



LEED: A Global Reinvention

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The Chinese art of bian lian - or "face-changing" with masks.

"Invent because you must."

Tom Sachs' [adage](#) is a fitting mantra for our International vision for LEED. As the market and the passion for LEED grows around the world, we must reinvent USGBC in the context of the global landscape. There are new destinations ripe with green building potential, and emerging markets from Berlin to Budapest.



Our strategy? To follow the knowledge, to go where there is passion. Last month, that took USGBC leadership to China.

Why China? The passion and pro-activeness for green building among Chinese developers cannot be understated. Despite language barriers and other challenges, the Chinese have begun applying LEED across an array of projects and building types, from green schools to [Shanghai Tower](#), which will be the tallest LEED building in the world once complete. China is a place where the dispersion of green building has grown organically, 7,500 miles from the birthplace of LEED. For our USGBC team, it felt like we were parents looking at our own child: Our creation made us look very small. And that was a remarkable feeling.

We've been fortunate to travel to China in years past, making lasting connections with emerging LEED users and celebrating new projects with plaque ceremonies. This particular trip was an opportunity for USGBC to gain critical insight in to emerging global markets. USGBC has become a knowledge center that many sectors leverage - but there is an *abundance* of knowledge outside of USGBC and LEED. China represents one nucleus of this kind. As we walked the floors of China's LEED buildings, and met the enthusiastic and accommodating teams that championed them, that fact became extremely clear.

We left China with a "mission accomplished" feeling, and a clear idea of what USGBC needs to develop in order to support Chinese developers and act on their recommendations. There were three prominent outcomes:

1. The developers asked us, "How can we learn more about LEED?" China is just getting started, and it is our responsibility to bring as much education and guidance to the region as possible. Which brings us to our next outcome...
2. Translating LEED resources is a necessity, not a luxury! The language barrier among Chinese LEED users is the biggest obstacle to widespread usage of LEED in China. It only gets more complex through the delivery chain - a Chinese developer or corporate leader may speak an array of languages, but consider the construction worker or laborer who has lived in China his entire life: Generations of his family may have never stepped outside of the country. The time to translate USGBC and LEED resources is now. You can expect a launch of many translated resources on Oct. 1.
3. We were extraordinarily humbled by the level of access and hospitality we were given by the busy Chinese developers and business leaders we met with on our trip. Despite hectic schedules, these individuals were eager to learn from us and interested in progressing the green building mission. The amount we learned from them is insurmountable. We are grateful to them, and to our USGBC International team members, Jennivine Kwan and Nellie Chang, for making this experience a reality.

The trip to China left me and Judith Webb, USGBC's Senior Vice President of Marketing and Communications, feeling more energized than ever - and truly convinced of LEED's global potential.

LEED is currently being applied in hundreds of countries, but to see China's green building revolution firsthand brought the idea home. And just like the bian lian performers we met in Shanghai, who can change their masks in a fraction of a second (see the photo gallery above), we, too, need to change and reinvent ourselves. By making LEED globally accessible, we're on the road to doing exactly that.

Lastly, thanks goes to USGBC's Senior Vice President of LEED, Scot Horst. Accompanying him to China was an experience: I felt like a student in the

presence of the master. Thank you, Scot, for your influence over the past three years.

I have just become *more* passionate.



Mahesh Ramanujam
Chief Operating Officer
U.S. Green Building Council



Member employees, USGBC staff

2 comments

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Qiang Zhang

Project manager, Carrier Corporation/United Technologies

2 years 21 weeks ago

Great article about the LEED for China, hope to see the magic Bian Lian for LEED in China.



Qiang Zhang

Project manager, Carrier Corporation/United Technologies

2 years 21 weeks ago

Looking forwards to seeing you again in China.

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