



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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LEED® for Homes

What is LEED for Homes?

LEED for Homes is a green home rating system for assuring homes are designed and built to be energy and resource efficient and healthy for occupants. LEED can be applied to single and multi-family homes and is intended for both market-rate and affordable housing. USGBC began the pilot test of LEED for homes in August 2005. There are currently 10,300 homes across the U.S. involved in the LEED for Homes pilot program and 400 homes that have already been LEED certified as a green home. There are 535 builders across the U.S. participating in the LEED for Homes program. USGBC will launch the LEED for Homes rating system nationally in late 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 LEED home?

LEED certified homes are safer, healthier, more comfortable and more durable than conventional homes. The benefits of a LEED home include economic benefits such as lower energy and water bills; environmental benefits like reduced greenhouse gas emissions; and health benefits such as reduced exposure to mold, mildew and other indoor toxins. Also, LEED homes fit into a family's budget, as the net cost of owning a LEED home is comparable to that of owning a conventional home.

How can consumers compare green homes?

One of the many challenges faced by a homebuyer 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 green homes that have been third-party inspected, performance-tested and certified to perform better than conventional homes. The LEED certification assures that the home you are purchasing was designed to meet the highest criteria and is operating exactly the way it is supposed to. Visit www.greenhomeguide.org for more information.

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 "deep green." The LEED rating system has four progressive levels of green: Certified, Silver, Gold and Platinum.

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 leadership 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. USGBC believes incentives will support market leadership, which is a principal driver towards market transformation.

How was the LEED for Homes rating system developed?

The LEED for Homes rating system was developed via USGBC's open, consensus development process. The LEED for Homes Committee, a diverse group of USGBC volunteers elected to represent the 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 has undergone two public comment periods, opportunities for all interested parties and stakeholders to provide their feedback. The final step in the process is a member ballot of the rating system, which will happen in late 2007. 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. LEED is the only national homes rating system that clearly defines and establishes benchmarks for green homes. 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 system for green home building that is developed and refined by a diverse committee of national experts and experienced green builders.

Why should I build a LEED home?

LEED has become recognized in the commercial building sector as the national system 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 representing the highest quality of green homes 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 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. USGBC plans to run a multifamily pilot for structures over three stories through the end of 2008. Also, multifamily housing structures of over three stories are currently eligible to participate in LEED for New Construction.

Will LEED include home renovations?

The first phase of LEED for Homes is focused on the construction of new homes. Existing homes undergoing full gut rehabs (down to the studs on at least one side of each exterior wall) are eligible to participate in the program. USGBC and the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) have partnered to create the first nationwide green residential remodeling guidelines for existing homes. A draft of the guidelines is available for public comment. To view the draft of the guidelines visit <http://www.regreenprogram.org/>

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 documented 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?

There are currently 12 LEED for Homes Providers serving 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. For the post-pilot period, USGBC plans to select an additional 20-25 Providers to serve local housing markets.

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 \$2,000 per home. The cost of verification will vary with size of the home, the LEED rating sought (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?

The LEED for Homes rating system is currently being revised and prepared for ballot by USGBC's membership. The fully chartered program is projected to launch in November 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

How do I participate in LEED for Homes?

Project teams should work with a LEED for Homes Provider in their area that will oversee performance testing and compliance with the rating system. To participate, 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

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 online at www.usgbc.org/leed/homes) offer training and educational information. USGBC has launched a new Web site that features resources on green home building for consumers. You can visit that Web site at: www.greenhomeguide.org

LEED contact information

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