



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: Leveraging LEED-ND as a Sustainability Tool

[LEED for Neighborhood Development \(LEED-ND\)](#) is a rating system that incorporates the principles of smart growth, New Urbanism and green building into a voluntary framework for sustainable neighborhood planning and design. As practitioners have started to use LEED-ND to drive sustainable change in their communities, federal entities too are recognizing its value. These agencies have found that LEED-ND supports their strategic priorities and they are directing funding to localities that use the system as a framework or tool. The [Partnership for Sustainable Communities](#), formed by HUD, EPA and DOT, laid out six [Livability Principles](#) that would guide their coordinated investment efforts. At the 2010 Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) conference, Secretary Shaun Donovan announced HUD's intention to employ LEED-ND in its effort to use location-efficiency to score grant applications. Donovan declared, "it's time that federal dollars stopped encouraging sprawl and started lowering the barriers to the kind of sustainable development our country needs and our communities want." HUD recently incorporated LEED-ND into all of its grant funding through the General Section and required LEED-ND certification for Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant recipients.

[2012 HUD GENERAL SECTION](#)

Both the 2011 and 2012 HUD General Sections, which provide common guidelines for all agency grants, ask applicants to undertake projects that align with HUD's Strategic Plan. The General Section references LEED-ND as a way to demonstrate the impact of a project as well as its alignment with the Sustainability policy priority from that Strategic Plan:

To receive points for this policy priority, applicants must produce activities that exceed requirements of the NOFA to which they are applying, detailing how they will achieve outcomes in areas such as: (a) [Neighborhood Sustainability Standards](#). Identify projects or activities consistent with adoption of LEED 2009 for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) Rating System or a similar neighborhood sustainability standard.

(Docket No. FR-5600-N-01, Page 12)

[CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS INITIATIVE](#)

Choice Neighborhoods promotes "a comprehensive approach to transforming distressed areas of concentrated poverty into viable and sustainable mixed-income neighborhoods." In August 2010, HUD released the first Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for Choice Neighborhoods, announcing \$65 million available through separate planning and implementation grants. The total amount available for both programs has nearly doubled by 2012 to \$115 million.

[Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grants](#)

Beginning in FY2011, HUD incorporated the requirement that Planning Grant recipients must achieve LEED-ND Stage 1 conditional approval. In February 2012, HUD [announced](#) approximately \$5 million available for Planning Grant awards.

...Planning Grant recipients must secure Stage 1 Conditional Approval of their Transformation Plan for LEED for Neighborhood Development from the United States Green Building Council or similar neighborhood sustainability standard approved by HUD.

(FY2012 NOFA Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grants, Docket No. 5600-N-10, Page 27)

USGBC recommends that Planning Grant recipients pursue LEED-ND for the proposed redevelopment project rather than the larger transformation plan district.

Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grants

Through two previous rounds of funding, [11 projects](#) have been awarded a total of \$122 million. In January 2012, the [FY2012 NOFA](#) announced another \$110 million in available funding. The 2012 NOFA rates projects using up to 204 points based on how they meet criteria in four categories: Capacity, Need, Vision, and Soundness of Approach. **Projects that satisfy the basic requirements consistent with achieving LEED-ND at the Certified level would receive two out of 34 points available in the Neighborhood sub-category.**

COMMUNITY CHALLENGE PLANNING GRANTS

In June 2010, HUD and the U.S. Department of Transportation announced a joint grant program to fund planning activities that reduce barriers to achieving affordable, economically vital, and sustainable communities with a variety of transportation choices. HUD offered \$40 million as **Community Challenge** grants and DOT invested \$35 million as **TIGER II Planning Assistance** grants. The NOFA for these grants did not specifically reference LEED-ND, yet at least four awardees noted in their applications their **intent to follow LEED-ND principles or incorporate LEED-ND criteria**. In July 2011, HUD [announced](#) \$30 million in funding and ultimately awarded [27 projects](#) in 17 states. U.S. DOT did not receive funding in the appropriations bill and was unable to participate in the FY2011 grant program.

