

# **LEED for Neighborhood Development**

## **General Certification Guidance & LEED Online Tips**

This document serves as additional guidance for properly preparing information for a LEED-ND certification application. It reviews general certification guidance, including acceptable forms of alternative documentation (depending on project stage), and specific nuances to the LEED-ND submittal forms. It is recommended that project teams refer to the LEED for Neighborhood Development Reference Guide and LEED Online submittal forms for implementation and calculation information in tandem with this guidance.

### **General Certification Guidance**

1. Make sure documentation is concise and specific. Use clear and legible markings, notations, scale, and legends on all mapping. Highlight relevant sections of narrative uploads. All documentation must be in Imperial units and in English.
2. Name documentation files according to the Upload number in the form. That is, if a form has Uploads NPDc4-1 and NPDc4-2, please name corresponding documentation according to these titles (e.g. "NPDc4-1\_Affordable Housing", "NPDc4-2\_Neighborhood Centers").
3. To aid the review team, please submit a complete set of documentation for each prerequisite or credit, even if a map or exhibit may be very similar or identical to documentation submitted for another prerequisite or credit.
4. Be consistent across project information forms, prerequisites, and credits. Many of the submittal forms have inputs for project features such as total project acreage, total project square footage, development footprint, and others that should be the same value across the entire certification application. Please ensure that such values are the same for all relevant forms. In addition, all project features such as streets, sidewalks, alleys, and building entrances should be documented consistently throughout the application.
5. If any areas of the project are or will be restricted from development in perpetuity, such as required parks, required schools, and protected areas, be sure to validate with documentation from the appropriate authority, as noted in the forms.
6. For Stage 2 projects, the level of documentation needed to show prerequisite or credit compliance can vary, depending on the project's development status. Some forms allow for a signed commitment to confirm compliance, while others require more stringent documentation depending on how advanced the project is on the development timeline. Project teams should use their discretion on which path to choose within the form; however, if the path is incongruent to the development status (i.e., if a less stringent path is chosen for a project with significant construction), it will be questioned in the certification review. For any such instances, project teams should explain why the less stringent path is being pursued under Special Circumstances in the Additional Details section of the form or in a separate narrative upload (see Submittal Form Details further in this document). Note that, even with a detailed narrative, a project may still be required to pursue the more stringent path, if it is deemed warranted based on the project's scope, development status, features, and context.
7. Upon receipt of a certification application's preliminary review, project teams should be prepared to provide additional clarification documents that may or may not be listed in the submittal form. There have been instances in which the supporting documents included in the

preliminary review do not adequately address the prerequisite and credit requirements. To ensure compliance is met, the technical advice in the preliminary review may request that supporting documents be revised to include or respond to any discrepancies. In some cases, the technical advice may also suggest or request that additional documentation (e.g., photos, maps, ordinance excerpts, etc.) be provided to further confirm credit compliance. It is recommended that project teams adhere to the technical advice in order to meet the prerequisite or credit.

8. Some project teams have reported being uncertain about when it is appropriate to (1) submit a project-specific credit interpretation request (CIR) (a.k.a – LEED Interpretation) *versus* (2) take advantage of Special Circumstances area in the form *versus* (3) recognize that their project not being eligible to meet credit requirements.
  - a. A project team may want to submit a project-specific CIR when their project may be able to meet the intent of the credit in a different way than specified in the Rating System requirements. CIRs formally allow a project to pursue an alternative compliance path to meet the Rating System requirements and are evaluated by GBCI on a per-credit, per-project basis. An example of this is a project team desiring to utilize an alternative energy standard (other than ASHRAE 90.1-2007) to meet the energy requirements of GIBp2 and GIBc2. In such instances, the project team should submit a detailed CIR as to what standard they desire to use, how it is equivalent or more stringent to ASHRAE 90.1-2007, and how it will be used to meet the Rating System requirements. More information on project-specific CIRs can be found at:  
<https://www.usgbc.org/Login.aspx?REFERER=/leedinterpretations/lilanding.aspx>
  - b. In every form, there is an “Additional Details” section that allows project teams to explain and document any special circumstances that exist for their project (see LEED ONLINE TIPS Section below). Project teams should feel free to use this section to further explain credit strategies, corresponding uploads, and/or functionality issues within the credit form. An example of this is a project team realizing a calculation error exists in NPDc6 that is preventing the form from showing the correct number of points. In such instances, the project team should insert a note in the Special Circumstances area alerting the reviewer to the form discrepancy. Please note that the Special Circumstances area should not be viewed as a means of exemption for complying with the Rating System requirements, as these will not be granted except where explicitly stated in the Rating System.
  - c. There are certain situations where a project cannot meet the requirements of a credit or earn points for meeting higher thresholds. A project might be just shy of meeting a requirement, might not be eligible for earning a credit at the current LEED-ND stage, or might be located in a particular context that limits earning points in certain credits. For example, a project located in a very dense, urban vicinity with large blocks that hinder the ability to earn the required connectivity score to meet the requirements of SLLc1: Preferred Locations - Option 2. In such instances, though the project is located in a preferred location, the physical context prevents it from meeting the requirements of Option 2 and earning the desired number of points. When this is the case, unfortunately, it means that the project does not earn a credit or does not earn additional points under a credit. This type of situation also does not warrant a CIR or special circumstance.

