

# U.S. GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL

## STRATEGIC PLAN

2009 – 2013

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**VISION**

*Buildings and communities  
 will regenerate and sustain  
 the health and vitality of all  
 life within a generation.*

**MISSION**

*To transform the way  
 buildings and communities  
 are designed, built and  
 operated, enabling an  
 environmentally and socially  
 responsible, healthy, and  
 prosperous environment that  
 improves the quality of life.*

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**U.S. Green Building Council**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## U.S. GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN 2009 – 2013

### I. LEADING TRANSFORMATION IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD

The U.S. Green Building Council has developed its strategic plan for 2009 – 2013 amidst rapidly changing conditions. “Green” is booming. Being green has become mainstream. At the same time, achieving sustainability on a large scale is still very far off. Green buildings and other green products remain very small percentages of total market shares.

The pace of change must increase to prevent significant deterioration of ecological conditions in many places around the world. USGBC is keenly aware of the scope and scale of these challenges — and we are prepared to evolve as needed to mobilize and lead the building community’s contribution to the transformation toward sustainable communities.

As our understanding of USGBC’s mission broadens, so must the scope of our strategies and programs evolve and expand. This plan sets forth our strategic vision for the next five years.

#### *Key Strategic Issues Facing the Green Building Community*

Key strategic issues facing the green building community in general, and USGBC in particular, include:

- Shift in emphasis from individual buildings toward the built environment and broader aspects of sustainability, including a more focused approach to social equity;
- Need for strategies to reduce contribution of the built environment to climate change;
- Rapidly increasing activity of government in green building arena;
- Lack of capacity in the building trades to meet the demand for green building;
- Increasing need for a focus on the greening of existing buildings;
- Lack of data on green building performance;
- Lack of education about how to manage, operate, and inhabit green buildings; and,
- Increasing interest in and need for green building expertise internationally.

### II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Along with its *Vision* and *Mission*, USGBC’s *Guiding Principles* provide the foundation upon which the work of the organization stands and the reservoir of intent and imagination out of which its strategy grows. They also serve as touchstones by which USGBC evaluates the success and integrity of its work both inside and outside of the organization.

**Fostering Social Equity:** USGBC seeks to elevate social equity as a value and outcome integral to sustainable built environments. Because this dimension of sustainability and the triple bottom line has received too little attention both by USGBC and the green building community at large, we have added *Foster Social Equity* as a *Guiding Principle*.

### III. AGENDA FOR TRANSFORMATION: STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The strategic goals presented here define the priorities USGBC will pursue to further its mission over the next five to ten years:

- **Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Catalyze and lead the building sector’s active participation in the movement to achieve sustainable cities and communities.
- **Climate and Natural Resources:** Lead the dramatic reduction and eventual elimination of building construction and operations’ contribution to climate change and natural resource depletion.

- **Green Building Marketplace:** Accelerate green building demand, delivery, and accessibility.
- **Public Policy:** Advocate for effective and comprehensive green building policy and codes at all levels of government.
- **International:** Advance green building around the world by developing certification capacity, sharing knowledge, and collaboratively advancing regionally appropriate and effective green building practices and policies.
- **Organizational Excellence:** Leverage USGBC's organizational structure and capacity to support and catalyze the market transformation required to achieve its mission.

#### IV. PROGRAM: HOW USGBC ACHIEVES ITS GOALS

USGBC core programs and competencies guide its choices about how best to pursue its mission and goals.

**Leadership and Transformation:** USGBC provides leadership to the green building community and society at large by advancing effective, cutting edge innovation in green building vision, theory, practice, design, and construction.

**Education:** USGBC will continue to raise awareness of critical issues and build capacity among a wide range of sectors within the building community, as well as those who purchase, manage, operate, maintain, and regulate buildings.

**Research and Development:** Research and development play a vital role in the achievement of USGBC's vision and mission by accelerating the scope and scale of green building. USGBC seeks to drive research critical to the expansion of green building.

**Outreach:** A strong partnership and close coordination between USGBC and its chapters and members is essential to fulfilling USGBC's mission. USGBC will continually refine the relationship between the national

organization and chapters to enable maximum effectiveness in achieving the goals of all.

**Advocacy:** Societal transformation of the scope and scale required to realize USGBC's vision requires changes in public policy at all levels of government. USGBC will continue to expand the application of direct advocacy both for comprehensive efforts to transform the built environment and for particular legislative or regulatory outcomes.

**Collaboration:** Large-scale transformation requires creating partnerships, forging alliances, and building coalitions, a collaborative approach intrinsic to USGBC's values.

#### V. THE PATH FORWARD: IMPLEMENTATION

The Executive Management Team (EMT) and Board will work together to establish metrics for evaluation of all objectives and to identify implementation and operational strategies. USGBC will mobilize its many resources and diverse stakeholders to achieve the far-reaching goals set forth in this plan. Specifically, chapters, in collaboration with regional councils, and program steering committees will be responsible for developing annual work plans and focused strategies that align with national goals and objectives.

