

As Green Building Codes and Standards Emerge – Where Do We Go from Here?

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The success of the LEED green building rating systems in driving amazing amounts of green building activity, driving focus on a broader spectrum of human and environmental health issues and driving leadership in achieving a more sustainable future has [created space](#) for many other conversations to take place – from the bleeding edge to the minimum code level. A year after [the launch](#) of a previously unimaginable code framework to advance regulatory change towards better, greener building practice, where are we? And where do we go from here?

The industry is abuzz with questions about how a green building code may change their business outlook, change the laws or even change the world. There's no doubt that broadly-applied minimum regulations for better, healthier, more efficient and environmentally sensitive building practices necessarily push a lot of buildings, professions and professionals forward. For jurisdictions that are interested in upping their minimum requirements, USGBC is encouraged that there are now tools available to facilitate that critical piece of the [green building policy puzzle](#).

But there is nothing gained by added confusion, or by a diminished understanding of [what a green building is](#) or aspires to be. Codes can do an effective job of delivering minimum performance – and that's important. But if you're looking for a non-mandatory approach to build greener buildings, a green building code is not designed for you.

As we draft the updates to LEED, there is so much progress that we can point to as reasons to keep driving onward toward restorative and regenerative buildings and communities. We invite you to [participate in that development](#) (LEED is re-opening for second public comment on July 1, 2011) and also in the final rounds of development of these green building codes and standards. [The balance](#) is nuanced but codes and rating systems fundamentally serve different functions, and we need to focus on improving all of them so that they each may fulfill their maximum potential. Neither one nor the other alone is as strong as both push and pull forces working collaboratively.

It's not a choice between codes or rating systems – one is a decidedly rigid mandatory minimum (with a handful of jurisdictional and performance pathways built in) and the other a leadership engagement tool that intentionally (and in its next version, increasingly) steps out of the way of design professionals to innovate and improve green building outcomes. We need *both* improved minimum codes and voluntary beyond-code rating systems to get the job done (see related [policy brief](#)).

Clearly the only way to go from here is onward, which is what USGBC intends to do. We hope you'll work with us to achieve truly sustainable buildings and communities using all the best tools for the job.

For more information, review USGBC's white paper: [Greening the Codes](#).

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