

A Local Government Guide

to **LEED for
Neighborhood Development**



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INTRODUCTION

Local governments, sitting squarely at the intersection of law, policy, economic development, land use decisions, and the public interest, have an opportunity to address sustainability. Many local governments have actively pursued an environmental agenda for years, while others are new to the field, and both face the daunting task of sifting through a recent outpouring of research and technology for items of value to government entities.

The purpose of this guide is to explore one tool in particular – the LEED® for Neighborhood Development rating system – focusing specifically on the ways it can be best used by local governments to achieve sustainability goals. You may be reading this document because you are working on a climate action plan, revising a green building ordinance, or looking to incentivize transit-oriented development; in the following pages, you will learn how others have used LEED for Neighborhood Development to tackle similar challenges. Four key approaches are highlighted in this guide:

- 1. Lead By Example**
- 2. Remove Barriers and Pave the Way**
- 3. The Case for Incentives**
- 4. Technical Assistance and Education**

These four approaches include strategies at different levels of involvement, from direct participation in a project, like Symphony Park in Las Vegas, to identifying LEED-ND as an important tool for policymakers, as in the City of Albuquerque Climate Action Plan. LEED for Neighborhood Development can serve as a resource whatever your sustainability goals may be, supporting your plan of action and moving one step closer to lasting change.

This resource has been developed by the U.S. Green Building Council with input from members of the LEED for Neighborhood Development Core Committee, representatives from local and state governments and stakeholder associations which represent these entities. The examples shared in this document are only the beginning. Creative and resourceful local governments are encouraged to find new ways to use LEED for Neighborhood Development to support their own sustainability goals. Please share your stories with us by emailing: neighborhoods@usgbc.org

ABOUT THE U.S. GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL

The U.S. Green Building Council is committed to a prosperous and sustainable future for our nation through financially-responsible, efficient buildings and communities. With a community comprising 80 local affiliates, more than 19,000 member companies and organizations, and more than 134,000 LEED credentialed professionals, USGBC leads a diverse constituency of builders and environmentalists, corporations and nonprofit organizations, elected officials and concerned citizens, and teachers and students. To learn more about greening the buildings and neighborhoods in your community, see www.usgbc.org.

LEED FOR NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT BASICS

LEED for Neighborhood Development is a rating system that incorporates the principles of smart growth, New Urbanism, and green building into a national standard for green neighborhood design. Like other LEED design and construction rating systems, it is a voluntary program designed to evaluate and guide the design and construction of development projects. The rating system distills the experience of leading professionals in environmental policy and the building industry, and the U.S. Green Building Council, the Congress for the New Urbanism, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, into objective, measurable criteria. Through certification, LEED for Neighborhood Development recognizes development projects that successfully protect and enhance the overall health, natural environment, and quality of life of our communities. Development projects that commit to sustainable building practices speak directly to a host of pressing issues in our modern world: vehicle use has nearly tripled between 1970 and 2006¹, raising vehicular emissions to more than 20% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions²; buildings alone account for 39% of energy consumption and 14% of potable water use³. Development projects that incorporate smart growth strategies, green building techniques, and efficient neighborhood design have an opportunity to reduce these negative impacts of the built environment, and many more.

LEED for Neighborhood Development projects vary widely in their scope and character. Small infill projects qualify, as do large master planned communities, and projects may apply early in the development process or immediately after construction is complete. Mixed-use and single use projects can fare well in the program and a variety of location types near existing infrastructure are also admissible. For more detailed information on eligible project types and a fuller account of the benefits of the rating system, please see the introductory material in the LEED for Neighborhood Development Rating System, the LEED Reference Guide for Green Neighborhood Development, and our website: www.usgbc.org/neighborhoods.

The LEED for Neighborhood Development rating system is made up of prerequisites, which all projects must meet, and credits, which the project can choose from to earn enough points for certification. The basic components of each prerequisite and credit are a general statement of intent and specific performance thresholds or prescriptive measures. Each of these components can be individually referenced or incorporated into your policies and projects, depending on the scale of your work.

LEED for Neighborhood Development has three stages of certification, which relate to the phases of the real estate development process.

Stage 1 – Conditionally Approved Plan: provides the conditional approval of a LEED-ND Plan available for projects before they have completed the entitlements, or public review, process. It is envisioned that completing Stage 1 will help projects get support from the local government and from the community.

Stage 2 – Pre-Certified Plan: pre-certifies a LEED-ND Plan and is applicable for fully entitled projects or projects under construction. Completing this review can help projects secure financing, expedite permitting or attract tenants.

Stage 3 – Certified Neighborhood Development: completed projects formally apply for LEED certification to recognize that the project has achieved all of the prerequisites and credits attempted.



