

# At Treasury, Green is Our Favorite Color – But We'll Take (LEED) Gold!

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When you think about a “green” building, you probably don’t picture a centuries-old National Historic Landmark that’s lined with columns and made of thousands of tons of granite.

Well, maybe that’s about to change. I’m pleased to announce that the Treasury Building – which dates back to the 19th century and is located right next door to the White House – received Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) at a ceremony today in our historic Grant Room.

According to the USGBC, the Treasury Building is believed to be the oldest building in the world to receive LEED certification. The fact that the home of much of our nation’s financial history has achieved this distinction for environmental leadership really adds new meaning to the term ‘green’ building.

LEED is a leading international standard for the design, construction, and operation of high-performance green buildings. The Treasury Building received its LEED Gold certification based on a number of green construction and operation features, including:

- Increasing the use of natural day lighting to reduce energy consumption
- Establishing sustainable cleaning and landscape programs
- Developing and implementing advanced control and management of the heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems
- Conducting waste stream audits to benchmark recycling programs and identify opportunities to maximize material conservation
- Creating a green procurement program for materials, equipment and services purchased
- Increasing occupant space utilization
- Augmenting alternate transportation means
- Establishing enhanced utility metering for improved systems management

These improvements are paying big dividends. Not just for the environment, but also for the Department’s bottom line – because going green saves green for taxpayers. Project results, which are producing an estimated \$3.5 million in energy and lease cost savings annually, include:

- A 43 percent decrease in the use of potable water
- A 7 percent decrease in electrical usage
- A 53 percent decrease in the use of steam
- The addition of 164 additional workstations within the building

The fact that we’ve been able to achieve those types of results is particularly significant given the unique historical and architectural features of the Treasury Building.

The Treasury Building is more than two city blocks long and was constructed over a period of 33 years between 1836 and 1869. The east and center wings – which comprise the oldest portion of the structure – were designed by Robert Mills, architect of the Washington Monument, and were built between 1836 to 1842. It’s the third-oldest federal building in Washington D.C., after the White House and the U.S. Capitol, and was named a National Historic Landmark in 1972.

We’re proud of the improvements we’ve made around the Treasury Building – both big and small – to help reduce our environmental footprint and save taxpayer dollars. They’re part of a broader Administration-wide effort, which includes President Obama’s recent [\\$2 billion commitment](#) to energy upgrades of federal buildings using long term energy savings to pay for up-front costs, at no cost to taxpayers.

But Treasury’s environmental initiatives represent just a few of the steps we’ve taken to cut waste and improve efficiency.

- We’re continuing to transition to electronic payments for federal beneficiaries and retirees, which will save more than \$500 million over the first five years. That also has a significant environmental benefit by converting approximately 135 million paper check payments to electronic payments per year.
- Last week, Vice President Biden and Secretary Geithner announced that the United States Mint is [suspending production](#) of surplus Presidential \$1 Coins for circulation, which will save at least \$50 million annually over the next several years.
- The Department’s work to increase e-filing of tax returns will save more than \$100 million over five years.

▪ A set of projects we're implementing to consolidate IT services will save an estimated \$125 million over five years.

▪ Earlier this year, Treasury received "green" ratings across-the-board on its energy and [sustainability scorecard](#) from the Office of Management and Budget and White House Council on Environmental Quality.

Of course, we're not satisfied with those initiatives alone. And, moving forward, we'll continue to work to identify additional ways to save money for taxpayers and improve our Department's environmental efficiency. (As you might be able to tell, we're pretty competitive when it comes to our environmental sustainability efforts here at Treasury.)

For now, though, receiving LEED GOLD certification is a certainly welcome achievement and represents the culmination of a lot of hard work by a number of dedicated public servants here at the Department.

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*Note: This blog was cross-posted from the U.S. Department of the Treasury Blog and the [White House Blog](#).*

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