

About LEED

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[LEED](#), or Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design, is a globally recognized symbol of excellence in green building.

LEED certification ensures electricity cost savings, lower carbon emissions and healthier environments for the places we live, work, learn, play and worship. LEED's global sustainability agenda is designed to achieve high performance in key areas of human and environmental health, acting on the triple bottom line - putting people, planet and profit first.

[LEED credits](#) are awarded by third-party technical reviewers; are applicable to all building types throughout a building's lifecycle; and are developed through several rounds of public comments and in collaboration with the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) board, broader membership and staff.

What is LEED certification?

- **LEED projects earn points by adhering to prerequisites and credits across nine measurements for building excellence from integrative process to indoor environmental quality.** Prerequisites are required elements, or green-building strategies that must be included in any LEED certified project. Credits are optional elements, or strategies that projects pursue to gain points toward LEED certification.
- **Credits are developed through several rounds of public comments and in collaboration with the USGBC board, broader membership and staff.** As market readiness increases and new technologies become widely available, credits adapt to improve the value and environmental integrity of building projects.
- **Based on the number of credits achieved, a project earns one of four LEED rating levels: LEED Certified, LEED Silver, LEED Gold or LEED Platinum.** The LEED rating systems work for all buildings at all phases of development and are meant to challenge project teams and inspire outside-the-box solutions.
- The [Green Business Certification Inc.](#), or GBCI, provides third-party technicians the training and expertise necessary to review and verify building quality and integrity.
- LEED is driving international green building practices, with **more than 93,000 projects participating in LEED across 167 countries and territories** and **a total of 19.3 billion square feet of space used worldwide**. USGBC estimates that nearly five million people experience a LEED building on a daily basis.

The benefits of LEED are clear

- LEED certification is designed to achieve high performance in key areas of human and environmental health for new and existing green buildings.
- **LEED buildings consistently set the market rate for commercial real estate** in highly competitive markets, demonstrating that sustainability now rates as a key factor in market valuations of real estate portfolios.
- **LEED projects save energy and resources and are responsible for diverting over 80 million tons of waste from landfills** Compared to the average commercial building in the General Services Administration's portfolio, LEED Gold buildings consume a quarter less energy and generate 34 percent lower greenhouse gas emissions.¹
- By letting in clean air and access to daylight, **LEED creates healthy spaces that increase recruitment, retention and productivity rates amongst employees**
- **LEED buildings attract tenants** with LEED building lease-up rates ranging from average to 20 percent above average.
- And **between 2008 and 2012, firms increased green building from 17 percent to 30 percent** with the primary purpose of achieving lower operating costs.

- **LEED buildings can be compared across the globe**— a LEED certified building in India is the same level and high quality structure as a LEED certified building in the U.S., in China or anywhere else.
- A recent economic impact study, [2015 Green Building Economic Impact Study](#) released by USGBC and prepared by Booz Allen Hamilton found that by 2018, the **total impact of green construction will reach more than 3.3 million U.S. jobs and \$190.3 billion in labor earnings**, with LEED projects responsible for contributing to 1.1 million green construction jobs²

LEED is flexible

- **LEED provides building owners and operators with a framework** for identifying and implementing practical and measurable green building strategies for all building types from commercial buildings to entire neighborhood communities.
- **There are five primary LEED Rating Systems** LEED Building Design and Construction (**BD+C**); LEED for Interior Design and Construction (**D+C**); LEED for Building Operations and Maintenance (**O+M**), LEED for Neighborhood Development (**LEED ND**) and **LEED Homes**. Each of the five primary LEED rating systems are broken down into subsections based on the type of building project.

LEED v4

- **The LEED green building rating system has gone through several evolutions since it was originally introduced in 2000.**With its initial launch, LEED opened a new chapter in building design, construction, management and operation that led to the advent of new energy efficiency and environmental sustainability technologies and gave rise to a full blown industry dedicated to supporting green buildings.
- **LEED was developed with a philosophy that recognizes buildings function more like living, breathing organisms.**Modern buildings are a collection of systems working together in order to help the building perform. Just as is the case with the human body, if any of these systems are not working well together, the building as a whole suffers. LEED v4 represents the most innovative approach to integrating these systems in order to ensure optimal standards in human health and environmental sustainability.
- **LEED v4 is the newest version of the world's premier benchmark for high-performance green buildings.**With contiguous improvement as an integral part of its DNA, LEED is a market driven green building rating system. **LEED v4** has ushered in substantial changes to make LEED more accessible to a wider range of building and space types so they can achieve higher levels of environmental sustainability, while also making more flexible for projects outside of the United States to adopt LEED and achieve LEED certification. LEED v4 includes:
 - Flexibility with strategies to fit the unique aspects of all projects
 - Performance based approach to design, operations and maintenance that calls for measurable results at every stage of a project's life
 - Smart grid thinking to the forefront that rewards projects for participating in demand response programs
 - A more comprehensive approach to water efficiency by evaluating total building water use
 - Expanded focus on materials — in addition to considering usage of materials in buildings, LEED v4 integrates a comprehensive approach to evaluate the impact of materials on human health and the environment
 - Streamlined documentation and even greater alignment between rating systems for a better customer experience.

Related videos

¹U.S. Department of Energy (2011). *Re-Assessing Green Building Performance: A Post Occupancy Evaluation of 22 Buildings*.

²Booz Allen Hamilton and the U.S. Green Building Council (2015). *2015 Green Building Economic Impact Study*.

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