

Going all in: USGBC creates net zero certification

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Net zero is a powerful target that will move the entire industry forward.

Today, millions of us are living, working and learning in LEED-certified buildings around the world. These spaces are using less energy and water. They're mitigating the environmental burden on their communities. They're saving money. And they are offering the people who occupy them a better quality of life. That reality is changing the way all of us think about buildings—not as inanimate structures, but as opportunities to help create a healthier, more sustainable future.

That hasn't happened by chance. It is a culmination of countless small-scale changes that have come together over decades, structure by structure, block by block. And together, they've inspired people around the world and have ignited a fundamental shift in the way we think about our built environment.

LEED has helped to shift our collective mindset about the "who" and the "why" behind sustainability. Businesses, activists, real estate developers and government officials are all coming around to the idea that green buildings aren't just good for the planet. They're good for the bottom lines of the people who own them—and the health and well-being of the people who occupy them.

At the end of the day that's what the green building movement is all about—people. And while I'm proud of what we've achieved over the past generation of LEED projects, I'm even more humbled when I think about the millions of people—from every industry and every continent—who have brought us to this point—and the millions more who will help carry it forward.

At USGBC, our mission dictates every action we take. By 2050, the total global floor area of all buildings is expected to double to more than 400 billion square meters. And each new building will last for multiple generations—maybe even hundreds of years. That means the

choices we make today are locked in for the foreseeable future. So we have to make the right decisions. We have to keep setting our sights higher and higher—and surpassing even our own high expectations.

At the [Global Climate Action Summit](#) this week, leading cities and corporations are gearing up their commitments to climate action, including recommitments to improving the performance of buildings and spaces. And today, at the [Net Zero for All conference](#), I witnessed leaders from all green building sectors pushing the boundaries of what it means to be net zero. Here at USGBC, we have intensified our efforts to support and advance global collaboration to decarbonize buildings, grids and communities by investing our resources and leveraging our tools and technology towards a positive vision.

And now, that means setting our sights at *zero*. Net zero is a powerful target that will move the entire industry forward.

For years, LEED projects around the world have aspired to net zero energy, net zero water and net zero waste milestones. It's time we recognize the leadership of projects—and formalize the commitment to net zero across the entire LEED community. That's why today, we're announcing a new Net Zero certification program that gives the green building community a new standard to strive for.

USGBC's new net zero certifications will help reinforce these visionary leaders, while improving accountability and transparency. LEED projects can achieve Net Zero certification when they demonstrate any or one of the following: net zero carbon emissions, net zero energy use, net zero water use or net zero waste. In order to achieve any of these net zero certifications, projects must be LEED-certified and must provide 12 months of performance data across any or all of these categories.

We believe these new certification programs will encourage a holistic approach for buildings and places to contribute to a regenerative future and enhance the health and well-being for not only building occupants, but all of humanity.

We'll officially kick off these programs this November at [Greenbuild](#)—so stay tuned for more!