

LEED for Neighborhood Development: Guidance for Large-scale Projects Issues to Consider for Projects over 320 Acres (1.3 square km) in Size

This document is intended to provide guidance to project teams of large-scale projects, as eligibility for LEED-ND (2009) is considered and as documentation for certification review is prepared.

Certification Fees: Please see the GBCI website (gbci.org) for details regarding certification (review) fees as special pricing may apply for large-scale projects.

Issues that may prevent eligibility:

LEED-ND does not have a minimum or maximum project size but it has been found that some large projects, understood as those encompassing more than 320 acres, have had challenges documenting certain credits. The issues listed below are the most common to date for large-scale projects and can at times prevent certification. Project teams should do an initial assessment to determine if they will be able to meet the requirements of all prerequisites and sufficient credits to achieve the desired level of certification. In addition, it is strongly recommended that projects greater than 320 acres take advantage of the LEED ND Introductory Call prior to submission, given the challenges that could arise with preparing the application, as outlined below. Prior to registration, LEED Interpretations may be submitted for any prerequisites to help determine project eligibility. Any LEED Interpretation submitted must be relevant to a specific prerequisite. More information on LEED Interpretations can be found at: <https://www.usgbc.org/Login.aspx?REFERRER=/leedinterpretations/lilanding.aspx>

- Difficulty in meeting proximity requirements – Proximity requirements are some of the most important ways that the LEED-ND rating system encourages walkability. These requirements necessitate proximity between project building entrances, transit stops, or diverse uses. Large-scale projects tend to have difficulty documenting these requirements due to the large number of dwelling units and nonresidential building entrances, which greatly increases the complexity of the documentation. Projects can also have difficulty demonstrating compliance with the requirements due to uncertainties with planned transit or planned uses (commercial, retail, institutional, residential), which makes regular communication with the entities responsible for designing and/or funding these project elements essential to project success. If credits with proximity requirements are pursued, proximity must be clearly delineated by maps and tables in order to confirm compliance. GIS- or CAD-generated data should be used to confirm the compliance of walk distances to reduce the opportunity for error, due to the vast amount of measurements that need to be shown for projects of this size.
- Difficulty in meeting SLLp1 – Large-scale projects can find it difficult to meet the requirements of SLLp1: Smart Location. While some large-scale projects have been infill sites, such as the redevelopment of a former airport or naval base, others do have trouble qualifying as an infill site (Option 1). In addition, some large-scale projects have also had challenges meeting the requirements to be an adjacent site (Option 2), or proximate to diverse uses (Option 4). As such, and especially for very large projects, Option 3: Proximity to Transit is typically the only Option that large-scale projects can qualify for in this prerequisite. When this is the case, the project

team must clearly depict how the project meets the requirements of Option 3, both in terms of proximity to transit and, if relevant, requirements for planned transit related to funding and commitment by an authorized entity. Submitting a LEED Interpretation (if the project is not registered) or a project-specific CIR to describe the project's strategy for meeting this prerequisite is strongly recommended in such cases.

Issues that may assist with certification:

There are also ways that large-scale projects can position themselves favorably to realize the benefits of LEED-ND, especially in the design elements of the project.

- Significant influence on walkability and connectivity – A well-designed internal street network, diversity of uses, prudent building orientation and façade treatment, and thoughtful placement of site features such as civic spaces and schools will greatly aid in the achievement of credits in the NPD category. Due to their size and the amount of new construction or major renovation, large-scale projects are often able to exert more influence over their site layout than other smaller-scale projects built within an existing circulation network.
- Increased number of uses and ability to locate these uses – Large-scale projects can also use their influence to favorably distribute uses throughout the site and locate complementary uses within proximity of one another. There is also greater potential to design and/or influence the presence of transit throughout the site and thus, allow for greater opportunity to situate dwelling units and nonresidential entrances near transit stops and diverse uses.
- Potential opportunity for large-scale conservation and/or restoration of habitat – Depending on the project's context, large-scale projects may have a unique opportunity to conserve significant habitat, wetlands, or water bodies, restore pre-development sensitive areas, and deed such areas and their buffers to be protected in perpetuity on a mass scale.
- Potential to implement innovative energy and water infrastructure – Large-scale projects have a singular opportunity to implement infrastructural changes that are more feasible and have a high return on investment. Larger projects are also uniquely positioned to benefit from district heating and cooling strategies.