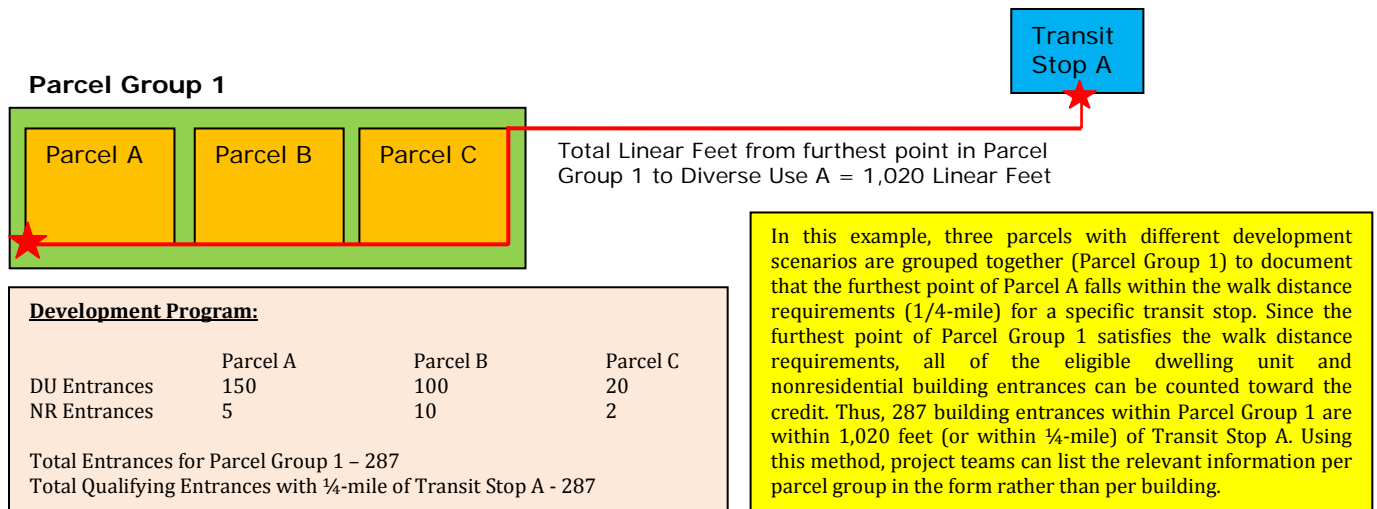
### **Acceptable Alternative Documentation**

In order to allow for some flexibility during certification, while still upholding the integrity of the Rating System, USGBC and GBCI have collaborated on what types of alternative documentation will be acceptable to submit for review, depending on a project's stage. Although the following alternatives are acceptable, GBCI strongly encourages project teams to comply with the walk distance requirements by documenting these distances from building entrances to diverse uses, transit stops, etc., when possible and where complexities do not exist. The LEED-ND Connections Tool, an extension for ESRI's ArcMap software, was developed specifically to facilitate documenting street connectivity and walking and bicycling distances, particularly for large projects, and should be considered where appropriate. Project teams can find a link to the Connections Tool and the User Guide in the Credit Information Tab of SLLp1 (or any prerequisite and credit that can use the Connections Tool – see screenshot below).

The screenshot shows the LEED Online interface for the SLLp1: Smart Location credit. The top navigation bar includes 'Form', 'Credit Information' (highlighted), 'Comments', 'File Uploads', and 'Back to Scorecard'. The main content area is titled 'SLLp1: Smart Location' and contains three sections: 'Credits' (a list of credits including P1f1, P1f2, P1f3, SLLp1, SLLp2, SLLp3, and SLLp4), 'Credit Details' (showing 'Credit Status: Under Review' and 'Change Flag: N'), and 'Quick Links' (a list of links including 'Intent & Requirements', 'Credit Interpretation Rulings', 'Connections Tool', and 'Feedback'). The 'Quick Links' section is circled in red.

