

What is LEED?

What are Green Homes?

Generally speaking, a green home is designed and built to be:

- Healthy,
- Comfortable,
- Durable,
- Energy efficient, and
- Environmentally responsible.

A common misconception is that all new homes, built to the minimum building codes, are high quality and high performance homes. However, many new homes do not achieve several of the benefits listed above. Green homes are built to substantially exceed the performance levels offered by conventional, code-compliant new homes.

Also, while many new homes may claim to be green, they differ in how thoroughly they achieve the benefits above. In other words, they achieve different degrees of green, depending on the degree to which they deliver these benefits.

Why Green Homes?

Homes have a very significant environmental impact. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, all homes in the U.S. account for:

- 22% of the total energy consumed; and
- 21% of carbon dioxide emissions.

Also, certain indoor air pollutants can often be four to five times higher than outdoor levels. Construction and demolition waste (including both residential and commercial buildings) represents 40% of the solid waste in the U.S. Homes also have a significant impact on the amount of water consumed, on the amount of chemicals (e.g., fertilizer, pest control chemicals) that can damage nearby water bodies, and other consequences.

Shifting towards the design and construction of more sustainable homes can have enormous benefits for the environment, as well as for the occupants.

What is LEED for Homes?

LEED for Homes is a voluntary rating system administered by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). USGBC is a non-profit organization that promotes the design and construction of high performance green buildings. To be certified under the LEED for Homes program, a home must:

- Include several required green measures (“prerequisites”) (e.g., achieve energy efficiency at least 15%¹ better than conventional homes), and
- Include many additional green measures. These are chosen by the builder from a variety of optional measures (“credits”) to earn points. A project must earn a minimum number of points to achieve certification.

The program includes several additional requirements as well, such as verification by a LEED for Homes Green Rater. The LEED for Homes Green Rater is not associated with the project team (i.e., this person is a “third-party”) and he or she has training in verifying green homes. In the verification process, the LEED for Homes Green Rater confirms that:

- All of the required green measures are installed in the home (by visual inspection), and
- The performance level of the home meets the program requirements (by physical testing of the home’s air leakage, duct leakage, etc.).

For more information on the LEED for Homes program, go to:

www.usgbc.org/LEED/homes

¹ Homes must be 15% more efficient in mild & moderate climates and 20% more efficient in cold climates.