

# LEED Recertification: One Illinois High School's Sustainability Journey

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What do you remember about high school? Is it cars, dates, and sports? Or maybe after-school clubs and applying to college? For some of the students of [Adlai E. Stevenson high school](#) in Lincolnshire, Ill., their high school memories will include implementing transportation surveys, stormwater calculations, occupant comfort surveys, and energy audit walkthroughs.

Throughout pursuit of the initial [LEED v2009 Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance](#) certification, the school's green team – made up of staff, faculty, students, and administrators – engaged students and the community every step of the way, leading to successful LEED Gold certification in June 2011. But their story does not end there. Assistant superintendent for business at Stevenson High School, [Mark Michelini](#), quotes one of his board members saying, "Sustainability is a journey, not a destination." That's why the school is currently in the early stages of its recertification (anticipated 2016).

Recertification - subsequent application(s) to the LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance program after receiving an initial LEED for Existing Buildings certification - is a central topic right now, and rightly so, since LEED is about performance and recertification is all about ongoing performance. We'll discuss this topic further in our [USGBC webinar on Aug. 30](#).

We will soon be releasing comprehensive LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations and Maintenance Recertification Guidelines that were developed to help previously-certified buildings continue greening their existing facilities. These should be used by all projects certified under any version of LEED for Existing Buildings that are ready for recertification under LEED 2009 for Existing Buildings. The guide is meant for use in concert with the LEED 2009 for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance rating system and:

- Outlines the technical details needed to recertify
- Supersedes any previously released temporary recertification guidance

With the benefit of experience from initial certification, the facility and operations staff at Stevenson High School are "firing on all cylinders," according to Michelini. Green policies and procedures lacking from their initial certification are now established and helping to streamline recertification. Systems for tracking and managing waste, recycling, and pest management are being used. Because of all this, LEED sustainability consultant on the project, [Marya Graff](#), teases, "I have it easy compared to Mark."

The recertification so far has presented some interesting challenges, but they may not be what you think. "Excitement, engagement, and momentum" are words that Mark uses to describe the emotions around the school's initial certification. His primary challenge is maintaining those sentiments from the community and students throughout the recertification process. It's a matter of influencing behavior change and shifting mindsets to carry forward those emotions which led them to be the first high school in the United States to achieve LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations and Maintenance v2009 Gold certification.

Engaging your stakeholders to stay motivated during recertification can be a real challenge. In the end, deciding to continue your sustainability journey relates to your number one resource: Finances. Mark summed it up when he said, "What better way to sustain the financial health of the organization than by



looking at the bottom line? A lot of the procedures encountered during LEED certification helped us drill down those costs.” Recertification can help ensure the systems and procedures that were designed for both cost and environmental impact are continuing to function properly.

Perhaps your experience with recertification took a different path than the Stevenson High School project. Every project has different challenges, lessons learned, and strategies. Read more about this Stevenson High School project team’s initial LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance certification through their [LEED project profile](#) visible in the [LEED project directory](#).

How have you kept your stakeholders excited and engaged throughout the LEED recertification process? What motivates you to continue being green in your personal and professional life? Share your thoughts and experiences below in the comments.

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