Governments Take the Initiative with LEED

In recent years, thousands of projects in the United States have achieved LEED certification. As of November 2009, more than 200 localities across the U.S. are recognizing LEED as an effective tool for benchmarking the performance of buildings in their community, and 2,997 local government projects are currently pursuing LEED certification. Learn more about green building policies: www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMPPageID=1852

CONSTRAINTS TO CONSIDER

There are natural limitations to the application of the rating system that are important to understand before using LEED for Neighborhood Development. LEED-ND is not a replacement for comprehensive planning by a municipality or county. It was not designed to rate public plans, such as general plans or small area plans, but rather individual project development plans. If you are looking for a program suitable for an entire city, the STAR Community Index may be more appropriate (see sidebar). Because the rating system is designed for individual development projects, it is not the best program to certify an existing neighborhood without development activity. However, new projects in existing areas can work quite well; it is recommended that at least 50% of the project total building square footage consist of new buildings or buildings undergoing major renovations. Additional information on this topic can be found in the introduction of the LEED-ND rating system.

Selecting a good development location is an important element of LEED for Neighborhood Development. This perspective is embodied in prerequisites related to location which means that not all land within a given jurisdiction is eligible for certification. Rather than issuing a blanket mandate that all new development projects must achieve certification, it is more effective to use strategies outlined in this document to encourage development projects to pursue certification, remove barriers to achieving certification, or provide technical assistance to projects seeking certification.

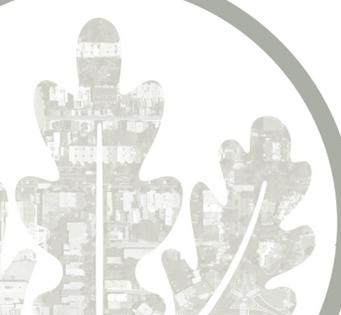
Because LEED for Neighborhood Development is a national program, on certain topics addressed in the rating system such as stormwater management, some local governments may have more stringent regulations than LEED-ND. LEED-ND is not designed to override or replace these more stringent regulations, but rather to set a minimum national baseline that will encourage all projects to meet high standards.

A Complementary Program: STAR Community Index

The STAR Community Index, currently under development by ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability in partnership with the U.S. Green Building Council and the Center for American Progress, is a benchmarking tool to give cities and counties a path forward towards a more sustainable future.

STAR identifies the key components of urban sustainability, providing cities and counties a way to measure their own progress in those areas. In doing so, STAR can serve as a planning tool for local governments and their citizens to take steps to become more sustainable while providing a mechanism to assess how successful cities are in their efforts.

Learn more at: <http://www.icleiusa.org/star>



APPROACH 1: LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Jurisdictions can lead by example either through direct project involvement, or by setting goals and making commitments that set the tone and expectations for future growth in the area.

STRATEGY: SET GOALS AND MAKE COMMITMENTS

There are several ways to show commitment to a green development agenda. The first step is often adopting a policy statement or joining a coalition of other jurisdictions with similar sustainability goals. When drafting a policy statement, consider reviewing the LEED-ND rating system to ensure that all relevant areas of sustainable practice are addressed, or to borrow specific achievement thresholds from the credits and prerequisites.

Starting an ongoing conversation among a variety of stakeholders, including elected officials, municipal or county departments, business owners, and community members about sustainability goals is also vital. If establishing a more formal task force of interested stakeholders, the LEED-ND rating system can be effectively used as a discussion starter and resource during goal-setting exercises.

STRATEGY: DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY FOR LAND UNDER YOUR CONTROL

With many municipal real estate portfolios including vacant or underutilized properties, one way for a local jurisdiction to lead in sustainable community development is through active participation in a LEED for Neighborhood Development project. With direct involvement in a project, the city or county can assist in bringing a project to fruition that might otherwise have stagnated or been developed in an unsustainable manner.

Certain factors contribute to a successful LEED for Neighborhood Development project and the scale and available resources will impact your level of involvement. Reviewing the questions below will help to determine whether a site under your control is eligible.

1. Is the site served by existing or planned water and wastewater infrastructure?
2. Is the site located:
 - in an infill location?
 - adjacent to existing development?
 - close to existing or planned transit?
3. Is the area located in a 100-year floodplain area?
4. Are there any wetlands or water bodies on the site or nearby?
5. Are there any known imperiled or endangered species in the area?
6. Is there any undeveloped prime agricultural land on the site?

For a complete list of criteria to consider, review the Smart Location and Linkage prerequisites of the rating system, available at www.usgbc.org/leed/nd.

Once it has been determined that the site is eligible, one or more of the following strategies may be appropriate, depending on your level of involvement in the project.



STRATEGY: CREATE A SMALL AREA PLAN/MASTER PLAN FOR THE SITE

One important focus of LEED for Neighborhood Development is the creation of walkable communities that integrate into the framework of the surrounding environment. A number of requirements in the rating system specify certain minimum density levels, walk distance thresholds, and street connectivity levels. By putting together a small area plan or master plan you can ensure that the development of the site will meet these requirements while still allowing for the flexibility to adapt to market conditions.

STRATEGY: CLEAN UP BROWNFIELD CONTAMINATION

Many infill sites have a level of soil or groundwater contamination that can hinder investment on the property. Helping to orchestrate the environmental remediation will eliminate the uncertainty in the development community about the potential site. As the process can be expensive and time-consuming, certain departments and organizations can provide financial (loan guarantees, etc) and technical assistance. These groups could include:

- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- The U.S. Department of Commerce
- The Small Business Administration (SBA)
- State departments of public health and environment
- Local business groups or partnerships
- Local brownfield organizations, if available

STRATEGY: CONSTRUCT OR INSTALL UPDATED INFRASTRUCTURE ON THE SITE

Funding the construction of updated or improved infrastructure in the area will help mitigate some of the financial costs that would otherwise be borne by the developer of the site. These infrastructure investments do not have to be focused solely on roadway or water/wastewater improvements. Parks, libraries, bikeways or support for other alternative modes of transportation will help to attract investment and meet certain credits within the LEED for Neighborhood Development rating system.