#### VI. THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Strategic Planning Committee, established by the Board in July, 2007, identified key strategic issues facing the green building community and developed strategic goals for the USGBC to address them. The Executive Management Team (EMT) was fully involved from the outset. Meridian Institute facilitated the process, which extended through July, 2008. [This plan was adopted by the Board on July 17, 2008.]

## I. LEADING TRANSFORMATION IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD

The U.S. Green Building Council has developed its strategic plan for 2009 – 2013 amidst rapidly changing conditions. “Green” is booming. Being green has become mainstream. Sales of green products, hybrid vehicles, and organic foods, for example, are growing rapidly. Carbon regulation will dramatically alter energy markets, driving innovation and efficiency across the economy. Legitimate concerns about faddishness and “green-washing” aside, these trends reflect long-term shifts in societal mindset.

At the same time, achieving sustainability on a large scale is still very far off. Green buildings and other green products remain very small percentages of total market shares. USGBC has achieved tremendous success in recent years, with LEED playing a particularly strong role in driving green building. Yet, only 3% of new commercial buildings in 2007 met at least a minimum green standard and only 0.2% of new residential construction is built green.<sup>1</sup>

The pace of change must increase to prevent significant deterioration of ecological conditions in many places around the world. Impacts of climate change grow weekly, the loss of biological diversity accelerates, and the scope of ecosystem degradation and resource depletion continually expands. Though growth of the global economy, particularly in developing countries, continues to improve living conditions for many, the gap between the rich and poor continues to grow at home and abroad.

USGBC is keenly aware of the scope and scale of these challenges. We will continue to evolve so that we can effectively mobilize and lead the building community’s contribution to the transformation toward sustainable communities. As the world changes and the green building movement matures,

so too does our understanding of the mission before us.

The meaning of “green” is evolving, to more fully include human and social relationships to the built environment. USGBC is giving increasing attention to the entire built environment, moving beyond a focus on individual buildings.

As our understanding of USGBC’s mission broadens, so must the scope of our strategies and programs evolve. This plan sets forth our strategic vision for the next five years. Our efforts to accelerate and expand the transformation of the built environment will continue to be guided by positive vision and practical solutions that harness human creativity toward a sustainable future.

### *Key Strategic Issues Facing the Green Building Community*

The key strategic issues facing the green building community in general, and USGBC in particular, were identified at the beginning of the strategic planning process through an extensive “issues mapping” study conducted by the Meridian Institute. More than 100 individuals representing every sector of the green building community, including USGBC members, volunteers and staff, were interviewed to identify issues, challenges, and opportunities. The following findings of this study provide the context for the development of this plan:

- There is a growing awareness among green building leaders that buildings’ relationships to each other, the broader built and natural environment, and the people they serve have a profound impact on sustainability, including social equity and human health.
- USGBC must develop a comprehensive organizational strategy to address climate change by leveraging carbon controls to aggressively advance green building.

<sup>1</sup> *Greenbuilding in North America*, Commission for Environmental Cooperation, 2008.

- The rapidly increasing activity of governments in green building presents both opportunities and challenges to USGBC in its efforts to advance leading-edge green building practices.
- Lack of capacity in many sectors, particularly among the building trades, designers, developers, and code officials, impedes the ability of the market to meet the demand for green building.
- The greening of existing buildings is an increasingly urgent need in order to reduce human impact on the environment.
- Lack of data on green building performance makes it difficult to address perceptions that green building is not cost effective and to make an effective case for green building to the financial community.
- Building owners, operators, and occupants frequently lack education about how to manage, operate, and inhabit green buildings.
- Interest in and need for green building expertise is growing internationally.

The conclusions collectively drawn by the Board, Executive Management Team, and Strategic Planning Committee from the issue mapping form the basis of the strategic goals and objectives in this plan. The most important findings and conclusions of the issue mapping study are presented alongside the goals and objectives developed to address them. *For additional description of the strategic planning process, see page 19.*

### ***Positioned to Lead***

USGBC has established itself as the flagship institution of the green-building community, with LEED as the world's leading framework for green building. Given the impact of buildings and the built environment more broadly on natural resource consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and quality of life, USGBC is well positioned to play a critical role in addressing the environmental

challenges facing the planet. We bring the far-reaching imagination and robust capacity for innovation of a dedicated, diverse, and skilled community to some of the great tasks of our time.

As we move forward, USGBC builds on a strong and rapidly expanding foundation. USGBC has established an impressive record of accomplishment and built a comprehensive network of relationships, spanning the building and green communities. We have attracted visionary and vibrant leadership at the national and chapter levels. Our extraordinarily diverse membership continues to grow rapidly. And we have recruited a talented and focused staff of first-rate professionals. USGBC has the leadership and vision needed to meet the challenges before us.

