

The people behind the early days of LEED

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My first exposure to LEED and the people behind it did not begin auspiciously. It was the night before the AIA Mainstreaming Green Conference in October of 1999 in Chattanooga, Tennessee and Hartsfield Airport in Atlanta was fogged in, cancelling all flights out for those of us trying to get to the conference. The Braves were in the World Series which meant there wasn't a hotel room to be had in Atlanta, so a chance-met friend and I pulled an all-nighter and drove to Chattanooga. To cap it off, the conference hotel coffee was terrible, so every morning a number of us went down the street to an upscale coffee shop for our daily fix.

That was when things began to look up. In line at that shop was where I first met Nadav Malin, later to become MR TAG Chair and LEED Faculty. I also met at the conference for the first time Joel Todd, currently LEED Steering Committee Chair, Muscoe Martin, later to become LEED NC chair and LEED Faculty, Bill Reed, later to become TAG chair and LEED Faculty, and Gail Lindsey, later to become LEED Faculty. I met Dru Crawley of US DOE, a key supporter of USGBC at a critical time. I heard, but didn't meet at that time, Jim Toothaker from Pennsylvania, former green building sceptic turned pioneer and evangelist. Nigel Howard was also there, at that time from the UK, but later to be instrumental in the revision and expansion of the LEED program within USGBC.

I know there were other key USGBC people at the conference, but these are the people I remember meeting, and who have since become friends. It was these people, at the heart of the USGBC and the rating system, as much as the rating system itself, that made an impression on me. They all cared deeply, they had all demonstrated deep commitments to change and they were such genuine and warm individuals. It seemed to me that any system that was a product of such a group of passionate and capable individuals was worth closer attention and support.

Of course what I have come to understand since then is that a rating system's success does not exist in a vacuum. The networking, the idea sharing and the mutual support among the people, that comes with the development and ongoing use of the rating system, is just as important as the rating system itself.

Oh, and those people that helped to develop LEED, that I met at that conference, they haven't stopped. They have continued to advocate, educate and volunteer for LEED and they continue to pioneer and lead in green buildings, sustainability and regeneration.

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