**Documenting walk distances from centroid of a parcel** – For several prerequisites and credits, there are requirements to show walk distances from the entrances of dwelling units and nonresidential buildings to diverse uses, transit stops, etc. GBCI recognizes that some Stage 1 projects may not yet have the specifics of building design and construction configured to confidently delineate walk distances from building entrances. Such projects with this hardship may originate walk distances from the *centroid of a parcel* within the project to a diverse use, transit stop, etc. to show compliance, as an alternative to originating walk distances from building entrances. **This allowance is for Stage 1 projects and domestic U.S. projects only.**

**Documenting walk distances from farthest point** - For several prerequisites and credits, there are requirements to show walk distances from the entrances of dwelling units and nonresidential buildings to diverse uses, transit stops, etc. GBCI recognizes that some projects may find it easier to document walk distances by grouping several parcels together and showing the furthest point in that group meets the walk distance requirements (see illustration on the next page). Projects that prefer this method of showing walk distance compliance may do so at their discretion, but should be explicit and consistent in the form and supporting documentation. **This allowance is only for small-scale projects less than 50 acres in any stage.**

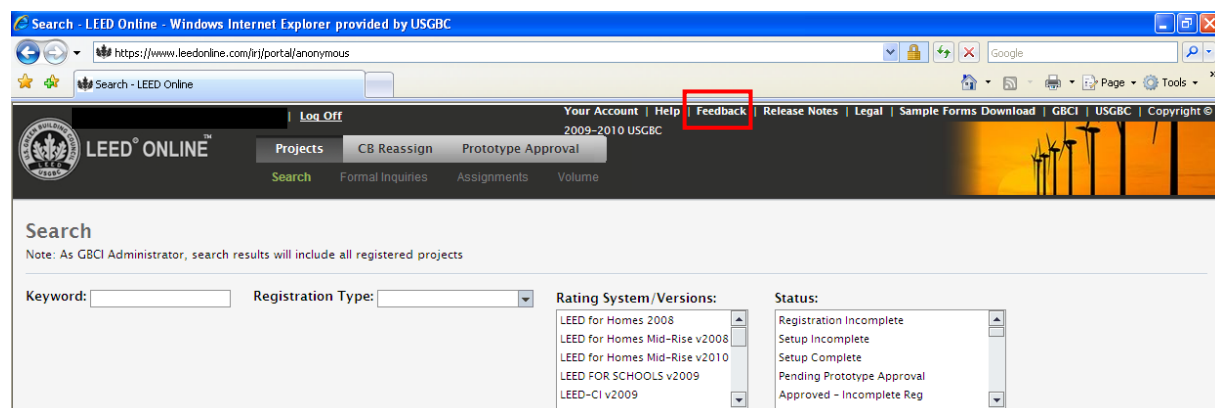


**Design Standards** - GBCI recognizes that some Stage 1 and early Stage 2 projects may not yet have the specifics of building design and construction configured to confidently delineate building design features such as building height-to-street width ratios, principal functional entries, property line setbacks, blank wall length of façade, etc. Such project teams with this hardship may submit enforceable design standards (i.e., officially endorsed, and thereby mandated, by a local municipality) as an alternative to the submittal form requirements. Project teams can use the Special Circumstances area in the Additional Details section of the form or a separate narrative upload to describe the legally-binding nature of the design standards in addition to other relevant information. Where possible, project teams should still provide associated mapping, building elevations, and sections to illustrate compliance. **This allowance is for Stage 1 projects and early Stage 2 projects (either those that are fully entitled, but without commencement of construction OR those with a master developer and codified design guidelines pertaining to each parcel).**

## LEED Online Tips

### **Submittal Platform Details:**

Please report any issues with the LEED Online platform or submittal form functionality to our IT department by using the Feedback Button located at the top right-hand corner of the page once logged into a project (see screenshot below):



**Switching from SLL Prerequisite Review Status to Full Stage Status (or vice versa):** Project teams can change the status of the review from SLL Prerequisite Review to Full Stage Review (or vice versa) by simply clicking on the Timeline Tab located within the project application in LEED Online. To change, select the “Change Timeline” hyperlink followed by the desired project status.