STRATEGY: ISSUE A REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Unless you are planning to handle the procurement and construction process of the project, a Request for Proposals (RFP) will need to be developed for the project site. Depending on the condition of the existing site and the scope of the project, the specific tools above can be used to help ready the site before the issuance of an RFP. In addition, to ensure that the project is developed according to the vision of your jurisdiction, it is best to include some or all of the following stakeholders:

- Planning Department
- Economic Development Department/Agency
- Department of Real Estate & Procurement
- Department of Public Works
- Local Redevelopment Authority

Pursuing the “highest bidder” approach is not the only way to arrive at a financially-responsible development concept for the site. A fuller life-cycle costing exercise may reveal hidden costs in a traditional development model that could be mitigated through more sustainable development. In this case, one alternative approach is to attach selection of an RFP winner to the pursuit or achievement of LEED for Neighborhood Development certification.

The City of Victoria, BC in Canada issued an RFP in 2004 for the 12-acre Dockside Lands area that incorporated a focus on the Triple Bottom Line – Social, Environmental, & Economic – principles. The city wanted a project that was innovative and pushed the boundaries and felt that a typical bidding process would not achieve the goals for the site. Instead of setting specific parameters, potential developers were allowed to determine the potential land-use, density, and community amenities. The development teams were then scored based upon their alignment with the Triple Bottom Line approach (1/3 for each section), while still presenting their innovative approaches to the site. The Dockside Green project that ultimately resulted from this RFP process has demonstrated impressive achievement and innovation thus far in its evolution. Dockside Green is a LEED-ND Platinum Plan, and many of its buildings are aiming to reach the platinum level of certification under other building-focused LEED rating systems.

OTHER APPROACHES

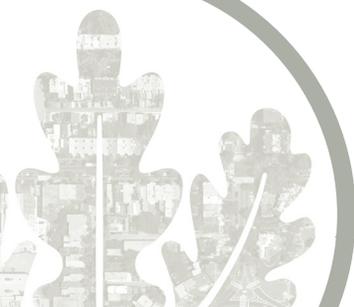
In lieu of selling the land directly, a public-private partnership can be formed, especially if the development program includes multiple facilities dedicated to public use. A variety of city or county departments may be directly or tangentially involved in such a partnership, or may simply put policies in place that support sustainable development projects.

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

Symphony Park in Las Vegas is an example of city-owned land (a former rail yard site) that is currently undergoing redevelopment by a city selected partner – Newland Communities. Currently under construction, the 60-acre project incorporates a new park, Symphony/Performing Arts Hall, and hospital center, along with a hotel/casino and private condominium towers. Symphony Park, now a LEED-ND Gold Plan, is the culmination of a set of initiatives designed to integrate green design and development into the city; such initiatives include the adoption of a Green Building Resolution and the creation of a Green Council. To further show its commitment to the long-term sustainability of the project, the city took the step of adopting the green design guidelines governing the project area (based on LEED-ND and covering both buildings and infrastructure), ensuring that green design will continue through build-out and beyond.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Transit authorities also have an opportunity to influence sustainable development practices in a variety of ways. In New York, the Blue Ribbon Commission on Sustainability and the MTA analyzed the existing operational structure of the Metropolitan Transit Authority and issued a report outlining practices that would make the agency and region more sustainable. In addition to reducing the energy load of their vehicles and facilities, the report promoted the integration of land-use and transit and how to maximize the value for both. The report specifically encourages policies that provide incentives to developers who design and construct LEED for Neighborhood Development-Gold level projects or develop on land surrounding transit stations.



SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Public Housing Authorities may also be interested in pursuing LEED for Neighborhood Development certification for any sites they own or in tying certification to related grant funding. The Hunter's View project, which is part of the HOPE SF program in the San Francisco Housing Authority (a program modeled on HOPE IV), was recently awarded two competitive California state grants. The awards, \$30 million for infill infrastructure (the maximum grant) and \$10 million for multi-family housing, are both funded by state proposition 1C, which prioritizes smart growth development of affordable housing.

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

The Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA) took a direct approach, acting as a co-developer with the JBG Companies on a project to transform a WMATA-owned parking lot around a transit station into a mixed-use center. The Twinbrook Station project earned Gold-level certification for its plan under the LEED-ND pilot program.

