LEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is redefining the way we think about the places where we live, work and learn. As an internationally recognized mark of excellence, LEED provides building owners and operators with a framework for identifying and implementing practical and measurable green building design, construction, operations and maintenance solutions.

With nearly 9 billion square feet of building space participating in the suite of rating systems and 1.6 million feet certifying per day around the world, LEED is transforming the way built environments are designed, constructed, and operated --- from individual buildings and homes, to entire neighborhoods and communities. Comprehensive and flexible, LEED works throughout a building's life cycle.

LEED certification provides independent, third-party verification that a building, home or community was designed and built using strategies aimed at achieving high performance in key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality.

Developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) in 2000, the LEED rating systems are developed through an open, consensus-based process led by LEED committees. The next update of the LEED rating system, coined
LEED 2012, is the next step in the continuous improvement process and on-going development cycle of LEED.

LEED promotes a whole-building approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in key
What LEED Is

areas:

- **Sustainable Sites**
  Site selection and development are important components of a building’s sustainability. The Sustainable Sites category rewards projects that protect ecosystems and enhance the attractiveness of the built environment. It includes strategies that promote water harvesting, stormwater management, the use of permeable pavements, and the reduction of erosion, light pollution, and the heat island effect.

- **Water Efficiency**
  Buildings are major users of our potable water supply. The goal of the Water Efficiency category is to encourage the use of water-efficient practices that minimize the demand for potable water. This can be achieved through the use of more efficient appliances, fixtures, and fittings, as well as the implementation of water-conscious landscaping and rainwater harvesting systems.

- **Energy & Atmosphere**
  According to the U.S. Department of Energy, buildings use 39% of the energy and 74% of the electricity produced each year. The Energy & Atmosphere category aims to reduce the energy intensity of buildings by encouraging the use of renewable and clean energy sources, as well as other innovative measures to improve energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

- **Materials & Resources**
  During both the construction and operations phases, buildings generate a lot of waste and use large quantities of resources. The Materials & Resources category recognizes the importance of waste reduction and recycling, as well as the use of sustainable materials. It particularly rewards projects that focus on reducing waste at a product's source.

- **Indoor Environmental Quality**
  The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that Americans spend about 90% of their day indoors, where the air quality can be significantly worse than outdoors. The Indoor Environmental Quality category evaluates the impact of indoor air quality on human health and comfort, as well as the use of strategies that improve indoor air quality, such as the use of energy recovery ventilation systems, demand-controlled ventilation, and the use of materials that reduce indoor pollutants.

- **Locations & Linkages**
  The LEED for Homes rating system recognizes that much of a home’s impact on the environment comes from where it is located. The Locations & Linkages category evaluates the impact of location and transportation choices on energy and resource use, as well as the promotion of walkable and bikeable communities.

- **Awareness & Education**
  The LEED for Homes rating system acknowledges that a home is only truly green if the people who live in it use its features effectively. The Awareness & Education category requires that owners are educated about their home’s green features and that they are provided with the tools and resources to understand and utilize those features.
**Innovation in Design**
The Innovation in Design category provides bonus points for projects that use innovative technologies and strategies to address environmental concerns.

**Regional Priority**
USGBC’s regional councils, chapters and affiliates have identified the most important local environmental concerns to prioritize for LEED projects. Projects that address these regional priorities may earn up to one bonus point in addition to any points awarded for that credit. Up to four extra points can be earned in this way.