

LEED building certifications surpass 5,000

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Interest in “green” building continues to grow in this country.

One sign of the increased interest in this area is the geometric growth surrounding the LEED Green Building Rating System (LEED). LEED, which stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, was developed by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC), a nonprofit organization formed in 1993. It released a pilot version of LEED in 1998.

USGBC now has more than 19,000 members, and in March, the USGBC announced that the 5,000th project had been certified. This number does not include new homes that have been certified. However, before a building is certified, it must be registered with the USGBC. USGBC's [website](#) indicates that close to 20,000 projects have been registered.

To assist with certification of projects and increase knowledge regarding sustainability as related to buildings, the USGBC created a system for educating and accrediting professionals in the LEED system. In 2008, the USGBC transferred responsibility for educating and accrediting professionals to the Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI). As evidence of the immense interest in “green” building and the importance attached to the LEED system, more than 120,000 professionals have been accredited by GBCI in one of the following levels of expertise:

- LEED AP's without specialty
- LEED AP - Building Design + Construction
- LEED AP - Interior Design + Construction
- LEED AP - Operations + Maintenance
- LEED AP - Homes
- LEED AP - Neighborhood Development

There are currently 2,903 persons who have been accredited in Michigan at one of these levels, with more than 2,700 being LEED AP's without specialty. Two hundred twenty-five

persons in Ann Arbor have been accredited. The accreditation system was overhauled in 2009 to require accreditation in specialty areas, continuing education, and to provide an option for a person to obtain a LEED Green Associate credential. The Green Associate credential is intended for professionals who want to demonstrate green building expertise in non-technical fields of practice without the rigor of the extensive exam requirements to become a LEED Accredited Professional.

In addition, according to USGBC, there are currently LEED initiatives including legislation, executive orders, resolutions, ordinances, policies, and initiative in at least 45 states including 206 localities.

The success of LEED has not come without controversy. As more buildings are certified, legal and other issues are surfacing. A sampling of a few of these issues includes:

- Are LEED certified buildings actually performing consistent with expectations?
- Can a LEED certified building be decertified, and if so, who can seek decertification?
- Does the cost of attaining LEED certification justify the benefit?
- Who is liable for any damages arising from failure of a building to achieve LEED certification?
- Can a municipality require new buildings to be LEED certified?
- Should certification require a site visit as part of the third-party verification that a building meets LEED criteria (currently - there is no requirement of a site visit)?

For more information about LEED, go to <http://usgbc.org> or <http://gbc.org>.