RESOURCES

Symphony Park websites

<http://www.symphonypark.com/home.aspx>

<http://www.lasvegasnevada.gov/Government/7598.htm>

http://www.lasvegasnevada.gov/files/UPDesStandards_11_8_06.pdf

Dockside Lands Request for Proposals

http://www.victoria.ca/cityhall/pdfs/currentprojects_dockside_rfp100904.pdf?zoom_highlight=dockside

Dockside Green Project

www.docksidegreen.com

Hunter's View: A HOPE SF project

<http://www.huntersview.info/>

Greening Mass Transit & Metro Regions: A Synopsis of the Final Report of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Sustainability and the MTA

<http://www.mta.info/sustainability/pdf/synopsis.pdf>

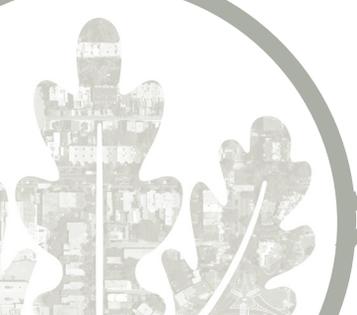
Twinbrook Station

<http://www.twinbrookstation.com/>

"Smart Mobility 2010"

<http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/ocp/smf.html>

Prepared by Caltrans in California, this publication is a framework for integrating sustainability into all forms of transportation and mobility. See Section 6.1 for reference to LEED-ND as a resource for creating "Close in Compact Communities."



APPROACH 2: REMOVE BARRIERS AND PAVE THE WAY

One of the most meaningful ways to support the use of LEED for Neighborhood Development is to ensure that a jurisdiction's zoning codes, regulations, and policies are supportive of the program and its principles. Developers who have often spent many years learning to navigate their jurisdiction's approval processes may be wary of adding a new layer into the process. By taking a fresh look at existing regulations, your jurisdiction can proactively remove real and perceived barriers, sending a signal to the development community that sustainable development is welcome.

The potential for advancement in this particular area is substantial. Current laws throughout the country often contain obstacles which may make it difficult, onerous, costly, or impossible to undertake some aspects of sustainable development.

Common barriers include:

- high required parking ratios
- zoning codes that require a separation of land uses
- laws prohibiting the installation of green technologies such as solar panels

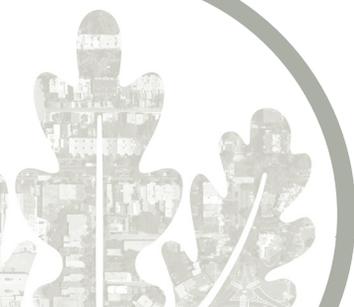
Outlined below are a variety of different strategies that may help you hone in on existing barriers and create new policies in harmony with LEED for Neighborhood Development.

STRATEGY: REVISE ZONING CODES

Zoning codes are an excellent place to begin looking for opportunities for revisions that better align with LEED for Neighborhood Development principles. You may find an array of standards in your codes that differ from LEED-ND requirements, ranging from specific issues, like building setbacks, to more global issues, such as zoning that is incompatible with mixed-use development.

Specific, line item changes to existing codes may be the best way to align with LEED for Neighborhood Development if more overarching changes are not necessary or possible in your jurisdiction. If you intend to undertake a substantial code revision, however, you should consider the numerous ways that you can use LEED-ND to inform new zoning ordinances that are more compatible with sustainable development than traditional codes, such as performance zoning, form-based zoning, or design-based zoning.

Performance zoning offers a high degree of flexibility by dictating acceptable impact levels for new development projects depending on their location in the community, but not necessarily dictating land use. For example, if a project can demonstrate that it will not have negative impacts in a number of categories identified by the jurisdiction – noise, pollution, aesthetic qualities – then the actual land use can vary. LEED-ND requirements contain specific metrics that may work well as the building blocks of a performance-based zoning system. Elements of LEED-ND may also inform a form-based code (see NPDp1/NPDc1: Walkable Streets for measures appropriate for incorporation into form-based codes). Form-based codes are useful in building a cohesive style in the public realm because they focus on harmony among design elements and distinguishing neighborhood character based on the intended form and function of the area. Another possibility is to create an overlay zone that bundles together a set of



sustainable guidelines, eliminating the need for each individual project to seek zoning changes when undertaking a LEED for Neighborhood Development Project.

CLEVELAND, OHIO

Three high-profile LEED for Neighborhood Development pilot projects in Cleveland have given the city an opportunity to rethink how to create policies and tools to support green projects. The projects – St. Luke’s Point, Upper Chester, and Flats East Bank – aim to revitalize underutilized sites in the city and re-imagine them as compact, mixed-use neighborhoods. The city stayed closely involved as project team members and representatives from the Cleveland Foundation, which provided some financing and coordination assistance, met to discuss the challenges of developing green in the city. These conversations resulted in the realization that creating a set of green design guidelines that would act as an overlay for the three project sites was a much better solution than asking project teams to seek individual variances each time that LEED for Neighborhood Development principles conflicted with current regulations. An interdepartmental green team was also created to address livability issues outside of the traditional bureaucratic development process. The green design guidelines are in the midst of approvals; if adopted, these guidelines would be available for the three existing LEED-ND projects and potentially others seeking to do similar projects.

Review the draft green design guidelines at: http://www.greencitybluelake.org/images/planning_projects/greenguidelines.pdf

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

On February 2, 2010, Nashville adopted a new Downtown Code (DTC) to serve as the regulatory accompaniment to the 2007 Downtown Community Plan. Recognizing community desire for more distinct, cohesive downtown neighborhoods, and faced with a regulatory process in which almost every project sought rezoning or variances, the city created an alternate approach. The new DTC is form-based, giving the development community better options with respect to mixing land uses and increasing density, while creating clear standards for the character and scale of each neighborhood. The DTC drew on the LEED for Neighborhood Development rating system to identify areas of consideration for the code, and in some cases borrowed metrics. Additionally, the DTC awards pre-certified LEED for Neighborhood Development projects with additional density under the Bonus Height Program.

