (Operation and Maintenance), Commercial Interiors, Core & Shell, Schools, Retail, Healthcare, Home, or Neighborhood Development.

Sustainability

As applied to the community, sustainability has been expressed as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

USGBC

U.S. Green Building Council
(<http://www.usgbc.org>)

Our world has become increasingly aware of the need to conserve our natural resources and use them carefully to the benefit of both the human community and the particular resources. One measure gaining momentum throughout the country, particularly for those constructing or renovating any type of structure, is through a "**Green Building**" initiative. To assist our "Green Thinking" clients through the process of LEED certification, we provide the following outline of the basic components of a Green Building process:¹

Frequently Asked Questions

What is "green building" (a.k.a., "sustainable design")?

Green building is the practice of increasing the efficiency with which buildings use resources (energy, water, materials), while reducing the building's impact on human health and the environment during the building's life-cycle, through better siting, design, construction, operation, maintenance, and removal.

Does a green building cost more?

While it may cost more to design and construct such a structure, this is an investment. The cost of the additional "green" features often result in significant mid- and long-term savings with respect to heating/cooling costs. Perhaps more importantly, many companies building green buildings report intangible benefits in human efficiencies such as increased productivity of those using the buildings.

What is LEED?

LEED is a third-party certification program, developed by the USGBC in 2000, that is the nationally accepted benchmark for design, construction, and operation of high-performance green buildings.

How does LEED work?

- Projects earn LEED points for satisfying specific green building criteria under the following 6 categories: Sustainable Sites, Water Efficiency, Energy & Atmosphere, Materials & Resources, Indoor Environmental Quality, and Innovation in Design.
- The number of points earned by the project determines the level of LEED certification, ranging from (lowest to highest): Certified, Silver, Gold, or Platinum.

What are the benefits of LEED certification?

- Third-party validation of a building's environmental, economic, and occupant-oriented performance.
- LEED certified projects:
 - Cost less to operate and maintain
 - Are energy- and water-efficient
 - Have higher lease/occupancy rates than conventional buildings in same market
 - Are healthier and safer for occupants
 - Are a physical demonstration of the values of the organizations who own/occupy them

LEED/GREEN BUILDING INITIATIVES

- Tax credits may be available at the state and local levels, becoming more prevalent
- Owners can build a green building without LEED certification, but LEED provides:
 - A comprehensive check-list of how to do so and reap all of the available benefits
 - A qualified source of validation
 - A recognized "stamp of approval" for advertisement purposes

How do Owners register for LEED?

- Register the project electronically using LEED-Online to declare intent to obtain certification, and receive project-specific information and forms for certification
- All forms are interactive and will automatically complete calculations as information is entered
- Can obtain review of the project during the early design process to see whether the desired certification level is likely to be achieved, which allows the Owner to tweak the project design to reach that desired level

What are the steps for LEED certification?

- After registration of the project (usually by the design professional), the Owner must submit a detailed certification application, and any supplemental information deemed necessary by the LEED reviewers.
- The application includes:
 - Description of the type, size, and occupancy of the project
 - A project narrative, including 3 "green" highlights
 - LEED project checklist, credit prerequisites, and projected point total
 - Drawings, photos, and/or renderings of the project
 - Fees are non-refundable, though rebate given for achievement of Platinum certification
 - Review by USGBC committee. No "approval" is given until the end of the process (after the building is constructed) but there is some

Who can help an Owner obtain LEED certification?

- A qualified architect who is a LEED Accredited Professional is the best place to start. Such person or entity can manage the complex registration, documentation, and certification processes. LEED certification is an architect-driven process because of necessary professional design knowledge.
- If using the standard AIA documents for the Owner-Architect agreement, there is a new companion form: "AIA B214-2007 – Standard Form of Architect's Services for LEED Certification." This form is a good guideline for what the Architect should be doing to help the Owner achieve LEED certification.

¹Obtaining LEED certification is a very technical process and one that must be approached with certified and licensed design and construction professionals. This information is provided as a very basic overview. If you need additional information or have questions, Winstead lawyers Michelle Rieger, Ashley Hutcheson, Lorin Combs, or Bill Weinberg are in the process of becoming LEED accredited and can assist you with your questions.

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