### ***Growing Communities***

In addition to being a highly focused, mission-driven enterprise, USGBC is a community of people and organizations. Among us are architects and contractors, large corporations and small businesses, grassroots activists and government officials. What brings us together is a shared commitment to improve the health and well-being of humans and all life through creative engagement, with the built environment as a focal point.

The next few years hold great promise for, and significant threats to, the human community. Guided by the strategic plan presented here, USGBC will dramatically expand and harness the energy of the green building community toward fulfillment of promise in the face of peril.

## II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Along with USGBC's *Vision* and *Mission* (see inside front cover), its *Guiding Principles* provide the foundation upon which the work of the organization stands and the reservoir of intent and imagination out of which its strategy grows. They also serve as touchstones by which USGBC evaluates the success and integrity of its work both inside and outside of the organization.

### *Promote the Triple Bottom Line*

USGBC will pursue robust triple bottom line solutions that clarify and strengthen a healthy and dynamic balance between environmental, social, and economic prosperity.

### *Establish Leadership*

USGBC will take responsibility for both revolutionary and evolutionary leadership by championing societal models that achieve a more robust triple bottom line.

### *Reconcile Humanity with Nature*

USGBC will endeavor to create and restore harmony between human activities and natural systems.

### *Foster Social Equity*

USGBC will respect all communities and cultures and aspire to an equal opportunity for all.

### *Maintain Integrity*

USGBC will be guided by the precautionary principle in utilizing technical and scientific data to protect, preserve and restore the health of the global environment, ecosystems and species.

### *Ensure Inclusiveness*

USGBC will ensure inclusive, interdisciplinary, democratic decision-making with the objective of

building understanding and shared commitments toward a greater common good.

### *Exhibit Transparency*

USGBC shall strive for honesty, openness, and transparency.



### **USGBC seeks to elevate social equity**

as a value and outcome integral to sustainable built environments. Because this dimension of sustainability and the triple bottom line has to date received too little attention both by USGBC and the green building community at large, we have added *Foster Social Equity* as a *Guiding Principle*. This statement affirms and elaborates USGBC's commitment to social equity.

USGBC intends for the human community -- in the broadest sense -- to benefit from green built environments, regardless of income, race, or any other social factor, and we are committed to more fully integrating social equity into our work.

Significant organizational focus will be required to more effectively integrate social equity values into the programs of the USGBC. In 2007, USGBC established a Social Equity Task Force to explore opportunities related to this priority. We recognize the need to be consultative with diverse communities, including underserved communities and communities of color, and to be proactive in advancing social equity objectives and dedicating organizational resources. We also recognize that an effort to seriously engage social equity will require us to increase the representation of underserved populations in USGBC's decision-making structures.

### ***Integrating Social Equity into the Strategic Plan***

*To assist us in operationalizing this commitment, there is one objective for each goal in this plan that is intended to directly advance social equity:*

- Collaborate with relevant social justice and quality of life initiatives and advocates to integrate the theories and practices of social and economic justice with those of sustainable building. *(Sustainable Cities and Communities)*
- Research and develop adaptation of the built environment to anticipated climate change effects, and provide proactive guidance and technical support concerning adaptation to vulnerable communities in the U.S. and around the world. *(Climate and Natural Resources)*
- Increase access of underserved populations to the benefits of green building by educating building owners and occupants in underserved areas and mobilizing public and private capital for green building projects that will directly benefit underserved populations. *(Green Building Marketplace)*
- Develop and advocate a public policy agenda that ensures that the benefits of green buildings become available to currently underserved populations. *(Public Policy)*
- Develop a shared global vision for built environments that embraces the triple bottom line by engaging green building practitioners and policymakers internationally. *(International)*
- Diversify the USGBC board, staff, volunteer leadership, and membership to provide broader perspective and engagement. *(Organizational Excellence)*

### **III. AGENDA FOR TRANSFORMATION: STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

*The strategic goals presented here define the priorities USGBC will pursue to further its mission over the next five to ten years.*

*The objectives outline how USGBC will work toward achievement of these goals over the next five years. Some objectives will be fulfilled through existing programs, such as LEED and Greenbuild, while others will require the development of new initiatives.*

*The objectives have been formulated in a manner conducive to the development of specific indicators and metrics to measure progress. Specific programs, tactics, and indicators will be identified by the staff in a five year operational plan, as well as annual work plans, beginning in 2009.*



## SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

### GOAL

*Catalyze and lead the building sector's active participation in the movement to achieve sustainable cities and communities.*