Nashville Downtown Code available at: <http://www.nashville.gov/mpc/dtc/default.asp>



CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS

When a new highway interchange was constructed along the southwest edge of Champaign, the city recognized the opportunity to create a more sustainable vision for the new development that would soon surround the 600+ acre interchange site. The city aimed to create an overlay zone that would speak to both environmentally-sensitive design and urban form, finding in LEED for Neighborhood Development a set of standards that integrated these ideas and reflected their values. The draft overlay zone draws upon specific portions of the rating system that are most applicable and appropriate for the site; for example, the draft incorporates block size and intersection density metrics found in LEED for Neighborhood Development to support the creation of walkable streets with high connectivity. The draft overlay also signals clearly to potential developers the importance of green development practices by requiring that a member of the development team be a green building professional. In the future, this overlay will offer an excellent case study that can inform comprehensive zoning code revisions for the city of Champaign.

Curtis Road Interchange Zoning Amendments available at:

<http://archive.ci.champaign.il.us/archive/dsweb/Get/Document-7627/SS%202009-076.pdf>

STRATEGY: REVISE A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

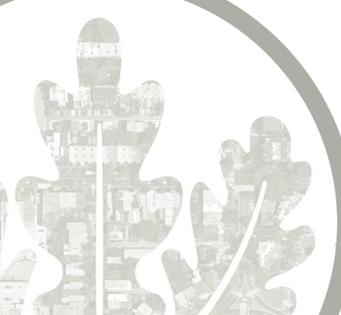
A comprehensive plan that is supportive of LEED for Neighborhood Development will include goals explicitly connected to sustainable land development, such as the clustering of growth around existing infrastructure, increased density where appropriate, investment in transportation infrastructure, the creation of an attractive pedestrian environment, and similar provisions. If your comprehensive plan already includes many of these elements, reviewing the rating system can help add specific metrics to more general goals, allowing you to measure the success of the plan. LEED for Neighborhood Development can also help identify specific actions linked to sections of a comprehensive plan; for example, a jurisdiction that identifies public health as an important goal should review the analysis of rating system credits and their public health implications on the LEED for Neighborhood Development website, prepared by the Centers for Disease Control. Similarly, a jurisdiction focusing on environmental performance issues will find numerous strategies to reference in LEED-ND.

OREGON

The Oregon Department of Land Conservation & Development is preparing a climate change handbook to offer guidance to jurisdictions throughout the state on how they can best address climate change issues at the local level. One important recommendation found in the handbook is that each jurisdiction should revise its comprehensive plan accordingly. Example comprehensive plans use LEED-ND in various ways to guide and measure their sustainability goals. The handbook also includes LEED for Neighborhood Development as a suggested reference.

STRATEGY: CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

The rating system contains numerous thresholds that can be used to refine the general goals found in a climate action plan. For example, a climate action plan that includes an increased public transportation access goal can be revised to include specific service thresholds found in



SLLC3: Locations with Reduced Automobile Dependence to provide a concrete target. The jurisdiction could also do an analysis of existing service thresholds according to the parameters in SLLC3 to set a baseline upon which percentage improvement will be measured.

If your climate action plan requires that individual projects document how they will address the goals of the plan, you may want to suggest incentivizing or incorporating the principles of LEED for Neighborhood Development as a way to satisfy this requirement.

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

Beginning in 2008, the City of Albuquerque began working on a climate action plan designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2050. A draft released in 2009 includes a clear assessment of the gap between the city's aspirations for growth and the kind of development occurring as a result of current regulations and policies. The plan calls for updating ordinances, sector plans, and master plans using LEED for Neighborhood Development, in addition to providing incentives for achieving LEED for Neighborhood Development certification or incorporating a range of sustainability strategies found in the rating system, such as increased density and well-developed transit corridors.

City of Albuquerque Climate Action Plan found at:
<http://www.cabq.gov/cap/CAPREV11forWEB.pdf>

STRATEGY: PERFORMANCE METRICS FOR EXISTING BUILDINGS

LEED for Neighborhood Development is highly structured, and includes a great number of specific metrics for each green development strategy included in the rating system. This high degree of specificity and the broad scope of the credits – touching upon everything from vicinity characteristics to the extent of glazing on retail spaces – make the rating system very useful as a tool in performing a gap analysis of an existing neighborhood. In underutilized or blighted neighborhoods that are targeted for revitalization efforts, benchmarking the neighborhood against the rating system provides a manageable starting point for what can often be an overwhelming task.

PORTLAND, OREGON

The fledgling Portland EcoDistricts initiative looks holistically at livability in largely existing neighborhoods. The goal of the initiative is to develop best practices in environmental, economic, and social sustainability, testing them in specific neighborhoods throughout Portland. LEED for Neighborhood Development is referenced as a tool that can be used to measure and monitor impacts across these categories. The EcoDistrict framework and LEED for Neighborhood Development are viewed as complementary strategies that will help guide development at all stages, from new development to infrastructure upgrades and best management practices in existing areas.