**Switching Review Stages:** Project teams that have registered for an incorrect stage are unable to switch to another review stage through the LEED Online platform. To change the stage, submit a request via the GBCI ‘Contact Us’ page: <http://www.gbci.org/org-nav/contact/Contact-Us/Project-Certification-Questions.aspx>. The project contact will be sent a special code to utilize when re-registering the project for the correct stage free of charge, typically within three to five business days. Please be sure to supply your current project number, name and contact in the correspondence.

### **Submittal Form Details:**

#### **Project Information (PI) Forms:**

In addition to the prerequisite and credit category forms, each certification application comes with Project Information Forms (PI Forms). These three forms allow project teams to provide general information about their project which is referenced throughout the application. The completion of these forms is required for each submittal and is critical to the success of a certification review, as they facilitate documentation preparation for subsequent prerequisites and credits. Project teams should take great care in completing these forms and corresponding uploads. Providing a project summary narrative as one of the uploads for PI Form 1 will also benefit and orient the review team.

Category #	Stage	RP	Credit Name	Attempted	Awarded	Pending	Denied	Status	Form Version
PI f1			<a href="#">Development Program and Site Type</a>	Y	-	-	-	Review	V01
PI f2			<a href="#">Project Timeline</a>	Y	-	-	-	Review	V01
PI f3			<a href="#">Project Location and Base Mapping</a>	Y	-	-	-	Review	V02
SLL p1	S2		<a href="#">Smart Location</a>	Y	-	-	-	Review	V02
SLL p2	S2		<a href="#">Imperiled Species and Ecological Co...</a>	Y	-	-	-	Review	V04
SLL p3	S2		<a href="#">Wetland and Water Body Conservation</a>	Y	-	-	-	Review	V01
SLL p4	S2		<a href="#">Agricultural Land Conservation</a>	Y	-	-	-	Review	V02
SLL p5	S2		<a href="#">Floodplain Avoidance</a>	Y	-	-	-	Review	V01

### Special Circumstances:

In every form, there is an “Additional Details” section that allows project teams to explain and document any special circumstances that exist for their project (see screenshot below). Project teams should feel free to use this section to further explain credit strategies, corresponding uploads, and/or functionality issues within the credit form. Please note this section should not be used to take the place of project-specific credit interpretation requests (CIRs) or LEED Interpretations (LIs). These should be submitted formally at: <https://www.usgbc.org/Login.aspx?REFERER=/leedinterpretations/lilanding.aspx>

## ADDITIONAL DETAILS

- ☒ Special circumstances preclude documentation of credit compliance with the submittal requirements outlined in this form.

### SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Describe the circumstances limiting the project team's ability to provide the submittals required in this form. Be sure to reference what additional documentation has been provided, if any. Non-standard documentation will be considered upon its merits.

- ☐ Upload SLLc1-SC. Provide any additional documentation that supports the claim to special circumstances. (Optional)

### Use of ‘Optional’ in the Form:

Some of the LEED-ND form requirements are tagged with the word ‘optional’. However, these ‘optional’ tags actually mean ‘if applicable’. That is, if the requirements apply to your project, documentation should be provided to show compliance. In the screenshot below, Tables Plf1-3 and Plf1-4 are both tagged as ‘Optional’. If a project actually has existing buildings to be demolished or renovated, it should be listed here.

## BUILDING INFORMATION

Table Plf1-3. Existing Buildings To Be Demolished (Optional)

Description / ID of Existing Buildings To Be Demolished	Dwelling Units	Residential Building Area [sf]	Nonresidential Building Area <sup>1</sup> [sf]		
Residential				+	-
Nonresidential				+	-
Mixed-Use				+	-
Total	0	0	0		

<sup>1</sup> Excludes parking structures

Table Plf1-4. Existing Buildings To Be Renovated (Optional)

Description / ID of Existing Buildings To Be Renovated	Dwelling Units	Residential Building Area [sf]	Nonresidential Building Area <sup>1</sup> [sf]		
Residential				+	-

If a Form Does Not Generate a “Y” or Points:

If a form does not generate a “Y” or the expected number of points after the appropriate inputs, don’t panic! Certification reviewers do a thorough check of the form and supporting documentation. If there is enough information to confirm prerequisite or credit compliance, the prerequisite or credit will be awarded. It is recommended that project teams also inform the reviewer about any problems with the form functionality under Special Circumstances in the Additional Details section of the form.

**Last Updated: June 2012**