

What is LEED, and why is it important?

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, formally known as LEED, is a globally recognized accreditation in the green building sector. Green building has become a trillion-dollar industry in North America. LEED standards — and the organizations that support them such as the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) and Canada Green Building Council (CaGBC) — have been put in place to ensure a sustainable future for everyone.

This idea began to develop in the 1990s for the main purpose of creating a green building rating system that would allow the owners of buildings to earn points in certain categories, ultimately achieving a certain level of certification towards their building and its reduced impact on the environment. Countries generally follow the same rating systems; however, they are tailored to the specific country in order to align with Government laws and regulations as well as its environment.

LEED CATEGORIES



Sustainable
Sites



Water
Efficiency



Energy &
Atmosphere



Materials &
Resources



Indoor
Environmental
Quality



Innovation in
Design



Regional
Priority

The importance of LEED stems from the past decades of an increase in rural and urban development due to an increase in population and changing environments causing the need for more buildings. However, we as humans have been facing the consequences of its negative impacts on our environment. The burning of fossil fuels, rampant deforestation, biodiversity loss, and excessive pollution have resulted in the rise of global warming and climate change. Where LEED standards can help is in limiting the negative impacts that constructed buildings, both new and old, have on the environment.

LEED is beneficial not only to the wider environment but to smaller communities and neighborhoods that we live in. Achieving this certification allows buildings to tangibly reduce carbon emissions, use less energy, produce less waste, conserve water, and use safer and less toxic materials.

In fact, according to the U.S. Green Building Council, between 2015 - 2018, the benefits from LEED certification globally, has led to an estimate of:

- \$1.2 billion in **energy savings**
- \$149.5 billion in **water savings**
- \$715.3 billion in **maintenance savings**
- \$54.2 billion in **waste savings**

LEED Certification & Points

Based on the LEED credits earned, a building can be LEED certified in one of four levels:



Certified
40-49
points earned



Silver
50-59
points earned



Gold
60-79
points earned



Platinum
80+
points earned



WHY BUILD TO LEED STANDARDS?



Profitable Buildings and Added Value

Green buildings reduce day-to-day operating costs and achieve shorter payback periods because of the focus placed on minimizing wasting and strategically maximizing available resources. LEED-certified buildings are also known to be highly valued assets in the eyes of investors.



Improves Health and Well-Being

With the rise in construction and development of areas the use of toxic interior building materials has increased over the years within the construction sector and have caused serious harm to the health and well-being of those occupants. Using safe and non-toxic building materials benefits not only the occupants of the building, but everyone else involved from the manufacturing process of the materials to the construction process.



Reduce Costs

Seeing that one of the main goals of becoming LEED certified is to reduce the amount of water, energy, and materials used, this essentially means with this, comes a reduction in costs.



Minimizes Environmental Impacts

An increasing number of green buildings in the world helps to reduce carbon emissions, water, and energy usage, and toxic and non-toxic waste. Builders are motivated to become more innovative. According to the USGBC, LEED-certified buildings have prevented more than a total of 80-million tons of waste from ending up in landfills globally, and by 2023 that number is expected to grow to 540-million tons.



References & Citations

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