Learn more about the Portland EcoDistricts Initiative at:
<http://www.pdxinstitute.org/index.php/builtenv/ecodistricts>



SYRACUSE, NEW YORK

The SALT (Syracuse Art Life and Technology) district, a project of the Near Westside Initiative, Inc., is envisioned as a new center of artistic and cultural development in the Syracuse and Central Upstate New York area. Historically home to both a rich arts community and an industrial salt works, the Near Westside revitalization effort is aimed at alleviating poverty in the neighborhood and transforming underutilized industrial and commercial buildings into vibrant places once again. LEED for Neighborhood Development was used as a guiding framework throughout the planning process. Initially, the existing SALT district was assessed against the entire rating system, producing an initial scorecard and a clear picture of the current neighborhood's strengths and weaknesses. Plans and policies were then produced, taking into account current development activities and future development activities. The SALT district now has a set of plans and policies that will guide future development, as well as a LEED-ND Gold Plan.

Learn more about the SALT district at: <http://saltdistrict.com/>

STRATEGY: WRITE OR REVISE A GREEN BUILDING ORDINANCE

Jurisdictions are increasingly realizing that sustainable building practices only begin with single buildings and that a building is only as green as its context. Green building ordinances can and should be transformed into green development ordinances that recognize the additional benefits of sustainable land development and planning at the neighborhood scale. Several different models are in use throughout the country. Some jurisdictions with existing green building ordinances that mandate or strongly recommend LEED (or equivalent) certification can be revised to include LEED for Neighborhood Development as a valid compliance path. Other jurisdictions create more specific policies that require submission of a LEED for Neighborhood Development checklist (or proof of registration or certification, potentially), based on the size of the project or other characteristics. Requiring certification is not necessary or recommended for an effective green development ordinance; rather, an analysis of the project proposal against LEED for Neighborhood Development criteria often allows the jurisdiction to see how the project measures up without mandating certification. Some jurisdictions choose to require certification, but only for projects receiving a certain level of financial support from the jurisdiction. One particularly useful connection to make would be to encourage the use of LEED for Neighborhood Development by projects in ideal growth areas, such as along transit corridors or near neighborhood centers.

GREEN BUILDING ORDINANCE EXAMPLES

Oakland, CA has proposed that new Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) or projects with phased entitlements or subdivision of parcels greater than 60,000 sq. ft. must submit a LEED for Neighborhood Development checklist to the city for review. See: <http://www.oaklandnet.com/government/ceda/revised/pdf/GreenBuilding-SReport-Thresholds.pdf>

Boston, MA requires that multi-building projects prove that they are LEED for Neighborhood Development certifiable. See Articles 37 and 80 here: <http://www.cityofboston.gov/environmentalenergy/>

GREEN BUILDING ORDINANCE EXAMPLES (CONT.)

East Lansing, MI created a green building ordinance requiring private development projects with multiple buildings receiving over 15% municipal incentives to achieve at minimum LEED for Neighborhood Development Silver certification, with at least one point earned under GIBC1: Green Buildings. See: <http://www.cityofeastlansing.com/Home/Departments/Communications/MediaRoom/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/121/East-Lansing-Adopts-Ground-breaking-Green-Building-Policy/>

RESOURCES

EPA Smart Growth Policy database

<http://cfpub.epa.gov/sgpdb/search.cfm>

Institute for Local Government – Climate Action Network

<http://www.csac.counties.org/images/users/1/BestPracticesFramework%20v5%200%20May%2014.pdf>

A Best Practices Framework that calls for new housing and mixed use developments to be built to the LEED for Neighborhood Development standard or its equivalent

LEED-ND and Healthy Neighborhoods

<http://www.usgbc.org/ShowFile.aspx?DocumentID=5895>

Analysis by the Centers for Disease Control of LEED-ND credits with respect to public health impacts

Designing Low-Carbon Neighborhoods with LEED-ND

<http://www.usgbc.org/ShowFile.aspx?DocumentID=6557>

Analysis of LEED-ND credits with respect to carbon emission mitigation potential

Planning for a New Energy and Climate Future resource database

<http://www.planning.org/research/energy/database/index.htm>

A database of local government planning strategies that address climate and energy concerns

“Overcoming Obstacles to Smart Growth through Code Reform. An Executive Summary of Smart Growth Zoning Codes: A Resource Guide”

<http://www.planning.org/research/smartgrowth/index.htm>

Form-Based Code Institute

<http://www.formbasedcodes.org/>

Green Playbook for Buildings and Neighborhoods

<http://www.greenplaybook.org>

General advice and strategies for envisioning a sustainable future and getting started on implementation



APPROACH 3: THE CASE FOR INCENTIVES

Local governments across the country have found targeted financial and development (regulatory/process-related) incentives to be some of the most effective strategies to encourage green building and development. Rewarding developers and builders who choose to build green is an effective way to encourage the adoption of best-practices in design, construction and operations while spurring innovation and demand for green building technologies and improving the health, prosperity and quality of life for all.

