



Scope and Eligibility Guidelines

LEED for Homes - 2008 Version

This document provides guidance on the types of projects that can participate in the LEED for Homes program.

Universal Requirements for Participation

Any project that participates in LEED for Homes must be defined as a 'dwelling unit' by all applicable codes. This requirement includes, but is not limited to, the International Residential Code stipulation that a dwelling unit must include "permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation." This language has been interpreted by LEED for Homes to mean that every participating home must have a cooking area¹ and a bathroom.

A LEED for Homes certification must be granted to an individual building. This has the following implications:

1. A building cannot be partially certified. Single units in multi-family buildings cannot participate in LEED for Homes unless the entire building is registered to participate.

Stacked attached homes, such as condominium flats, are considered to be multi-family buildings.

2. Every unit within a multi-family building must earn the same certification level (e.g. Silver, Gold).
3. Separate buildings must be certified separately. Multiple buildings in a complex, or single-family homes in a subdivision, may be certified separately, but it's not a requirement that all the buildings or homes be certified or that they meet the same certification level. If multiple buildings are planning to certify through the program, each participating building must be registered with USGBC.

Single-family side-by-side attached homes, such as row houses, are considered to be separate buildings.

Green Rater Involvement

Every LEED Home project team must work with a designated LEED for Homes Green Rater (as classified by the Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI), and a project registration must be completed for each project. Green Raters are required to work under the quality assurance protocols of LEED for Homes Providers (as classified by the US Green Building Council).

The Green Rater should be involved as early in the process as possible. Projects that have begun construction prior to contacting a Green Rater may participate in LEED for Homes, subject to the judgment of the Green Rater, as long as all of the mandatory measures (prerequisites) in LEED for Homes can be met.

¹ For the purposes of LEED for Homes, the definition of a "cooking area" should rely on local or state codes, but must be at least a kitchenette, and include a sink, cooking appliance (e.g. stove, oven, microwave), and preparation space.

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Typically, buildings cannot pursue certification after drywall has been installed unless all necessary pre-drywall inspections were performed for a different green homebuilding program.

Eligible Projects

The following project types are eligible to participate, subject to the conditions described below.

Green Raters are strongly encouraged to scrutinize all projects carefully to ensure that the prerequisites in the LEED for Homes Rating System can be addressed.

Detached single-family homes

Conventional single-family homes, whether custom, production, or affordable, are eligible to participate.

Attached single-family homes

Homes that serve one family but share one or more vertical party wall with other homes are eligible to participate. This category includes townhomes but does not include stacked duplexes or triplexes, which are considered multi-family buildings.

Low-rise multi-family

Low-rise multi-family buildings are one to three stories² high and include two or more dwelling units. Residential associated spaces do not need to be included in the Home Size Adjuster, but must meet all LEED prerequisites and the same credits as the worst case unit³, where applicable.

Mid-rise multi-family

Mid-rise multi-family buildings are defined as buildings with four to six stories⁴ and at least two dwelling units. These projects are allowed to participate in the LEED for Homes Mid-rise program. Mid-rise projects must follow the guidance laid out in the Mid-rise Addendum to LEED for Homes, which includes special energy modeling and ventilation requirements.

In order to participate in the Mid-rise Program, each project must have a) adequate expertise to conduct modeling per ASHRAE Standard 90.1; and b) adequate expertise on mid-rise components and systems, so as to provide useful advice on energy-reduction strategies.

For projects at the 3-5 story borderline of LEED for Homes that meet ALL of the following criteria, the decision of whether to use LEED for Homes or LEED for Homes Mid-Rise is at the discretion of the project team, Green Rater *and* Provider:

1. 5 stories or fewer

² A “story” includes any floor with living or commercial space. A floor that is 80% or more garage space is not considered a story for the purposes of defining the building type in LEED for Homes.

³ A worst case unit is an amalgamation of the worst scoring features of all units within a multi-family development based on credits attempted, unit orientation etc.

⁴ A “story” includes any floor with living or commercial space. A floor that is 80% or more garage space is not considered a story for the purposes of defining the building type in LEED for Homes.

⁵ Projects with a central water heating system where solar thermal delivers at least 50% of the building’s domestic hot water needs are exempt from this requirement.

