

Defending LEED

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Recently there has been a lot of attention drawn towards the USGBC (United States Green Building Council) and the LEED rating system that has been less than flattering. A frivolous lawsuit about what LEED "falsely promises" to people and increased vitriol to the standard in general. Well, I am here to defend LEED - which might surprise some. I think people sometimes mistakenly assume that I am anti-LEED because of my sometimes vocal criticism of *elements* of the program, as well as the fact that I created a program (the Living Building Challenge) that some consider to be in competition with LEED - which it most assuredly is not.

Do I think that LEED is perfect? Absolutely not. No system is perfect. And yes, some criticism is deserved - and *needed* to keep improving what has become the most dominant green building program in the world. But there is a big difference in criticism that is intended to make the program stronger - so that it can continue to contribute to lowering environmental impact and changing the building culture - and criticism that is intended to tear down and destroy something that I believe has done a lot of good in the world. The former is essential - if not always appreciated - the latter is destructive and typically self-serving of particular corporate or individual interests.

So here I am - coming to LEED's defense. To be clear, the USGBC did not ask me to write this article. If they had I probably would have declined. I am nobody's "yes" man and what should be clear by now is that Cascadia - as a chapter - does not "toe the line." We are an independent voice and the conscience of the movement - USGBC *chooses* to put up with us and we *choose* to remain a chapter, because together we are collectively stronger and we share the same mission.

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