



LEED for retail: The market grows

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The Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) certification has entered the permanent vernacular of sustainability designers and also has a recognition amongst the general public. The most common applications of LEED certification are for high rise construction projects and commercial office spaces, but the certification is not limited to those areas. One sector that is gaining traction is LEED for retail. In 2001, there was only one single certified LEED for retail project that year, fast forward to 2013, a year when 905 LEED for retail projects became certified - and this number is rapidly increasing with each year.

LEED v2009 offered two routes of certification for retail projects, Building Design and Construction (BD+C) and Interferer Design and Construction (ID+C). With the roll out of LEED v4, a third path was created for retail stores looking for become certified. An Operations and Maintenance (O+M) pathway designed for retail offers companies with existing stores, which are already operating a baseline level of efficiency, to pursue certification based on ongoing performance measures and establishing environmental policies, among other requirements. With the addition of O+M, now nearly all retail locations have the potential for becoming LEED certified.

The USGBC has created LEED Volume Certification so that large chain retailers have the opportunity to register their projects in bulk, cutting the cost of individual certification and adding to the ease of the registration process. Big name retailers have taken advantage of this and have taken steps to obtain certification for multiple stores.

Some of the most commonly recognizable names include: Starbucks, Target, Walgreens, Citibank, Best Buy and many more.

LEED for retail is an interesting sector because it links the consumer to the goods and services they are purchasing and to the values behind the brand they are purchasing from. Consumers are becoming increasingly invested in the environmental consciousness of their favorite brands, and in turn many brands are seeking ways to do their part to both protect the environment and give their customers an experience that they desire. With 7,921 LEED for retail projects currently registered and certified, this only further highlights its needed place in the industry

As the need for environmental awareness and transparency moves beyond the stereotypical "tree hugger" and into the mainstream, no industry sector is exempt from accountability. The consumer is beginning to demand it from the industry, and many companies are starting to incorporate environmental sustainability into their core values. The LEED for retail certification goes beyond a great marketing tool; it allows a company to gain the associated cost savings of running an efficient building all the while lessening their environmental footprint, which in the end will contribute to a better bottom line.

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