

# More Than a Decade of High-Performing Buildings: Out Now in EDC's February Issue

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The Westory Recertification, LEED Gold. Photo credit: Eric Burka

*Editor's note: Browse the [February issue of EDC](#), the official magazine for the LEED Professional - and preview the piece "[LEED: More Than a Decade of High-Performing Buildings](#)" by Brendan Owens below. [Sign up today](#) to get your free digital edition of EDC.*

A three-ring binder dated April 1999 and filled with about 200 photocopied pages was the reference guide for LEED v1.0—the pilot version of LEED sent to USGBC members from its headquarters, which was then located in San Francisco. Comments were requested during the pilot period, which ran to December 1999.

The rating has come a long way since LEED v1.0, which had credit categories paired with verbs to get the point across, like "Safeguarding Water" and "Planning Sustainable Sites," but the DNA of today's LEED is clearly present in that original version.

LEED for New Construction (LEED-NC) is "based on existing, proven technology and evaluates environmental performance from a 'whole building' perspective." Even after five years of development (a simple "pass/fail" draft of the rating system was completed in 1994), numerous credits under consideration had been dropped from v1.0, "due mainly to difficulties in quantification." Even so, v1.0 managed to include 45 credits and prerequisites with specific requirements.

LEED evolved steadily from that point as adoption of the rating system exploded, maintaining and sharpening its focus on proven strategies, whole-building performance and metrics. The first 12 buildings were LEED certified in March 2000, and USGBC members approved LEED 2.0 in May 2000, in the first of several cycles of improvement. (Version 2.2 came out in 2005 as the next major revision, and LEED v2009 in April 2009.)

## **Beyond New Construction**

Meanwhile, USGBC was eyeing the existing building stock. LEED-EB (now LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance, or LEED-EBOM) was being talked about no later than 2000, and 65 projects were part of a LEED-EB pilot by 2002. As Environmental Building News wrote at the time:

"As it relies on actual utility bills and other documentation of energy and resource flows through the building, LEED-EB is potentially even more meaningful than the original LEED as an indicator of the actual environmental impact of buildings in use. In addition, the large number of existing buildings means that the potential market for LEED-EB is substantially larger than that for the original LEED program."

USGBC launched a formal draft of LEED-EB in March 2004, and the rating system was live in November 2004, with the first certified project (the Getty Center in Los Angeles), arriving in February 2005. LEED-EB got its first major update in 2008, and then a minor update arrived with LEED v2009.

With these major pieces in place, and the LEED rating systems gaining market traction, USGBC worked to strengthen the tie between new buildings and the Existing Buildings program, and between all LEED buildings and verified performance.

At its Greenbuild conference in December 2006, USGBC made several announcements that set the tone for years to come. After an analysis of 420 buildings certified under LEED-NC prior to 2006 showed that 17 percent earned fewer than two points for overall energy efficiency, USGBC announced that all projects would have to earn at least two points. This essentially increased the

stringency required by the prerequisite to 14 percent energy savings in new buildings compared to an ASHRAE 90.1-2004 baseline—a baseline that typically is ahead of local codes by several years.

To accelerate adoption of LEED-EB, USGBC also opened free LEED-EB registration to certified LEED-NC buildings, lighting a path from green construction to green operations and ongoing tracking. While 33 projects were registered under LEED-EB prior to that announcement, according to the Green Building Information Gateway (GBIG), 207 were registered in the following year and 547 in the year after that. By the launch of LEED v2009, 194 LEED-EB projects had moved beyond registration and become certified. As of December 2012, 1,660 are certified.

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