### Objectives

1. Develop and promote a vision of how to achieve sustainable cities and communities and enlist the participation of relevant institutions and USGBC members in the pursuit of that vision.
2. Expand and promote the use of LEED programs, particularly Homes, Neighborhood Development, and Existing Buildings, as effective, regionally-appropriate tools to advance sustainability and improve quality of life at the city and community level.
3. Develop a vision and pursue opportunities to advance the restoration and regeneration of natural systems within and surrounding built environments--in collaboration with chapters, members, community-based organizations, and visionary thinkers.
4. Integrate theories and practices in the fields of sustainable planning, transportation, and other infrastructure with those of sustainable building by working in partnership with the building community and relevant organizations.
5. Collaborate with relevant social justice and quality of life initiatives and advocates to integrate the theories and practices of social and economic justice with those of sustainable building.
6. Educate relevant sectors of the building community to routinely integrate into their work consideration of built environments' direct impacts on surrounding ecosystems and communities, as well as their indirect effects on climate, human health, and natural resources.

### BACKGROUND

As recognition of the need to create a more sustainable society grows, there is increasing attention given to the built environment as a whole, and to holistic approaches to sustainable cities and communities. This broader perspective goes well beyond individual buildings to include roads, fixtures, parks, transit, and land use planning, as well as economic development and social equity issues such as access to efficient and healthy affordable housing, the development of green industries and jobs, and fair wages for laborers.

Dense "new urban" (re)developments and other community sustainability and revitalization efforts are growing rapidly. Initiatives seeking to advance a "sustainable lifestyle" by influencing individual behavior are also proliferating. Such initiatives present abundant opportunities to advance green building, some of which are already being pursued through LEED programs for Neighborhood Development and Homes. The transformation of existing buildings and built environments needed to support the evolution of more sustainable cities and communities requires much greater attention.

At the city or community level, social equity and green building intersect through urban renewal, community revitalization, and disaster rebuilding initiatives. These are highly localized and require an on the ground presence to develop relationships and productively engage circumstances. Other drivers of an increasingly local and regional approach include variation in climate; municipal control over building codes; and emerging regional and local alternatives to the energy grid. There is a need for leadership in the integration of green building with disaster planning, management, and recovery -- including research, education, and pilot programs -- at both the federal and local levels. Expertise also is needed in translating a systemic approach to urban renewal into actionable plans.

## CLIMATE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

### GOAL

*Lead the dramatic reduction and eventual elimination of building construction and operations' contribution to climate change and natural resource depletion.*

### Objectives

1. Drive down net building-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, including those related to transport, materials, water-use, and building systems, through LEED certification and complementary tools and programs.
2. Reduce natural resource depletion by transforming building and community design and construction paradigms through LEED certification and the promotion of holistic life-cycle assessment and regenerative / restorative design in the building community.
3. Conduct and support research concerning building-related GHG emissions and use of depleted and endangered resources, and regularly monitor and publicize economy-wide progress in reducing building-related GHG emissions and resource use.
4. Support the development of robust measurement methodologies and tools to assess the carbon footprint of buildings and promote carbon emission reduction programs that ensure accuracy, accountability, transparency, and integrity in reporting.
5. Educate building owners and users about the role of the built environment in climate change and resource depletion and the tools available to reduce carbon footprints and resource use associated with the built environment.
6. Develop and advocate carbon policies and codes that drive down GHG emissions from the built environment and create incentives for the development of net zero carbon emissions buildings and built environments.

7. Leverage carbon markets and other forms of carbon policy to drive rapid increase in the quantity and quality of green building and the transition toward sustainable built environments.
8. Research and develop adaptive responses of the built environment to anticipated climate change effects, and provide proactive guidance and technical support concerning adaptation to vulnerable communities in the U.S. and around the world.

### BACKGROUND

**Climate Change:** Observed and predicted changes in climate around the world will almost certainly alter living conditions for most people in the coming fifty years. Climate change threatens the integrity of ecosystems and their capacity to provide food, clean water, and renewable resources. Those already living in fragile environments and those with few resources to adapt to changing conditions will suffer most.

Societies around the world must dramatically reduce emission of the gases that cause climate change, and they must develop strategies and technologies to adapt to a rapidly changing world.

Buildings and the energy they use contribute greatly to climate change. The close and complex inter-relationship between the built environment and both climate change and tightening fuel supplies presents opportunities for innovation in virtually every aspect of developing and maintaining the built environment.

The drive to decrease GHG emissions and rising energy prices are predicted to radically change the landscape in which USGBC operates, rapidly accelerating demand for energy efficient buildings, incorporation of renewable energy technologies into the built environment, and (re)design of communities around more efficient transit and sustainable resource use. Climate

change likely will affect the cost, design, technology, and location of buildings and the built environment.

USGBC's involvement in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina provides a foundation for the integration of adaptation to climate change and preparation for natural disasters into the planning and design of the built environment.

USGBC needs a comprehensive and distinctive strategy for: contributing to the solution of climate change, leveraging carbon concerns and requirements to advance its more comprehensive mission, and supporting ongoing adaptation to changing climates.

