



LEED for Neighborhood Developments

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), and Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)—three organizations which represent the nation’s leaders among progressive design professionals, builders, developers, and the environmental community—have come together to develop a national standard for neighborhood design that integrates the principles of green building and smart growth. The goal of this partnership is to engage stakeholders across the country in establishing consensus-based standards for assessing the impacts of development projects using the rating framework of the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System™ that has already become the national standard for high performance buildings.

Whereas other LEED products focus primarily on green building practices, with only a few credits regarding site selection, LEED for Neighborhood Developments (LEED-ND) would emphasize smart growth aspects of development while still incorporating a selection of the most important green building practices. The scope of what would be considered smart growth design would be guided by the Smart Growth Network’s ten principles of smart growth, and would include density, proximity to transit, mixed use, mixed housing type, and pedestrian- and bicycle- friendly design. LEED-ND would then provide an objective basis on which to certify developments as smart growth. In short, LEED-ND would create a label, as well

as a set of guidelines for decision-making, which could serve as a concrete signal of, and incentive for, better location, design, and construction of neighborhoods and buildings. Equally important, it will be a product that can be readily folded into USGBC’s existing and successful efforts to market LEED to developers, consumers, and policymakers.

The existing LEED Rating System for New Commercial Construction (LEED-NC) has a proven track record of encouraging builders to utilize green building practices such as increasing energy and water efficiency and improving indoor air quality in buildings. LEED-ND can have a similarly positive effect on development trends to revitalize existing urban areas, decrease land consumption, decrease vehicle miles traveled, improve air quality, decrease polluted stormwater runoff, and build communities where people of a variety of income levels can coexist, and where jobs and services are accessible by foot or transit. The continued use of certain green building standards in LEED-ND will ensure that indoor air quality is healthier, that energy and water consumption decrease, and that the corresponding utility bills of tenants and residents decrease as well. In addition to direct economic and quality-of-life benefits for consumers, the implementation of water and energy efficient technologies will ensure a more efficient use of infrastructure in urban areas, where water, sewer, and electric grid systems are likely to be overtaxed.

For additional information on LEED-ND, contact the USGBC at leedinfo@usgbc.org