The City of **Cincinnati, OH**, will receive \$2.4 million. It will use these funds to develop a Unified Development Code (UDC) to replace outdated and disjointed regulations and to reflect the goals of its Comprehensive Plan (under development). **The UDC will incorporate criteria from LEED for Neighborhood Development.**

In **Jersey City, NJ**, the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency will receive almost \$2.3 million, which will fund the Canal Crossing project. This project seeks to convert 18 industrial blocks (111 acres) into a mixed-use, transit-oriented development with affordable housing and access to open space amenities. The project will address infrastructure modifications, subdivision of properties, zoning changes, and connections to the light rail stop and bike paths in an area predominated by minority households and suffering from high unemployment and poverty rates. The funds will support recent master planning efforts and **help the agency use LEED for Neighborhood Development principles to create a more livable community.**

The City of **Warrensburg, MO**, will receive \$134,900, which will pay for a study to analyze land use and economic development opportunities along a rural Missouri corridor. The Highway 13/Maguire Street Corridor Study will seek opportunities for new urban infill housing and mixed-use development and **will consider the potential application of LEED for Neighborhood Development standards throughout the corridor.**

University City, MO, will receive almost \$316,000 to pursue improvements to the Parkview Gardens neighborhood. **Neighborhood planners intend to use LEED-ND principles to improve housing in Parkview Gardens.**

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES REGIONAL PLANNING GRANTS

In June 2010, HUD issued a NOFA announcing awards of up to \$100 million to improve regional planning efforts that integrate housing and transportation decisions, and increase the capacity to improve land use and zoning. The following awardee is integrating LEED-ND into its regional planning effort:

Salt Lake County, UT, as part of a consortium of organizations in the Wasatch Front metropolitan region, [received \\$5 million](#). Part of this amount will fund an open-access, open-source community sustainability model called [Envision Tomorrow Plus \(ET+\)](#), which will work as a plug-in to ESRI's ArcGIS software. ET+ seeks to evaluate **how potential development project characteristics—such as land use, density or use of LEED-ND—would affect the community's environmental and economic priorities.**

In September 2011, HUD issued a [NOFA](#) announcing \$70 million in funding and ultimately awarded [29 projects](#) from 26 states.

[HOPE VI](#)

Housing authorities seeking to revive aging public housing will find that the LEED-ND rating system often reflects their redevelopment goals. HOPE VI sought to revitalize severely distressed public housing through physical and management improvements and social and community services. Three HOPE VI grantees are LEED-ND projects, including two recipients of the final round of [FY2010 HOPE VI Revitalization](#) funds:

In **Memphis, TN**, [University Place](#) is a 473-unit mixed-income housing development, situated on the site of the former Lamar Terrace public housing project. In June 2004, the Memphis Housing Authority was awarded \$22.5 million in HOPE VI funding for the project. Working closely with MHA, the project is a joint venture between McCormack Baron Salazar, Inc. and Community Capital. **The project achieved Stage 3 certification, at the Certified level, in the LEED-ND Pilot.**

In **St. Louis, MO**, McCormack Baron Salazar has helped the housing authority reinvent the Arthur Blumeyer development as [Renaissance Place at Grand](#). Using Hope VI FY2001 and FY2010 funds, developers created a mixed-income, mixed-use community to replace the original set of buildings from 1968. **The project team achieved Stage 3 certification, at the Certified level, in the LEED-ND Pilot.**

In **Boston, MA**, the Boston Housing Authority charged Beacon Community Services with redeveloping the [Old Colony Public Housing](#) complex. With federal and state tax credits, support from the USGBC Affordable Green Neighborhoods Grant Program and over \$22 million in Hope VI FY2010 funds, the developer set out to reconnect the Old Colony site to its neighborhood and make it as close to net zero energy as possible. **The project team is pursuing Stage 2 certification (Pre-Certified LEED-ND Plan) under LEED-ND 2009.**

HUD has contributed greatly to the burgeoning sustainable development movement by encouraging the adoption of LEED for Neighborhood Development standards, and projects that pair federal investments with LEED-ND measures are just beginning to reveal the full extent of their positive impact on the environment and our quality of life. Federal and local use of LEED-ND will help transform how we build communities and lead to places that are green, healthy, and economically strong for years to come.

Please email Neighborhoods@usgbc.org with your questions or comments.

More information is available at www.usgbc.org/nd.