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2. Individual heating, cooling and water heating⁵ for each unit
3. At least 80% of total floor area must be in-unit residential space. (This differs from EPA which requires that 80% of *residential* floor area must be in-unit space).

Note that these projects will not be given exemptions for prerequisites/credits they are unable to obtain because of the building type, so *prior to registering*, carefully consider local code requirements, energy testing/modeling requirements (HERS vs. ASHRAE std. 90.1), local zoning and prerequisites that may disqualify a project from certifying.

Gut / rehabilitation

Projects that are characterized as ‘substantial gut/rehab’ can participate in LEED for Homes, as long as all of the prerequisites can be met. In order to qualify as a ‘substantial’ gut/rehab, a project must replace most of the systems and components (e.g. HVAC, windows) and must open up the exterior walls to enable the thermal bypass inspection to be completed.

Manufactured and modular housing

Manufactured or modular homes can participate in LEED for Homes, but manufacturing plants cannot be LEED certified; only individual homes can earn certification, and only after the home is constructed on-site. Green Raters are encouraged to ensure that all of the requirements are met, particularly the thermal bypass inspection (see prerequisite EA 1.1) and the requirement that any tropical wood be FSC-certified (see prerequisite MR 2.1). These projects will generally require the involvement of the plant manager / owner, and Green Raters may need to arrange on-site plant inspections. Please consult USGBC for further guidance on manufactured and modular housing.

Mixed-use buildings

Mixed-use projects may participate if at least 40-60% of the building’s total floor area is residential. In these cases, the project team is expected to prepare “green” tenant fit out guidelines that address energy, water, air quality, and materials performance of the non-residential portion of the building. These guidelines can be based on the commercial LEED Rating Systems. Common residential spaces must meet all LEED prerequisites and the same credits as the worst case unit, where applicable.

Dormitories and assisted living facilities

These buildings are typically identified by the presence of a central kitchen facility, and the fact that they fall outside of the scope of ASHRAE Std. 62.2. Any building of this type that does not have cooking and bathroom facilities cannot participate in LEED for Homes. If each unit has its own cooking area and bathroom, the building should be treated as a multi-family building. Common residential spaces must meet all LEED prerequisites and the same credits as the worst case unit, where applicable.

Buildings with central kitchen facilities must fall into one of the following categories:

- Small buildings with 2-9 units: these buildings should be treated as single-family homes, and each unit should be treated as a separate bedroom.
- Larger buildings with 10+ units: these buildings should be treated as multi-family buildings, in which each unit is a separate living unit and each unit is compartmentalized (i.e. isolated

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from common spaces and each other). In this case, central kitchens and common bathrooms are required to meet the local exhaust requirements in ASHRAE Standard 62.1. Common residential associated spaces do not need to be included in the Home Size Adjuster but are required to meet the ventilation requirements in ASHRAE Standard 62.1 and must meet all LEED prerequisites and the same credits as the worst case unit, where applicable. In-unit spaces are still required to meet the ventilation requirements in ASHRAE Standard 62.2.

International projects

In response to growing international demand for LEED for Homes certification, USGBC is formally launching a LEED for Homes International Pilot. Project teams working on low- or midrise projects with 50 or more units may submit an application for consideration:

[LEED for Homes International Pilot Application](#)

[LEED for Homes International Pilot FAQ](#)

NOTE: If you are registering a project in Canada, please visit the CAGBC's [LEED Canada for Homes website.](#))

"In-law" flats

In-law units are typically small, separate units that are attached or co-located with single-family homes. There are a few different designs for in-law flats:

- Attached, with a shared entrance or interior connections (e.g. doors) – the in-law flat should be treated as part of the main home. The flat may be considered a separate bedroom, but not a separate unit.
- Attached, with a separate entrance – the in-law flat must earn the same certification as the main house, but it can either be treated as a separate unit or an additional bedroom to the main home.
- Detached accessory dwelling units – these detached units may be treated in one of two ways:
 1. As a separate certification. In this case, the accessory dwelling unit (ADU) will complete a separate checklist and have a home size adjuster based on the details of that unit.
 2. As part of the main home. In this case, the conditioned square footage and bedrooms in the ADU should be added to the main home for the purposes of the home size adjuster, and the spaces should be included together in one energy model. The multi-family home size adjuster should not be used. Project teams and Providers are given discretion about which approach to take. In cases where the systems are shared, option #2 is strongly recommended but not mandated.