



1015 18th St, NW
Suite 508
Washington, DC 20036
T: 202 828-7422
F: 202 828-5110
www.usgbc.org

FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

LEED® for Homes

What is LEED for Homes?

LEED for Homes is a green home rating system that will ensure that a home is designed and built to be energy efficient, resource friendly and healthier for the occupants. LEED can be applied to single and multi-family homes and is intended for both market-rate and affordable housing. The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) originally developed the LEED green building rating system in 2000 for new commercial construction. Following LEED's success in the commercial sector, USGBC began the pilot test of LEED for homes in August 2005. There are currently over 4,200 homes across the U.S. involved in the LEED for homes pilot program and more than 90 that have already been LEED certified as a green home. The LEED for homes pilot test will conclude in spring 2007 and USGBC will publicly launch the LEED for homes rating system in June 2007.

What is a green home?

A green home uses less energy, water, and natural resources; creates less waste; and is healthier for the people living inside.

What are the benefits of a green home?

Green homes are safer, healthier, more comfortable, and more durable. The benefits of a green home include economic benefits such as lower energy and water bills; environmental benefits like reduced greenhouse gas emissions; and health benefits such as superior indoor air quality. Even better, the net cost of owning a green home is comparable to that of owning a conventional home.

What does "shades of green" mean?

The phrase "shades of green" is often used to refer to various levels of achievement in adopting resource efficiency in a home. Homes with one or two green measures are sometimes called light green while homes with several green measures are called dark green. The LEED rating system has four levels ("shades") of green: Certified, Silver, Gold, and Platinum, with Platinum being the highest level of LEED certification.

How will a consumer recognize a green home?

One of the many challenges faced by a home buyer is comparing a green home to another home. Any one home can be called "green," but how does the homeowner know that it really is green? LEED certification is something that consumers can look for to readily identify true green homes that have been third-party inspected, performance-tested, and certified to perform better than conventional homes. The LEED certification ensures that the home you are purchasing was designed to meet the highest standards and is operating exactly the way it is supposed to.

What is the mission of LEED?

LEED is a voluntary program developed by USGBC to promote the transformation of the home building industry towards more sustainable practices. LEED recognizes and rewards the top performing new homes in terms of resource efficiency and environmental stewardship. LEED is a collaborative initiative that actively involves all sectors of the home building industry including builders, home owners, product manufacturers, service providers, and affordable housing developers.

How was the LEED for homes rating system developed?

The LEED for homes rating system was developed via USGBC's open, consensus-based development process. The LEED for Homes Committee, a group of USGBC expert volunteers carefully selected to be representative of the entire home building industry, has primary responsibility for the development and ongoing refinement of the rating system. In addition to the pilot testing phase, the rating system will undergo a public comment period, which is an opportunity for all interested parties and stakeholders to provide their feedback. The final step in the process is a member ballot of the rating system. For more information on USGBC's consensus process, visit www.usgbc.org/AboutUs.

What is the difference between LEED for homes and other green home building programs?

There are currently more than 70 local or regional green home building programs in the United States. Visit www.usgbc.org/leed/homes for a complete list. Each of these programs is unique, with its own specifications and requirements. For example, the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) has created guidelines which explain how builders can incorporate green building concepts into a project. Unlike LEED, however, these guidelines do not require documentation and independent, third-party verification. LEED is the only national homes rating system that clearly defines and establishes benchmarks for the features of a green home. It enables builders anywhere in the country to obtain a green LEED rating that can be recognized by homebuyers nationwide. LEED is a consensus-based national standard for green home building that is developed and refined by a diverse cadre of national experts and experienced green builders.

Why should I build a LEED home?

Over the last six years, LEED has become recognized in the commercial building sector as the de facto national standard of performance for green buildings and has rapidly gained recognition among the public at large. LEED is designed to serve the residential construction industry. Home builders using LEED will be able to differentiate their homes as some of the best on the market. Furthermore, the LEED certification will make it easy for home buyers to readily identify high quality green homes.

Will LEED include affordable and multifamily homes?

LEED includes both affordable and multifamily homes. These projects' participation and associated activities are funded by a generous grant from The Home Depot Foundation. In order to address the unique needs of affordable housing, the LEED Homes Committee has formed an expert Affordable Housing Working Group to review the pilot rating system for its applicability to affordable homes, and to make recommendations for specific measures that need to be refined, removed and/or added to the rating system to better meet that market's needs. Exactly how multifamily projects will ultimately be addressed by LEED will be examined during the pilot phase. Multifamily housing structures of over three stories are currently eligible to participate in LEED for new construction.

