
Get Green

The Benefits of Environmentally-Conscious Design and Development

OUR BUILDINGS ARE MACHINES

Buildings consume 39 percent of the energy used in the United States, more than cars or manufacturing plants, according to the Department of Energy. While new homes are twice as energy efficient as they were in 1970, residential buildings account for about 20 percent of national energy use, according to the nonprofit Virginia Sustainable Building Network. As fuel costs rise, as they are now, the interest in alternative energy sources is increasing as well. Green technologies, with a record of improved cost effectiveness, are gaining in popularity.

WHAT IS THE LEED GREEN BUILDING RATING SYSTEM?

The LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System® was founded by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) to create a set of standards that define environmentally-responsible building and to promote integrated, whole-building design practices. Based on well-founded scientific standards, LEED emphasizes state-of-the-art strategies for sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality. LEED promotes expertise in green building project certification, provides professional accreditation, training, and practical resources. It is making quite an impact, transforming the building market and raising consumer awareness of green building benefits.

THE BENEFITS OF WORKING WITH LEED-ACCREDITED PROFESSIONALS

In order for the LEED system to be most effective, it's important that designers and architects are well-versed in sustainable building and design practices. That's why LEED offers professional accreditation to those who pass a USGBC exam that tests their understanding of LEED requirements, resources, and processes.

LEED-accredited professionals work to extend the benefits of green design to their clients. They decrease utility bills by specifying energy-efficient mechanical and plumbing systems, appliances, and fixtures. They decrease building costs through intelligent materials reuse and recycling. By using non-toxic sealants, finishes, and paints, they ensure the health and safety of building occupants. They help clients choose locally-sourced and natural materials that contribute to a regional architectural character and support the local economy. Ultimately, LEED-accredited designers help clients reduce a project's environmental impacts, building costs, and operating costs.



WHY SEEK LEED CERTIFICATION?

Besides energy and building cost savings, there are many reasons to seek LEED certification for your home or development project. It establishes you as a leader in the green building sector, since your achievement must be validated through third party review. Plus, by developing a green building, you may qualify for special state and local government incentives. Your commitment to sustainable building also contributes to a growing green building knowledge base.

HOW TO GET A BUILDING LEED CERTIFIED

Upon registration, your project team must prepare documentation and calculations to satisfy LEED prerequisite and credit submittal requirements. Generally LEED-accredited designers serve as the project contacts responsible for coordinating the process at this point.

If a project satisfies all of USGBC's prerequisites and earns the necessary number of points to attain a LEED rating level, it becomes LEED-certified, and may then be referred to as a LEED-certified building. The project team will receive an award letter, certificates, and a plaque from the USGBC.

THE FUTURE OF LEED

All new U.S. government buildings must now be LEED-certified. In fact, the success of the LEED system and the benefits associated with sustainable design are pressuring the real estate industry to meet these new industry needs and expectations. Green design is making a huge impact, and it's clear that it will continue to do so, with LEED leading the way.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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