

A moving target... or... a rolling stone gathers no moss

LEED is changing... again. By the time that you receive this newsletter, only those projects that were registered prior to the end of 2005 will be able to certify under the “old” LEED-NC Version 2.1. The new and improved LEED-NC Version 2.2 has been voted on and accepted by the USGBC membership. In addition, it is now possible to submit for certification electronically. USGBC has promoted these changes as ways to make LEED more “user-friendly” in response to complaints that the system is cumbersome. What is overlooked by these changes is that the same old design and construction requirements are still necessary and the submittal process isn’t the major effort in a LEED project. What IS time consuming is making sure that all of the BACKUP information is collected and sorted and stored in order to verify that the prerequisites and credits have been achieved.

There are some individuals that believe that LEED isn’t changing fast enough. Unfortunately, these are not the people who are in the midst of a MAJOR project that takes 4 or 5 years from beginning of design to final occupancy. Several projects that are just now being submitted for certification were being designed when LEED was just beginning. For the owners, designers and builders of major projects, the constantly sifting sands of LEED are cause for concern.

For example, a current project being designed under LEED-NC Version 2.1 using the ASHRAE 90.1-1999 standard could lose several points under LEED NC Version 2.2 using the ASHRAE 90.1-2004 standard due to changes in requirements in that standard. Anyone looking simply at the LEED scorecard wouldn’t realize this impact.

These kind of “hidden” changes are going to come back and bite the USGBC where it hurts... in the credibility of the program. Owners and builders, who are already somewhat skeptical of the green building certification process, are going to chose not to certify their projects if they find the certification process is too difficult. This is not to advocate making the system easier... but, to slow down and let the market catch up with the transformation that is occurring.

The proverb, “a rolling stone gathers no moss” means that people pay a price for being always on the move, in that they have no roots in a specific place. LEED doesn’t appear to have roots right now. USGBC needs to let LEED “take root” in the construction market so that it can have a chance to grow and flourish.

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