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GREEN FOR THE WHOLE DEVELOPMENT

So you want your whole development to receive a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) designation? Now there is a way – LEED for Neighborhood Development! This platform, released in April of 2010, is available for developers to pursue and contains a wealth of information for consideration of land use. It's not practical for everyone, but if you are looking for a way to add value and benefit to a community, this system is a great place to start.

Created in collaboration with the Congress for the New Urbanism and the Natural Resources Defense Council, LEED for Neighborhood Development (ND) is a completely different platform from other LEED rating systems, and relying on knowledge from LEED for New Construction or other platforms may bring misunderstandings at first. Smart Location and Linkage (SLL), Neighborhood Pattern and Design (NPD), and Green Infrastructure and Buildings (GIB) are the key areas of this new system and are designed to compliment LEED for New Construction and LEED for Homes, but Civil Engineering and Land Planning bring much more punch to the LEED for Neighborhood Development Team than Building Architecture and Mechanical Engineering.

A more comprehensive and community integration process is also required in with LEED ND projects. Considering factors such as transit – multimodal and automobile usage, street grid density, and access/connectivity are big features of the program; ecology – habitat/wetland renewal and long term conservation along with local food production and land renewal; diversity of use – mixed use and diversity for incomes, age, and affordability help define the attributes of the facilities planned within a development. A holistic approach for the green buildings is needed within the community as this guides the design

for energy, water, sewer, trash, and recycling optimization and reduction planning.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Sprawl, density, diversity, and walk-ability would top my agenda list for a LEED ND project. The prerequisites for the program demand infill or adjacency and density which can (and will) prohibit many well intentioned developers from pursuing this LEED designation. It is wise to consider the prerequisites early in the program to determine if your neighborhood will qualify.

How big is a neighborhood? How long does it take to complete a development? These are factors to deliberate as you build your strategy as size will effect more than the duration of the build-out as many of the credits consider distances traveled or distances for buffering. Teams may find it prudent to strategically carve out smaller sections of an overall development for the LEED ND certification, as certification cannot be awarded until the build-out is complete and the development is vertically concluded.

To counteract this problem, Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI) will award a LEED ND project in 3 stages:

- Stage 1 – Conditional Approval, may be attained prior to governmental entitlement process.
- Stage 2 – Pre-certification of plans, may be attained prior to 75% build-out of the project.
- Stage 3 – Final Certification, awarded upon completion of the project.

How can local governments get involved? If you are a developer, you realize the need to morph governmental land development codes toward sustainable development practices. Today's developments are driven by the guy who illegally waters the roadway, the Super Bowl party parking problem, and the automatic side-loader trash truck.

Most of the highly valued neighborhoods of today were land-planned before the invention of the automobile, which should tell us something. Sustainability is about holding value, protecting resources and habitat, creating safe and healthy environments, and good design. We have to grow beyond the “cookie cutter” approach and fear of allowing progressive thinking. I, for one, value a tree-lined street, which has almost become extinct due to the enormous right-of-ways required by most local development codes.

The US Green Building Council has published a short manual titled “A Local Government's Guide to LEED for Neighborhood Development” which is a must read for government employees. It is time for communities, city officials, city staffers, school boards, and developers to work together and modify codes for sustainability. Budgets are tight, but city long-range planning centered on LEED, city elected officials and staff training and education about LEED, and revamping of existing zoning/development codes and ordinances is imperative for our world.

This same type of education is also important for commercial developers. It is time to educate staff, design professionals and operational personnel in order to transform our product for our children and theirs. LEED ND may or may not be your answer, but it is a good place to start. •

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Lee Hall will be speaking at the



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