Will LEED include existing homes?

The first phase of the LEED for homes initiative is focused on the construction of new homes. A program for existing homes is being considered but no specific development plans are in place.

How will the quality of LEED homes be assured?

The strength of the LEED program is rigorous third-party verification and documentation. Each LEED home will undergo both on-site inspections to ensure that the LEED features have been installed correctly, and thorough performance testing to ensure proper performance.

Who is responsible for rating a LEED home?

LEED homes are rated by LEED for Homes Providers, local organizations with demonstrated experience and expertise in their region's market. A LEED for Homes Provider has three primary roles in a given market:

- Marketing LEED to builders;
- Providing green home rating support services to builders;
- Training, coordinating, and overseeing LEED qualified inspectors and builder support staff.

LEED for Homes Providers are located around the country and contracted through the USGBC to provide services to builders. They have demonstrated outstanding abilities and have a proven record of supporting builders in the construction of high performance, sustainable homes. See the list of providers at www.usgbc.org/leed/homes.

How can my organization be a LEED for Homes Provider?

The USGBC has selected 12 LEED for Homes Providers to service some of the country's leading housing markets during the pilot demonstration phase of the program. The providers must undergo a rigorous selection process and only select providers will be eligible to work with the builders in the delivery of LEED for homes. The LEED for homes pilot demonstration phase will end in spring 2007, at which time the national roll-out of LEED for homes will begin. We anticipate bringing in a select number of new LEED for Homes Providers in late 2006 (i.e., approximately 10-15 providers on an annual or semi-annual basis, as demand dictates).

What is the process for rating a LEED Home?

Specified performance tests and inspections will be conducted by the LEED for Homes Provider. When all of the LEED features have been verified, a rating certificate will be issued to the builder for that qualified LEED home.

How much will it cost to earn a LEED Home rating?

Documentation and verification fees for LEED are established by each LEED for Homes Provider. Fees for the initial verification tasks range from \$500 to \$3,000 per home. The cost of verification will vary with size of the home, the LEED performance tier (i.e., Certified, Silver, Gold, Platinum), travel time required by the rater, the number of homes being built, and the builder's experience with green home building techniques. Certain areas may have cost incentives provided through utilities, state energy organizations or corporate sponsors.

When can I participate in LEED for homes?

Upon completion of the pilot phase, the LEED for homes rating system will be revised as needed and balloted by USGBC's membership. The fully chartered program is projected to launch in spring 2007. Builders interested in participating in LEED should contact a local LEED for Homes Provider to discuss the possible timeframe for their registration and participation in the program (i.e., to determine whether they should join the pilot or participate in the fully chartered program).

How do I participate in the LEED for homes pilot?

The pilot demonstration phase is intended to test the LEED for homes rating system with stakeholders across the country. Pilot projects will work with a LEED for Homes Provider in their area that will oversee performance testing and compliance with the pilot rating system. To sign up for the pilot, home builders should contact a local provider directly and then work with that provider to complete a Builder Agreement. See the list of Providers at www.usgbc.org/leed/homes

USGBC is looking for pilot projects from a diverse group of professional builders that represent different price points and geographic regions. Production builders and affordable housing groups are encouraged to apply (a limited number of scholarships are available for affordable housing projects). It is crucial that working builders be the driving force of the LEED for homes pilot projects because critical feedback from builders is necessary to ensure that LEED for homes is viable and relevant to the residential marketplace.

While every effort has been made to include a variety of geographic regions and population centers, not every home builder will have local access to a LEED for Homes Provider during this initial phase of the program. Home builders outside of these service areas may contact their nearest Provider to discuss participation in the pilot.

How can I stay up to date on the progress of LEED for homes?

USGBC members interested in LEED for Homes Committee activities can join the LEED for Homes "Corresponding Committee" e-mail listserv; sign up online in the Your Account section of the USGBC web site (www.usgbc.org/YourAccount). Your Corresponding committee members receive committee meeting minutes, periodic updates and announcements regarding LEED for homes volunteer opportunities.

Interested parties who are not USGBC members can join a public announcement distribution list by request via homes@committees.usgbc.org.

Where can I find out more about green home building?

There are many green home building resources available on the internet. Many of the existing local green home building programs (listed at www.usgbc.org/leed/homes) offer training and educational information. USGBC is also in the process of developing a new online education resource on green home building. Details will be available soon.

LEED contact information

For questions about LEED, please call the USGBC at 202-828-7422 or e-mail leedinfo@usgbc.org.