The benefits of green development extend well beyond the quantifiable energy, water and financial savings to consumers and governments alike and deep into the community as a whole. Green building creates jobs, reduces strain on public infrastructure and resources, creates and maintains a healthier indoor and outdoor environment, and inspires growth and innovation in the local economy. In recognition of the positive and transformative impact that sustainable buildings and communities are having on pressing local, state, and regional issues, local governments are using effective government incentives to promote leadership in the design, construction and operation of our nation's communities.

DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES - AN OVERVIEW

Simple modifications in zoning permissions and review processes can yield impressive dividends for developers and building owners alike who choose to follow green building and development standards. Incentives such as density bonuses and expedited permitting are implemented at low or no cost to government authorities and encourage developers to adopt green practices by making healthy, efficient and high-performance communities an even more attractive option. Below, several common incentives are discussed, including the LEED for Neighborhood Development stage at which the incentives are most useful.

STRATEGY: EXPEDITED REVIEW/PERMITTING PROCESSES

Review and permitting processes can vary greatly in length from one jurisdiction to another. In some communities, reducing the duration of review and permitting processes may be appealing to local developers. Both of these incentives allow a municipality to offer a significant incentive with little or no financial investment, since they only require a shift in permitting priority. **Applicable to Stage 1 and Stage 2.**

SARASOTA, FLORIDA

In 2006, Sarasota County, Florida approved a Green Development Incentive Resolution that provides fast-track permitting for residential and commercial green developments. Such incentives apply to projects pursuing LEED for Neighborhood Development.

View the resolution at: http://share2.myfwc.com/spring/LowImpact%20Development%20Workshop%2020090508/04_Green_Building_Certifications_and_Incentives.pdf



STRATEGY: DENSITY BONUSES

Density bonuses provide an opportunity for municipalities to tie incentives to specific local public policy priorities. Many municipalities and counties allow for percentage increases in Floor Area Ratio (FAR) or other measures of density contingent upon certification or proof of developing green. Even municipalities with height restrictions are providing height bonuses as another form of density bonus for buildings that are part of green neighborhoods, particularly for urban infill projects. These additional bonuses in density yield both short- and long-term dividends for developers and building owners through the rent or sale of additional units allowed by the bonus incentive. **Applicable to Stage 1.**

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES - AN OVERVIEW

Financial incentives such as tax credits or fee reductions are a highly successful means of encouraging developers to follow green building and neighborhood practices. In tough economic times, financial incentives may not always be feasible. However, in some cases these programs do not ultimately result in negative impacts on a municipality's or county's finances since the proposed development may increase the assessed property value in the city, leading to increased property tax revenue and offsetting the financial cost of the incentives.

STRATEGY: TAX CREDITS AND ABATEMENTS

Many municipalities and counties already offer tax credits and abatements as a means of advancing specific policy agendas. These incentives can be extended specifically to developers and builders who achieve measurable, verifiable green neighborhood goals. While these types of incentives have a short-term cost to the jurisdiction, the increased property value from an energy-efficient, greener neighborhood can offset a reduction in tax revenue over time. **Applicable to Stage 2 and Stage 3.**

STRATEGY: FEE REDUCTIONS OR WAIVERS

Municipalities or counties that charge fees for permit review or other processes have begun offering reduction or waivers for developers or contractors who commit to verifiable green neighborhood practices. While this incentive does have a financial cost to government authorities, the benefits of a healthier and more efficient building stock pay dividends for the entire community. Often, fee reductions and waivers are paired with a structural incentive such as expedited permitting to give the developer increased benefit for choosing to build green. **Applicable to Stage 1 and Stage 2.**

STRATEGY: GRANTS

Grants for green neighborhood developers and green builders are being established by local governments to entice construction and renovation project teams to go green in markets that may otherwise be resistant. These programs can be funded through taxes or fees, or through federal or state funds. Such grants are usually awarded to developers to subsidize or render more profitable the design and construction of high-performance buildings. Grant programs often require developers to submit a proposal for the grant funding or meet specific program goals to ensure that they are developing in a green manner. **Applicable to Stage 1 and Stage 2.**

STATE OF ILLINOIS

In 2007, the Governor of the State of Illinois signed “The Green Neighborhood Grant Act,” which creates state-level incentives for LEED for Neighborhood Development. The Act directs the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to fund up to 1.5% of total development costs for up to three applicable projects per year. Applicable neighborhood developments will have achieved LEED for Neighborhood Development certification.

View the Green Neighborhood Grant Act at: <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/95/PDF/095-0325.pdf>

OTHER TYPES OF ASSISTANCE

Providing technical assistance (see Section 4) or marketing assistance can also be a valuable incentive to developers who are hoping for a smooth development process drawing high-profile attention.