**Protection and Restoration of Natural Systems and Resources:** Construction and building operations are among the leading direct and indirect drivers of the degradation and depletion of natural systems and resources. Such destruction imperils whole ecosystems, specific species, and human populations. In addition, conventional production of many building materials causes pollution, endangering people and natural systems. Sourcing of sustainable building materials – natural, processed, and manufactured – will continue to be a significant challenge.

In addition to the impact of construction and maintenance, the use of natural resources in buildings also has a major impact. Among the most pressing issues are water quality and quantity. Efficient use (and re-use) of water within buildings is a growing need, and availability of clean water will increasingly affect where and how buildings and communities are built.

USGBC aspires not only to reduce the negative impact of the built environment on natural systems, but to advance built environments that actively contribute to the preservation, restoration, and regeneration of natural systems. For example, buildings may be able to serve a role in water filtration and purification.

## GREEN BUILDING MARKETPLACE

### GOAL

*Accelerate green building demand, delivery, and accessibility.*

### Objectives

1. Expand the green building market by analyzing, aggregating and disseminating information that demonstrates the environmental, health, social, and economic benefits of green buildings.
2. Identify gaps in the green building delivery chain and build capacity to address them through innovative partnerships, targeted education programs, and strengthened chapters.
3. Increase the rigor of LEED credit requirements, through the existing consensus process, as part of a systematic, continuous improvement cycle for LEED based on advances in green building science and technology and an expanding base of experience and evidence.
4. Expand training opportunities for professionals working on LEED projects and reviewers to augment the LEED certification process, while building strong, effective professional credentialing and reviewer qualification programs that are global in reach.
5. Catalyze innovative improvements in green building performance, human health and occupant productivity by conducting, advancing, and publicizing relevant research.
6. Increase access of underserved populations to the benefits of green building by educating building owners and occupants in underserved areas and mobilizing public and private capital for green building projects that will directly benefit underserved populations.

7. Set aggressive annual targets for green building penetration in all market segments addressed by the LEED rating system.
8. Facilitate lower implementation costs for achieving LEED certification, without compromising effectiveness.
9. Encourage the integration of relevant aspects of green building into the curricula of secondary, undergraduate, and graduate education.

## BACKGROUND

There are several clusters of issues that USGBC must now address in order to expand the green building marketplace:

*Perceptions, Performance, & Costs:* The green building market, like all others, needs accurate and easily available information. Green building is thought by many to be too expensive and difficult, and there is little hard data on performance. While emerging data show upfront costs are outweighed by long-term benefits, data are still relatively sparse and not reaching or convincing critical stakeholders (e.g., building owners, bankers, insurers, and appraisers). Other issues include consumers' lack of definitive information about the "greenness" of products, services, and companies; and, consumers are being overwhelmed with too much information about "green" products, services, and companies.

### *Inadequate Capacity and Weak*

*Communication:* There is a severe lack of capacity in the marketplace to deliver green buildings. Critical stakeholders have varying degrees of sophistication and knowledge about green building and LEED. Uneven capacity impedes the expansion of green building. Even when understanding is high, communication channels are often weak or broken. These circumstances are among the key bottlenecks obstructing the deepening and expansion of green building practices.

*Need for Education:* There is a lack of green building and sustainability curriculum for schools and universities, and both facility plant managers and the building trades lack targeted and accessible educational opportunities about green building. Building owners, operators, and occupants frequently lack education about how to manage, operate, and inhabit green buildings in a manner that optimizes environmental performance.

## PUBLIC POLICY

### GOAL

*Advocate for effective and comprehensive green building policy and codes at all levels of government.*

### Objectives

1. Serve as a national green building networking center and clearinghouse for policy makers and other advocates.
2. Catalyze, convene, and mobilize organizations and governments to develop and promote a vision of green building and to implement the public policies needed to achieve it.
3. Enable chapters and members to identify and effectively advocate for public policies that advance green building and the creation of sustainable cities and communities by providing training, resources, and communications support.
4. Develop and advocate a public policy agenda that ensures that the benefits of green building become available to currently underserved populations.
5. Coordinate public policy advocacy undertaken at national, state, and local levels in a manner that optimizes effectiveness at all levels.

### BACKGROUND

While USGBC has encouraged incentives to drive market transformation, use of regulatory and other approaches is growing. Public policy is a powerful vehicle for advancing green building, and governments are increasingly adopting green building requirements for their own portfolios as well as writing green provisions into building codes. Public policy is also a necessary strategy to address market failures, such as the decoupling of design, construction, and operational budgets, which frequently leads to short-sighted decision-making in both the public and private sectors. Government issued green building mandates have the potential to both strengthen USGBC's position

and to significantly undermine it.

