

In general, “green design” describes techniques that are aligned with “best practice” guidelines set forth by several major conservation organizations. One good description of its goals was made at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Green design, it said, comprised a portfolio of strategies geared to “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.



This statement encapsulates green design’s intention to proceed according to “sustainable” principles that minimize the use of nonrenewable resources and seek to prevent air, water and ground contamination and other activities that degrade the environment.

To ensure that green design projects proceed according to commonly accepted standards, the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) was formed. The USGBC is a national coalition of over 4000 member building owners, design professionals, utilities and others. (www.usgbc.org)

The Council established a set of green building standards know as the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System. This voluntary standard, created by USGBC member builders, architects and designers, provides a complete framework for assessing building performance and meeting sustainability goals.

LEED itself recognizes achievements in green design through programs that include project certification, training and environmentally responsible facility operation guidelines.

Among LEED’s goals is to promote integrated, whole building design practices (a key to improved management and efficiencies), while stimulating leadership in facility planning and construction. Another goal is to promote green “competition” that will result in additional best practices techniques.

Green design’s overall advantages can be summarized in four points. It:

- Helps reduce negative environmental impacts
- Helps to build sustainable and healthful communities
- Tends to increase worker productivity and,
- Leads to reductions in the long term costs of daily operations.

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