STRATEGY: MARKETING ASSISTANCE

Developers and owners of green buildings and neighborhoods have much to gain from the increased marketability of third-party certified, high-performance green real estate. In recognition of the unique marketability of green neighborhoods, some municipalities and counties are offering free marketing assistance, including signage, awards, and recognition on city websites, press releases and other means to help green builders rent and sell their properties more effectively. **Applicable to Stage 2 and Stage 3.**

RESOURCES

Examples of a variety of financial and development incentives throughout the country:

<http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMSPageID=2078>

“Financing and Encouraging Green Building in Your Community”:

<http://www.usgbc.org/ShowFile.aspx?DocumentID=6247>

American Planning Association “Model Affordable Housing Density Bonus Ordinance”:

<http://www.planning.org/smartgrowthcodes/pdf/section44.pdf>



APPROACH 4: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND EDUCATION

LEED for Neighborhood Development is built upon the premise that sustainable development must be the product of an integrated approach, including collaboration across a variety of disciplines and decision-making based on analysis of existing and future conditions. To design and construct a LEED for Neighborhood Development project, project teams need access to quality data about the site and vicinity, and the expertise of professionals versed in sustainable design. A number of low or no-cost ways for jurisdictions to encourage developers to undertake LEED for Neighborhood Development are to provide direct technical assistance, educate staff on the rating system to expedite review, assemble an information storehouse to simplify the data collection process for project teams, or identify land that is potentially eligible for LEED for Neighborhood Development projects.

STRATEGY: DIRECT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

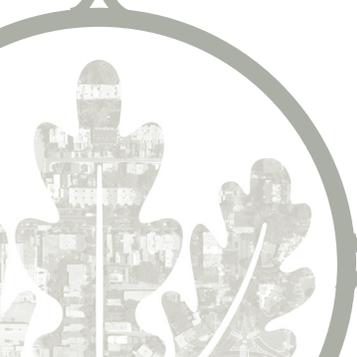
Often, developers interested in pursuing green projects hesitate to do so because they are still unfamiliar with the standards and requirements involved in building green. Several strategies can alleviate this hurdle for developers. If your jurisdiction has a designated sustainability department or is thinking of creating one, consider designating a staff member as the point of contact for project teams interested in undertaking green projects. This person, or multiple people, could also spend a portion of their hours engaged in providing direct technical assistance to project teams. Anyone in this position should be accredited under the LEED Professional Accreditation program (several specialties are offered, including LEED-ND). In large jurisdictions where several LEED for Neighborhood Development projects are underway, consider convening members of these project teams for occasional meetings or conference calls to share their experiences. The simple act of meeting periodically has two distinct benefits: project teams get the chance to learn from each other and representatives of the jurisdiction get firsthand information about challenges that projects are facing. Another model for designating specific individuals with green development expertise is to ask each department to have one such expert on staff, and convene these individuals occasionally as an interdepartmental green team.

STRATEGY: GENERAL STAFF EDUCATION

Beyond designating individuals with extensive green expertise, providing a modest level of training to all staff involved in the review and approvals process is a simple, low-cost way to signal your jurisdiction's commitment to green to developers and the general public, and ensure that all staff members recognize key green development strategies in new project applications.

STRATEGY: COMPILE DATA

Land development projects, especially LEED for Neighborhood Development projects, are particularly concerned with accessing high quality information about project site and vicinity characteristics. Common information needed to complete a LEED for Neighborhood Development certification submittal include items like street centerline files, water and wastewater infrastructure maps, parcel level development histories, historic building and cultural landscape designations, and bicycle paths. Your jurisdiction can greatly assist the project in gathering this data by centralizing as much as possible or by training staff with oversight of this information on what to expect from project teams that need this information for a certification submittal.



Additionally, if your jurisdiction does not have robust, updated geographic data (for use in Geographic Information Systems), building this database of information will be invaluable to future project teams.

STRATEGY: IDENTIFY ELIGIBLE LANDS

Your jurisdiction can identify land that is best suited for LEED for Neighborhood Development by applying the five Smart Location and Linkage prerequisites to all parcels within the jurisdiction. Prerequisites will filter land based upon: smart location characteristics, such as proximity to transit, public water and wastewater infrastructure, community services, and previously developed land; proximity to imperiled species, wetlands, and water bodies; soil characteristics; and proximity to floodplains. While such an analysis does not ensure that any project within the eligible lands will receive certification, it does identify promising areas for growth and give guidance to developers that will encourage them to strongly consider location when pursuing new projects.

RESOURCES

USGBC Course Catalog

<https://www.usgbc.org/CourseCatalog/CourseCatalog.aspx?>

Search by LEED rating system to find a number of excellent educational options, such as:

- LEED for Neighborhood Development Series. An introductory, 3-part series provided by USGBC.
- Local Government Adaptation of LEED-ND. A day-long, intensive workshop specifically for local governments, provided by Criterion Planners.
- Understanding the LEED for Neighborhood Development Rating System. A day-long, facilitator-led workshop about the core concepts and strategies of the rating system.
- Green Neighborhood Development: The LEED Implementation Process. A day-long, facilitator-led workshop at a more advanced level.

Technical Assistance Examples

- Portland, Oregon: <http://www.portlandonline.com/osd/index.cfm?c=41481>
- Seattle, Washington: <http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/greenbuilding/>

ENDNOTES

1. National Transportation Statistics, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, U.S. Department of Transportation, 2008. Accessed at www.bts.gov/publications/national_transportation_statistics
2. Energy Information Administration, Emissions of Greenhouse Gases in the United States 2005. Report DOE/EIA-0573(2005). Released November 2006.
3. U.S. DOE Buildings Energy Data Book and U.S. Geological Survey.