In some instances, LEED has been adopted as the basis of mandates, while in others, requirements are less rigorous. Some are concerned about a growing patchwork of approaches. However, less rigorous but more widespread green building requirements might have more net environmental benefits, particularly if they include provisions requiring continuous improvement. Though USGBC might engage with government decision-makers and standard setting bodies at all levels of government, to date it has focused almost exclusively on engaging the marketplace rather than government.

USGBC should position itself in relationship to green building public policy in a manner that advances both leading-edge market transformation and private sector leadership, as well as effective use of public policy. USGBC should promote provisions in green building policies for continual improvement, removal of barriers, and incentives to meet performance standards. In addition, leadership is needed to forge coalitions to advance green building policy at all levels of government, and USGBC is well-positioned to do so.

## INTERNATIONAL

### GOAL

*Advance green building around the world by developing certification capacity, sharing knowledge, and collaboratively advancing regionally appropriate and effective green building practices and policies.*

### Objectives

1. Develop and implement a USGBC policy for international cooperation to guide engagement with the World Green Building Council (WGBC) and other national green building councils, governments, multinational corporations, multilateral organizations, and non-governmental organizations.
2. Develop a shared global vision for built environments that embraces the triple bottom line by engaging green building practitioners and policymakers internationally.
3. Provide organizational development assistance to, and share organizational best practices with, other national green building councils and non-profit organizations consistent with USGBC policy for international cooperation.
4. Develop a global platform, certification process, and engagement framework to make LEED and related USGBC programs available internationally, and responsive to a wide range of social, economic, and ecological conditions.

### BACKGROUND

USGBC has increasing opportunities to collaborate with efforts in other countries, especially regarding adopting and adapting LEED. The large, urgent, and growing need for green building in emerging economies presents many opportunities and challenges. Yet it is often difficult to find an appropriate local partner and acquire knowledge about local conditions. Coordination with the World Green Building Council (WGBC), other national green building councils, governments, multinational corporations, multilateral organizations, and non-governmental organizations is vital to achieving success. In the next few years, the evolution of the Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI) will influence the international context.

USGBC's international engagements should be truly collaborative, with all parties learning from one another. USGBC should uncover and promote the best solutions, wherever they may be found. USGBC should develop clear guidance on how to respond to requests for information, support, guidance, and partnership from abroad.

## ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

### GOAL

*Leverage USGBC's organizational structure and capacity to support and catalyze the market transformation required to achieve its mission.*

### Objectives

1. Evolve the board of directors' role, structure, and composition to provide the vision, high-level strategic guidance, organizational direction, financial resource development, and diplomacy necessary to achieve USGBC's strategic priorities.
2. Adapt the composition and structure of all committees, advisory groups, and task forces, as needed to enable them to achieve USGBC's evolving strategic priorities, develop and refine programs, and serve effectively the growing scope and scale of USGBC operations.
3. Diversify the USGBC board, staff, volunteer leadership, and membership to provide broader perspective and engagement.
4. Provide clear roles and responsibilities for all volunteer and professional positions and bodies of the organization\* and ensure effective coordination, communications, and linkage among them.  
*\*Including national, regional, chapter, and affiliate boards; committees; technical advisory groups; and, task forces.*
5. Align, harmonize, and coordinate chapter, regional, and national level goals, structure, functions and communications.
6. Provide chapters and regions the organizational assistance, tools, and training they need to effectively pursue their mission and pursue shared goals.
7. Determine and implement a unified, harmonized and system-wide governance process.
8. Leverage USGBC's membership base to provide broader impact and accountability.

### BACKGROUND

USGBC's capacity to provide the leadership necessary to execute this plan is built on five pillars: the board, chapters, members, volunteer committees and advisory groups, and staff. We address the first four here; executive management is charged with staff development.

- *Board:* As USGBC evolves, so must its leadership. The growing scale, complexity and sophistication of USGBC have implications for the Board, including roles and responsibilities, structure, decision-making process, composition, and size. In 2007, the Board seated a Board Leadership Task Force to consider these issues and make recommendations to address them.
- *Chapters:* The advancement of green building requires a localized and customized approach. Effective chapters are vital to achieving USGBC's mission. There is widespread need and desire to harmonize the relationship between USGBC and chapters and achieve greater clarity about the distribution of responsibilities among the national, regional, and chapter levels. Capacity building among chapters is required in order for USGBC to efficiently and effectively deliver consistent products and services.
- *Members:* There is potential to mobilize the membership base as change agents to advance USGBC's mission through education and advocacy. In addition, the many USGBC members who have not yet thoroughly greened their own built environment constitute a large "internal market." Additionally, concern exists that some members may not have made a serious commitment to the triple bottom line, which could negatively impact USGBC's reputation and effectiveness.
- *Volunteer Committees and Technical Advisory Groups* are essential to the development, governance, and execution of USGBC's core programs. The volunteer-driven nature of USGBC continues to provide a highly valued, vital source of expertise and credibility within the green building community and marketplace.

