

# Ten tips for planning a successful green building project

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McGraw Hill and FMI have issued reports documenting the strong public interest in building green. The reports include commercial and residential projects.

Here's a list of ten tips for owners to follow to successfully plan a green project.

1. **Determine your goals:** Whether the project is residential or commercial, the first task is to determine the owner's goals. Is the owner primarily interested in energy efficiency and energy savings? Is the owner also interested in reducing greenhouse gasses, improving indoor air quality or conserving environmental resources?
2. **Will the owner seek project certification:** Some owners need to have someone verify how green their project is and for some it is important to show third parties the improvement's "level" of sustainability? The best way to do this is through use of one of several rating systems that provide a means of scoring the sustainability of a building. The best known system is LEED, but other systems exist. Carefully investigate which rating system fits best.
3. **Obtain information:** Gathering relevant information is an important part of any project. There is a wealth of information on the Internet relating to energy efficiency, and other elements of "green" building. Good places to start are [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org) and [www.doe.org](http://www.doe.org).
4. **Assemble a qualified team early:** Depending upon the owner's goals and the size and scope of the project, there are several options for using consultants when planning a green project. Consider an architect or engineer, a consultant or contractor familiar with sustainable building including possibly a LEED or other accredited professional, a lawyer familiar with "green" projects including risks and contracts, an energy consultant and/or commissioning agent and an accounting firm to maximize the financial rewards of the project. Be sure the consultant is qualified by training or experience as to green building.
5. **Review tax incentives and credits:** There are many federal, state and local incentives available for projects that improve energy efficiency and meet certain

requirements. Find a consultant who can assist. A good place to obtain general information is [www.doe.gov](http://www.doe.gov) and [www.dsireusa.org](http://www.dsireusa.org) (renewable energy).

6. **What grants are available:** Grants are available for certain types of sustainable improvements. Check out available sources such as [www.a2dda.org](http://www.a2dda.org).
7. **Are there special laws or regulations:** Some municipalities require that new buildings meet certain sustainable requirements e.g. San Francisco, Dallas, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta. Some units of government provide incentives for building sustainable projects. Examples include expedited inspections and approvals and feebates.
8. **Determine time frame:** Building green may require more time than conventional construction because of the use of innovative products and processes, third party ratings and added municipal verification. Plan sufficient time for each of these factors.
9. **Select the “best” site:** Often, the location of a project will determine the availability of certain environmental efficiencies and benefits such as alternative transportation, water conservation, recycling, existence of local resources and solar/wind power. Consider the prospects for sustainability when selecting a project site.
10. **Plan early:** The time to determine whether to incorporate sustainable elements into a project is early on. Expensive and benefit-limiting mistakes can be avoided by early planning. Having qualified consultants at the start of a project will avoid costly mistakes, reduce risks and shorten the project time.