

Another Shade of Green



By Keith Lindemulder

The Olympics are just around the corner with the opening ceremonies taking place this Friday. While the Olympics are certainly entertaining by any measure, they would *only* be entertainment if each event didn't have a method to keep score. It's the final score that determines who was the best competitor of that event on that day. The popularity of sports has developed amazing statistical histories of past performances of each athlete and team and even coaches and officials.

These statistics help the other competitors focus on key aspects of the game to help improve their chances of winning. Likewise, fans of the event can review these key statistics to be better informed about who's playing and the potential of the athletes.

While all this data won't determine who wins or loses on its own, it does provide the best prediction of what the outcome may look like if everyone performs like they have in the past. The green building programs in the marketplace today are very similar to this type of 'statistical history' of building methods and other decisions which make up how the building ultimately performs as built.

Currently the most popular green building program for commercial buildings in the US is LEED – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. This program was developed by the USGBC (US Green Building Council) starting in 1995 and has gone through several evolutionary changes. Currently they have programs for new commercial construction, new homes, core and shell only, commercial interiors, neighborhood development, schools, healthcare and retail and even existing building operations and maintenance. All the programs are slight variations of the same basic set of goals – to design, construct and operate the greenest buildings in the world. We'll look at some of these differences as we go along but let's focus on the LEED – NC (New Construction) program since it's the most mature and currently most popular.

According to the USGBC, "buildings" in the US account for 70% of the electrical consumption, 39% of all energy use, 39% of all CO2 emissions, 40% of raw material use, 30% of waste output (136 million tons annually), and 12% of potable water consumption. Effectively predicting and lowering these statistics are the key points of the program.

LEED - NC is built on six major sections each focusing on different aspects of the building. These sections are

- 1) Site Selection;
- 2) Water Management;
- 3) Energy Management;
- 4) Material Usage;
- 5) Indoor Air Quality and
- 6) Innovation in Design.

In turn, each section is broken down into specific 'credits' which, if achieved, award the building certain points. Some of the credits in each section are mandatory and others are optional giving the designers the flexibility to make decisions about the final design and its impact.

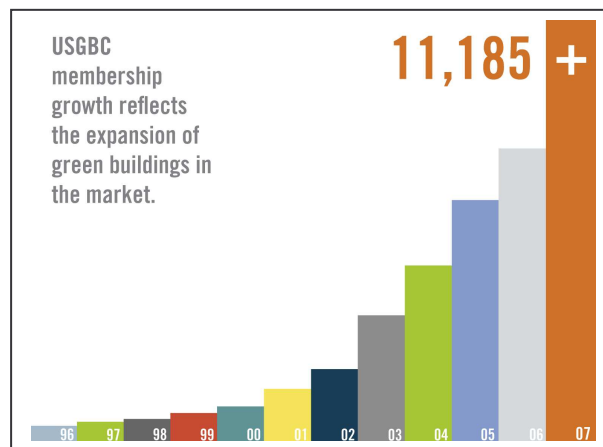
A maximum of 69 points are possible with LEED-NC version 2.2. The total of all the points equals the buildings 'score' and the building is awarded a Certified (26-32 points), Silver (33-38 points), Gold (39-51 points) or Platinum (52-69 points) rating.

In the following weeks we'll dig into each section in more detail. Have a SAFE and Sustainable week!

Reduce!

Reuse!

Recycle!



*Graphic courtesy of the US Green Building Council



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IS THE NEW GREEN.



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