Issues that may complicate documentation requirements:

Large-scale projects tend to be challenged by many issues related to documenting compliance with prerequisite and/or credit requirements in LEED-ND. These challenges are identified below along with best practices on how to overcome them.

- Managing a multi-year, multi-phase design process – It is understandable that large-scale projects will have multiple years' worth of design and planning documentation. For the certification application, a project team must pursue and document prerequisites and credits

according to the selected preliminary or final design scheme and use this scheme consistently throughout the review. It is not recommended for documentation from previous design schemes or early project proposals to be submitted as part of the review, as it may be confusing to the reviewer which design scheme was chosen for the LEED-ND review and thus, if requirements are met. Taking the proper due diligence to ensure that all project materials are consistent throughout the review is imperative for a successful certification outcome. In some situations, it may be appropriate to separate different phases of a project into separate LEED-ND registrations and certify each phase independently. When this strategy is pursued, it is important that the different phases be geographically distinct and that the individual LEED project boundaries do not overlap. This strategy can reduce the complexity of each individual project and allows certification of one phase to proceed independently of other phases. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this strategy may likely add additional cost to the certification process.

- Persistence of unknowns – Many large-scale projects have very long project timelines, multiple phases, and thus, many unknowns. This can complicate documentation of Stage 2 and 3 projects especially, because the expectation is that the site is fully designed or completed. While large-scale projects are not expected to have exact information about all features of the proposed master plan, project teams must provide reasonable estimates about various aspects of their project, and in some cases, real data will be required. Project teams should understand that their project may not be eligible for all credits and that the desired level of certification (e.g., Silver, Gold, Platinum) may not be attainable at the time of first submission, based on the information available at that point in time.
- Large amounts of information – It is essential to any LEED project that a thorough assessment of existing site factors is undertaken at the beginning of the certification process, but it is especially important for large-scale projects that incorporate existing buildings or infrastructure. It will be very helpful to the project team to determine the status of each building (new and major renovations versus existing and minor renovations) early in the LEED-ND process. Additional details regarding the identification of existing site factors can be found in Table 4 on pages 17 and 18 in the Getting Started section of the LEED Reference Guide for Neighborhood Development, 2009 Edition. Furthermore, many large-scale projects entail a significant amount of information related to the development program, project timeline, surrounding area, and project features. Given the vast amount of information generated by these projects, it is imperative that documentation is sectioned into parts that are readable for the reviewer, while still showing how the interrelated aspects of each section relate to the master plan as a whole. Providing a map of the entire master plan with all project features and the LEED Project Boundary in addition to smaller-scale maps representing various sections of the master plan to confirm compliance will contribute to a more successful certification submission.
- Clear and Concise Documentation – As with all projects, clear and concise documentation is essential to ensuring a smooth review process. Many of the best practices recommended for all projects are especially important for large-scale projects.
 1. For all maps, be sure to be as clear as possible with regards to project features and proximity.

2. Maps should include legible legends, markings, and symbols.
3. If any documents longer than a page must be submitted, the most pertinent information should be highlighted.
4. Submit smaller-scale maps of various sections of the master plan when necessary in order to show compliance with the requirements.
5. For all uploaded documents, use a naming convention that corresponds with the required uploads in the LEED Credit Forms, as well as with the sections and subsections of the master plan.
6. Note that when filling out the LEED Credit Forms, the project's size should not be considered a special circumstance and should not be noted as such in the form. Large-scale projects must adhere to the requirements of a prerequisite or credit as stated in the form, in the same way smaller-scale projects must adhere to such requirements.

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