

City of Seattle Sustainable Development Policy Update – Issue Statement

Background

In 2000 Seattle became the first city in the nation to formally adopt a Sustainable Building Policy, whereby all capital projects are called upon to achieve LEED Silver. Coupled with the biggest capital improvement program since the Seattle fire of 1888, the new policy provided a unique leadership opportunity to create change in the building industry. The City's proactive leadership with public projects, coupled with the City's green building initiatives for the private sector, established Seattle as an early leader in market transformation toward sustainable building.

Ten years later, it is time to once again consider how the City can take the initiative to move towards sustainable communities. The anniversary of the original policy provides a prime opportunity for an update to our sustainable building requirements, but it is just one of many reasons why this is an important time to update the policy.

- **Climate change.** Since adoption of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan in 1994, climate change has become as a major global challenge. Emerging goals in Seattle of carbon neutrality and mitigation and adaptation to environmental changes already occurring necessitate setting much higher performance targets for buildings and their urban environment.
- **Leadership.** Though Seattle established itself as an early leader in green building, many other jurisdictions have superseded Seattle and adopted more aggressive policies. Locally, we are now behind our neighbors Vancouver, BC, Portland, OR and King County who all require municipal buildings to be LEED Gold. Boston, San Francisco and Washington D.C. are examples of municipalities which now have green building requirements for private sector projects.
- **An evolving and expanding market.** As more and more private developers strive for sustainable development, the expertise in the design and construction community has grown. Not only are we seeing a greater number of what are almost typical green projects (a 320% increase in LEED projects since 2007 alone), we are now seeing highly innovative projects pushing the envelope of sustainability - the Bullitt Foundation's Living Building Challenge project is a key example. LEED Silver is no longer sufficient and may only just meet or barely exceed our minimum energy code.
- **Financial responsibility.** A compelling case has now been made in national studies that green buildings provide better long term investments than conventional buildings,ⁱ returning any additional initial costs over the life of the buildings. Nor do they necessarily cost more up front. In comparisons of LEED buildings to non-LEED buildings there is no significant difference in the average cost.ⁱⁱ

ⁱ *The Costs and Financial Benefits of Green Buildings*, Greg Kats, Capital E, 2003.

ⁱⁱ *Cost of Green Revisited*, Davis Langdon, 2007 and *Cost of Green in Affordable Housing*, Davis Langdon for City Green Building, July 2009.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Goal The purpose of a Citywide policy on sustainable development is to:

- demonstrate the City's commitment to addressing climate change and creating a sustainable future by protecting, conserving, and enhancing the region's environmental resources;
- provide leadership in setting community standards for sustainable development;
- provide responsible stewardship of the City's fiscal resources and public assets over time, leveraging our investments to create financial, public and environmental value;
- create quality environments that are healthy and provide community benefit.

Guiding Principles

- Be at the forefront of sustainable development, leading the way through both example and education and acting as a catalyst for change.
- Support innovation that is both environmentally and economically sound.
- Ensure that projects are designed at the highest level of resource efficiency, for economic viability, and practical operation over the long-term by using whole building life-cycle assessment.
- Prioritize actual performance. Conduct continuous assessment and ongoing evaluation of City properties, using adaptive management and ongoing improvement to advance the performance of existing projects.
- Design for both permanence and adaptability investing up front to ensure the long-term viability of City projects.
- Design projects that create a vibrant community and contribute to livable, walkable neighborhoods.
- Design for climate adaptability and resilience.
- Design to minimize our contribution to climate change.

Sustainable Development Policy – Scope

Departmental Feedback: Input received at IDT meetings and in individual communications with departmental representatives.
10/18/10

	New Construction Major Additions & Alterations	Tenant Improvements	Existing Buildings	Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance	Ongoing Project Evaluation	Sites
Include in Policy?*	12 of 12	11 of 12	11 of 12	10 of 12	12 of 12	11 of 12
Potential Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Party <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o LEED NC o Living Building Challenge o 2030 Challenge • City Defined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEED CI • FAS Capital Green • City Defined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEED EB O&M • Energy Star • City Defined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEED EB O&M • City Defined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance measurement & verification • Periodic performance reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Sites Initiative • Ideal Green Parks • City Defined
Comments / Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customize LEED to ensure desired performance, tie to city priorities • Addt'l criteria from LEED ND • Scaled approach: Vary requirement by scope/size of project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow intent of LEED CI w/o certification • Scaled approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding req'd to implement • Req'ts trigger when retrofit or change HVAC • Conduct LEED EB Pilot • LEED EB for select portfolio • Levy for facility improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset mgmt process • Increase funding, staff & expertise • Tie to existing conservation programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCA process, cost/benefit analysis • GHG part of budget analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaled approach • Conduct pilot

*Identifies the #'s of departments who support including this project type in the update policy. The numbers represent general support for inclusion, but often only as long as certain conditions are met (e.g. yes, include existing buildings if funding is available for upgrades).

Sustainable Development Policy – New Construction, Major Additions & Alterations: Options

CITY CAPITAL PROJECTS – leading by example

LEED for NEW CONSTRUCTION - CUSTOMIZED

Attain LEED certification and meet specific credit requirements to match the City's priorities.

CITY DEFINED

Develop the City's own targeted approach with specific performance criteria for energy, GHG, water, waste and transportation.

PROS

- National recognition via an existing and respected system
- Widely adopted in private sector
- Used as policy by multiple jurisdictions
- Quality assurance & compliance verification provided by third party
- The existing policy, relying on LEED, is straightforward
- Ability to customize point requirements to specific goals
- Could Require credits that demonstrate viability of future green code

- Local control of requirements
- Tailored to meet specific environmental goals of City
- Allows strategic focus on specific elements
- Conceptually, could be simple by focusing on key goals
- Can orient towards ongoing monitoring
- No certification fees to 3rd party
- Could focus expenditures on targeted city priorities

CONS

- Costs for documentation and certification
- No local control of rating system
- Over time, LEED may not end up being the ultimate tool for the private sector
- There may be City goals that aren't easily addressed within LEED

- Requires City staff & resources to develop, review and verify compliance
- An unknown system with unknown resource implications
- Unclear how would transfer to use in the private sector

UNIQUE IDEAS

- Utilize Living Building Challenge as a design framework
- Ensure that capital projects policy feeds into future private development policy

- Important to have aspirational goals
- Scale up requirements over time
- Incorporate tree canopy goals into requirements
- Consider community and social components

