



TOPICS

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LEED Poised to Transform Land Development

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)® is a set of rating systems developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. LEED provides both a benchmark and a roadmap for development practices that promote the “triple bottom line” of financial return, human health, and environmental quality.

LEED for New Construction (LEED-NC) has been guiding commercial projects since 2000. Eight projects in Minnesota have been NC-certified so far, and almost 70 projects have registered to indicate their intent to pursue certification in the past few years.

LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND), to be launched in 2009, will guide residential and mixed-use projects, reflecting a growing emphasis on land use and development at a community-wide scale. While only two Minnesota projects are participating in the LEED-ND pilot phase, the prevalence of this program in the marketplace in the coming years is expected to follow the same trend of exploding growth as other LEED rating systems.



While LEED is widely known for its attention to buildings, site development factors are incorporated into all rating systems. The earlier in the site selection and planning process you consider LEED, the more benefits you can achieve. The foundation of LEED is integrated design, a process by which planning, engineering, and construction are considered by the project team throughout development. An integrated design approach reduces redundancy and inefficiency, while facilitating cumulative benefits across the whole project.

Integrated design results in the following economic incentives to developers, builders, and site occupants:

- competitive construction costs and reduced operating costs,
- optimized life-cycle performance and increased asset value,
- enhanced marketing opportunities and improved risk management, and
- increased productivity, plus reduced absenteeism and turnover in the workplace.

TOPICS



Integrated design also provides benefits to:

- individuals, in the form of health, comfort, and job satisfaction;
- the environment, by reducing resource consumption and waste and pollutant generation; and
- the community, through improved quality of life and reduced strain on local infrastructure such as landfills, water supplies, storm sewers, and transportation networks.

Think ahead to your next project. Contemplate whether a new office complex or retail center may be obsolete even before it's built, given the current surge in green building trends. Or consider developing one of the first LEED-certified neighborhoods in our region. Whether you choose to use LEED just for technical guidance or also to pursue certification, achieving the "triple bottom line" is a way to let both consumers and competitors know that your development strives to meet tomorrow's standards today.



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