

What's The Difference?

Building Better Understanding Of Gaps Between LEED, GBI

BY ERIC NYBERG

With the push constantly growing for companies to build cleaner, more efficient and environment-friendly buildings, it's no surprise that "green" has been the way to go for many companies.

"Buildings have an impact on the environment and global warming," said Ujjval Vyas, Principal at Chicago's Alberti Group. "It's the performance of these buildings that is going to make it better."

Standards such as the LEED and Green Globes rating systems help construction firms by setting sustainability and efficiency goals for projects during the planning stage of the construction process, and assessing the finished projects according to their green rating principles.

According to Vyas, "LEED and Green Globes are two very similar systems with very distinct differences." What are the differences between LEED and Green Globes? Is one more accepted than the other? Who oversees the rating systems? How are buildings rated?

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System was introduced in the United States in 1998 by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). In 2005, the Green Building Initiative (GBI) launched Green Globes.

A 2006 study conducted at the University of Minnesota, titled A Comparison of the LEED and Green Globes Systems in the U.S., laid out their main similarities and differences. According to the study, due to their common roots and similar objectives, there are more similarities than differences between LEED and Green Globes.

The study estimated that "nearly 80% of available points in the Green Globes system are addressed in LEED 2.2 and that over 85% of the points specified in LEED 2.2 are addressed in the Green Globes system."

Vyas said Green Globes was concerned with allowing the marketplace to continue to innovate and adding value to the system in order to get the market to accept it. He said the GBI tries to find ways to make Green Globes very low cost.

In marketing, LEED's management staff focuses on its leadership in the U.S. and on its consensus-based process of determining its green standards. It is larger and has received more attention in the U.S. than Green Globes. LEED has been used in numerous federal initiatives, NASA, the armed forces, the Smithsonian Institute, and in many state governments. Green Globes, newer and with a smaller U.S. market penetration,



The interior of the Cook County Domestic Violence Courthouse at 555 W. Harrison Street, Chicago, showing the old walls (left) and the new, LEED certified outer walls. The courthouse, completed in 2003, is Cook County's first LEED certified "green" building. It was built by The George Solitt Construction Company, one of many Builders Association companies who have shown a commitment to going "green."

emphasizes its easy-to-use online tool and its integration of green principles at each stage of the construction process.

"The main difference between the two is that LEED is still largely a manual system," said Kevin Stover, the GBI's head of Commercial Programs. "For LEED you fill out the forms yourself and send them in. Green Globes is interactive." He added that Green Globes has online questionnaires that become progressively more detailed, addressing each section of the project separately and more completely.

"LEED's system has evolved over the last two years," said Jeff Olson, Project Superintendent at Pepper Construction, and former LEED committee member. He said that the information can now be filled out online as well as through the paper system. Although LEED has introduced its own online system, the Minnesota study said it remains more complicated than Green Globes' online system and requires knowledge in various areas. LEED is also more strict and expensive (the maximum fee to certify a large commercial building is \$40,000, plus a \$600 registration fee) and takes longer to administer certification – up

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contract terms or claims. The new standard form contract documents will be less general and updated to be more compatible with each party's specific interests.

Perlberg said that the documents will provide fair risk allocation for all parties and utilize industry best practices. Instead of protecting the overriding interest of one party member, the new documents also keep in mind the best interests of the projects as collective wholes.

According to Perlberg, the effort to draft the ConsensusDOCS has been several years in the making. The partnership between industry stakeholders and the ConsensusDOCS assures that the new documents will be balanced and actively supported by all parties who united to work on it. The AGC believes this to be an unprecedented effort and the most significant industry development in the last 20 years.

The balance that will be found in the new contracts will make them more likely to be used as standard.

"We want to get rid of that perception that the industry is just protecting itself," he said. "Contracts available now will protect the industry that drafted the contract. Getting feedback from everybody for a contract everyone could get behind was essential to making this work."

"This isn't something that happens every year or every other year. It's going to change the industry as we know it."

Once operational, the documents will be available to AGC members in one of two ways: Subscription or Meter Mode.

The AGC recommends subscription, which gives your company access to over 70 documents through a Complete Package Subscription. There are also more specific subscriptions to address a specific topic or delivery method, including:

- General Contracting
- Design-Build
- Subcontracting
- Construction & Program Management
- Short Forms

Each subscription allows your company to print as many contracts and forms as you wish in a one-year period.

Meter Mode might be the preferred method for construction industry firms that are unsure of what their contract needs will be or those that only occasionally need contracts. An initial deposit of \$200 allows you to view all documents on the screen. Depending on what contract or form it is, the meter will be debited between \$5-\$35 when the final version of the contract is printed. Users would not be allowed to make copies of the contracts, however, so a general contractor would have to purchase a separate copy for each subcontractor it wished to give the contract to.

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) chose not to be involved in creating the ConsensusDOCS, and the AGC will make a decision on whether or not to endorse the A201 Standard Contract Document in early October.

The ConsensusDOCS have been a collaboration three years in the making. Attend the Builders Association's Fall Meeting to get a better idea of what these developments mean to you.

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to four months, according to the Minnesota study.

By contrast, "Green Globes' web-based self-assessment tool can be completed by any team member with general knowledge of the building's parameters," according to the Minnesota study. It provides preliminary and final ratings during the assessment, for a flat registration fee of \$500 with certification costs ranging from an estimated \$4,000 to \$6,000.

The relative low cost for using Green Globes may stem from its sponsorship and funding by outside sources. In 2006, Green Globes was examined and critiqued by a UC-Berkeley graduate architecture class that found it to be funded by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), with the majority of the funds coming from the forest products industry. Because of this, students concluded, Green Globes is not bias-free, and any outside funding from groups that would receive financial gain from the GBI's decision making is detrimental to its image of integrity.

Olson commented that LEED does not receive any outside funding and is almost completely a volunteer-based organization, which gives LEED more legitimacy.

One important difference between the two rating systems is the use of prerequisites. LEED requires a minimum performance level in categories such as energy use, erosion control and indoor air quality, among others. In contrast, similar action in Green Globes earns points towards certification. While the lack of a minimum perfit also makes it less challenging for a project to achieve lower-level certification than it would with LEED.

Each person interviewed hinted, that while there is no shortage of differences between the two systems, the similarities between the two can be just as important, as each tries to encourage the surge in "green" building to continue.



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It's who, who, and who.**

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