

## **A Green Building Program Snapshot**

By Mary C. Alford

Not too long ago, if you proposed a commercial green building, most people would have not understood what you were talking about – and if they did understand, they may have thought you were a little crazy, and would want to know why. Now the question is not “what is green building?” but rather, “how do I build green?” Municipalities and campuses are beginning to mandate or encourage commercial green building, which may leave you scratching your head. Whether you think green building is the right thing to do or not, becoming familiar with the green building programs is a good business decision. The most common green building program in the U.S. is the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System® that is administered by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). Certification can be achieved in several areas: New Construction, Commercial Interiors, Existing Buildings, and Core and Shell. Other specialty certifications are available. Basic prerequisites are required for each project and then additional points or credits are earned that can be tailored to the project. An urban site may achieve points for being close to public transportation, while a more isolated project may achieve points for protection of wildlife habitat and preserving open space. The six categories points can be achieved in are: Sustainable Sites, Water Efficiency, Energy and Atmosphere, Materials and Resources, Indoor Environmental Quality, and Innovation and Design Process. This program requires third party certification and much documentation. However, the careful documentation required has made the program the standard by which other programs are measured in the U.S. The LEED program is also used in Canada and India. For more information about this program check out [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)

The Green Globes Program began in Canada, and is administered by the Green Building Initiative (GBI) in the United States. In 2005, GBI was the first green building program to be ANSI (American National Standards Institute) certified. The Green Globes system uses an online questionnaire based approach. After a questionnaire has been completed, a report is generated which provides a rating, a list of achievements, and recommendations. The categories in the rating system include: Project Management – Policies and Practices; Site; Energy; Water; Resources, Building Materials and Solid Waste; Emissions and Effluents; and Indoor Environment. There are four levels of certification, with the highest being achieved by only a few world class buildings, and the lowest, which recognizes “sound energy and environmental design practices by demonstrating good progress in reducing environmental impacts”. A third party is still required to achieve certification. You can try the software for 30 days by going to [www.thegbi.org](http://www.thegbi.org).

Finally, a third program exists in our own backyard: the Florida Green Building Coalition (FGBC). The Commercial Building Standard "is to encourage owners of smaller sized commercial projects to adopt green and sustainable strategies during the design and construction of their project and to receive recognition for their efforts". It covers all commercial occupancies addressed in the Florida Building Code. The areas assessed under this standard include Energy, Water, Site, Health, Materials, Disaster Mitigation and General (which covers team members, design meetings, and innovation credits). This

program, while not nationally recognized like LEED and Green Globes, has the advantage of being tailored to the particular needs of Florida, and well-recognized within the state. To evaluate your building, FGBC will designate a Project Evaluator to review the submittal and supporting documentation. For more information about the FGBC, go to [www.floridagreenbuilding.org](http://www.floridagreenbuilding.org).

To determine which program would work best for you, sit down with a set of plans that you're familiar with and pull out the checklists. See how close to each program you are already. See how many easy credits you can obtain and whether it is impossible to get the pre-requisites. Then call the appropriate qualified professional to guide you through the rest of the process to help you achieve accreditation: a LEED Accredited Professional, a GBI trained engineer or architect, or a Certifying Agent with FGBC. These professionals can be found on the respective websites.

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**RELEVANT WEBSITE - NAHB National Green Building Standard™:**  
<http://www.nahbrc.org/technical/standards/greenbuilding.aspx>