## IV. PROGRAM: How USGBC ACHIEVES ITS GOALS

USGBC core programs and competencies guide its choices about how best to pursue its mission and goals. Some of these are more fully developed than others, as reflected in USGBC's current program, described below. The execution of this plan will strengthen USGBC's ability to effect societal change through each of these approaches.

**Leadership and Transformation:** USGBC provides leadership to the green building community and society at large by advancing effective, cutting edge innovation in green building vision, theory, practice, design, and construction. As it grows and matures, USGBC will strive to continually engage new challenges and expand the horizons of the green building community through its own efforts and by catalyzing innovation in the green building marketplace. We will seek to lead with humility, collaborating with and supporting our own chapters and members, as well as national and international partners with complementary expertise. USGBC has been fortunate to attract exceptional volunteers and staff to advance its mission. Ensuring the ongoing engagement of high-caliber stakeholders will continue to be at the core of USGBC's operating strategy.

**LEED® -- Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design: The LEED® Green Building Rating System™** is a voluntary, consensus-based rating system for developing high-performance, sustainable buildings. LEED addresses all building types as well as neighborhoods. LEED emphasizes state of the art strategies and promotes expertise in green building through project certification, professional accreditation, training and practical resources.

**Education:** USGBC will continue to raise awareness of critical issues and build capacity among a wide range of sectors within the building community, as well as those who purchase, manage, operate, maintain, and regulate

buildings. Education of these sectors remains a vital strategy to advance green building, along with efforts to support integration of green building into secondary and higher education. Education has become an increasingly important strategy in advancing the green building agenda. USGBC recognizes that advancing its strategic goals will require expanding the target audiences for its educational programs and the development of more targeted materials.

**USGBC Education Programs** provide top quality courses on green design, construction, and operations for professionals from all sectors of the building industry. More than 75,000 designers, builders, suppliers and managers have attended USGBC educational programs to gain practical knowledge, explore new business opportunities, and learn how to create healthier, more productive, and more efficient places to live and work.

**LEED Professional Accreditation** is awarded to building industry practitioners who successfully demonstrate on a comprehensive exam their ability to serve on a LEED project team and provide detailed knowledge of certification requirements. A LEED accredited professional (LEED AP) also has a command of integrated design principles.

**Greenbuild:** The USGBC's Greenbuild International Conference & Expo is the nation's largest conference on high-performance building practices. Participants learn about new products, innovative projects, and the latest building research through educational sessions, international master speakers, practical workshops and green building tours, and a green building trade show.

**Research and Development:** Research and development play a vital role in the achievement of USGBC's vision and mission by accelerating the scope and scale of green building. USGBC seeks to drive research critical to the expansion of green building as well as to compile and disseminate research and informational resources regarding green



**building.** Critical areas for investment include building delivery process and performance evaluation, integrated building systems, buildings' interaction with local environments, buildings' interaction with occupants, and net zero carbon emission buildings and built environments. Public, non-profit, and private sector organizations all have important roles to play in increasing green building R&D, both through direct investment and by creating incentives and enabling conditions.

**Outreach:** A strong partnership and close coordination between USGBC and its chapters and members is essential to fulfilling USGBC's mission. Grassroots outreach and building local capacity are necessary to effectively promote green building; educate and train professionals; advocate policy; build networks of green building practitioners and activists; and recruit members. USGBC will continually refine the relationship between the national organization and chapters to enable maximum effectiveness in achieving the goals of all.

**Chapter Program:** USGBC works with chapters and other local organizing groups throughout the U.S., which provide local green building resources, education and leadership opportunities.

**Student Leaders:** USGBC provides opportunities for engagement, education, and leadership at the college and university level.

**Advocacy:** USGBC will continue to expand the application of direct advocacy both for comprehensive efforts to transform the built environment and for particular legislative or regulatory outcomes. Societal transformation of the scope and scale required to realize USGBC's vision requires changes in public policy at all levels of government. Through both policies to lead by example and policies to provide incentives for the private sector, governments have significant influence and power to dramatically speed green building uptake.

**USGBC's advocacy efforts** have helped yield public policies that are accelerating green building in the marketplace. Over the last five years, the Council's advocacy

efforts have become increasingly strategic and effective. To date, 12 federal agencies or departments, 28 states, and nearly 130 localities have passed green building policies that incorporate LEED. In addition, government-owned projects represent more than a quarter of certified and registered projects.

**Collaboration:** Large-scale transformation requires creating partnerships, forging alliances, and building coalitions, a collaborative approach intrinsic to USGBC's values. Though often challenging, partnering is a core operational strategy, and includes USGBC's relationships with its own chapters and members as well as industry trade associations, professional societies, and other organizations. USGBC will continue to work with an ever-widening range of public, private, and non-profit organizations in pursuit of its strategic goals and objectives. Indeed, a majority of objectives in this plan identify collaboration as a core implementation strategy and in some cases reflect a commitment by USGBC to catalyze, incubate or otherwise promote the success of other organizations as a strategic choice over expanding its own core competencies.

