

A REGIONAL APPROACH TO LEED FOR CITIES CERTIFICATION

Benchmarking and tracking progress for a region

Collecting data with regional planning councils

For decades, local governments have collaborated at the regional scale on transportation planning, infrastructure and the delivery of other essential government services. In recent years, there has been an emerging trend of regional planning councils (RPCs) and their counterparts convening their constituents around issues of sustainability and resilience. This is a natural partnership, as much of the data that is needed to benchmark and track progress is already collected by RPCs.

For example, vehicle miles traveled (or VMT data) is often gathered by RPCs, and data from utilities can be collated at a regional scale to create synergies in data collection and reduce the burden on individual local governments. RPCs are also using the [LEED for Cities](#) framework as the common set of metrics to benchmark sustainability efforts, measure progress and celebrate milestones at the regional level.

Using LEED to frame climate action planning in the Kansas City region

In 2020, Johnson County, Kansas, pursued LEED for Cities certification and took part in a [regional climate action planning process](#). Brian Alferman, who led the process for Johnson County, said, “Although there is certainly overlap, climate planning alone doesn’t address many facets of sustainability, and sustainability measurement doesn’t encompass all aspects of climate planning. Actively engaging in both at the same time provided valuable insight into each and streamlined meetings and data-gathering.”

Since the county certified, other cities in the region have begun to pursue certification, and Alferman sees clear benefits to using a common framework for measurement. “Johnson County will certainly use LEED for Cities to track its sustainability progress in the future, much of which overlaps the strategies called for in the KC Regional Climate Action Plan. Since the climate action plan doesn’t provide measurement tools, encouraging individual cities to participate in LEED for Cities could be just the tool they need to stay on top of their progress,” he shared.

Creating a more resilient Tampa Bay with LEED for Cities

The [Tampa Bay Regional Resiliency Coalition](#) aims to strengthen the region’s ability to plan for the changing climate, reduce impacts and secure increased levels of federal funding for mitigation efforts. According to Cara Serra, a resilience planner with the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council who leads the regional plan development, “TBRPC staff and Resilience Coalition member governments determined the need to align the plan with leading climate action frameworks. Since many of our member governments were using LEED for Cities as a framework for their local climate action plans, drawing on LEED for Cities for the regional plan was helpful.”



Convening a cohort

If your RPC is interested in convening a cohort of cities or counties to pursue certification, the LEED for Cities team can tailor a program to meet your needs. Support from USGBC can include:

- An in-person orientation and training event to guide each team through the rating system and certification process, leading exercises such as goal-setting and road map development consistent with the requirements in the LEED credit Integrative Planning and Leadership;
- A dedicated USGBC staff liaison providing project management and coaching support, technical assistance and QA/QC on certification materials
- Public relations and marketing assistance and a case study on your USGBC project directory page tied to the certification announcements
- How-to guides, education resources and other project management tools
- Access to green building policy and advocacy support, as well as connections to local communities and our network of thought leaders and practitioners

Getting started

If you are ready to learn more and get started, visit our [webpage](#) and dig in to our [tools and resources](#). Download the existing guide to learn about the rating system. We also have how-to guides on [resilience](#), [aligning LEED for Cities with plans](#) and several [educational courses](#).

Contact us

Reach out for an informational call—we can help design a plan to meet your needs. Contact us at cities@usbgc.org.