## V. THE PATH FORWARD: IMPLEMENTATION

The strategic goals and objectives presented in this plan have been developed by weighing data gathered in the issue mapping process in the context of USGBC's vision, mission, guiding principles, existing operational and organizational strengths, and track record. The goals are not intended to be "operational" in nature, and may not necessarily be accomplished within the five year planning period. Objectives are intended to propose how USGBC will work toward achievement of those goals during the next five years, yet they avoid identifying specific tactics, which will be identified by staff in annual work plans.

The Board and Executive Management Team (EMT) will initiate activities associated with implementation of the plan concurrent with the 2009 planning and budget cycle. Staff will establish metrics and criteria for Board review. These metrics and criteria will be used to evaluate progress on objectives over the next five years..

While implementation of this plan is not anticipated to require large-scale changes in the structures and programs of USGBC, the Board and EMT will need to ensure that appropriate Board and organizational structures and communications channels are in place to support the execution of the plan. After reviewing existing structures and programs and considering how goals and objectives will be implemented, it may be determined that adjustments in organization and capacity are needed to develop and implement programs for new or significantly intensified areas of focus identified in the plan. These may include hiring additional staff, creating additional mechanisms for cross-departmental coordination and joint initiatives, seating new program/Board committees, and establishing new mechanisms for development and oversight of organizational strategy and direction. Staff, led by the EMT, will be responsible for developing the annual work plan and budget. The Board will be responsible for general oversight and ensuring that annual plans and budgets are aligned with strategic goals and objectives.

Chapters, regional councils, and program steering committees will be responsible for developing focused strategies that align with and build upon the strategic goals and objectives in this plan. The Board and staff will provide direction, coordination, and support to ensure that planning and program development activities are conducted through a coordinated, inclusive process that aligns all of the various components of USGBC. Through a deliberative and harmonized planning process, USGBC will mobilize its many resources and diverse stakeholders to achieve the far-reaching goals set forth in this plan.

## VI. THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Board of Directors established a Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) in July, 2007, co-chaired by Rebecca Flora, board chair, and Chris Smith, chief operating officer. The charge of the Committee was to identify the key strategic issues facing the green building community, and develop strategic goals for the organization to address them. The board fully involved the Executive Management Team (EMT) in the development of the plan from the outset. While organizational development was not a focus of the effort, some attention was given to high level issues relating to governance and national-chapter relations. Meridian Institute was hired to facilitate the process, which extended from November, 2007, through July, 2008.

### *Issue Mapping*

The issue mapping process, undertaken from July, 2007, through February, 2008, assessed and analyzed the context in which USGBC operates, based upon interviews with external and internal stakeholders. The process began with discussions led by Meridian Institute at meetings of the Board, Executive Committee, Government Committee, Chapter Steering Committee, Emerging Green Builders Committee, LEED Steering Committee, Education Committee, Executive Management Team, Senior Management Team, and cross cuts of diverse staff. Almost 100 interviews were then conducted by members of the Strategic Planning Committee and staff of the Meridian Institute. Additional input included survey data (approximately 50 survey responses from members and 30 survey responses from staff), and written input from chapters and Regional Council representatives. Interviewees included board members and approximately 60 USGBC member and 20 non-member organizations across the full range of USGBC member categories. Societal trends in general and trends in the green building field in particular that seemed likely to impact the green building community and USGBC were culled and organized according to themes in an *Issue Mapping Summary*.

### *Joint Retreat of the Board and EMT*

The Board and EMT met offsite from February 27 – 29, 2008, for a retreat facilitated by Meridian Institute. The agenda included exploration of several scenarios of the future, discussion of the issues identified in the *Issue Mapping Summary*, identification of issue areas for which USGBC might establish strategic goals, and discussion of what engagement of those issues might look like for USGBC.

### *Development of Strategic Goals and Objectives*

Meridian Institute generated a “Strategic Planning Framework” that elaborated possible goals and objectives for USGBC in the goal issue areas identified by the Board and EMT. This document was circulated for comment to the Board, EMT, and three committees identified by the SPC as of particular importance, given the emerging direction of the strategic planning process: Board Leadership Task Force, Chapter Steering Committee, and Social Equity Task Force. Based on input from these sources, the SPC worked with the Meridian Institute to formulate strategic goals and objectives during a retreat on April 28-29, 2008, at USGBC headquarters.

### *Drafting, Review, and Adoption of the Plan*

The text of this strategic plan, including a basic framework to guide implementation, was drafted and underwent several iterations of review by the Executive Committee, Board, and EMT through June. [It was adopted by the Board on July 17, 2008.]

**[BACK COVER]**