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## MEMBER



## Flooring In The LEED

**T**he environmentally responsible commercial construction market will reach **\$10 to \$20 billion** over the next five years. This “green” growth will offer greater opportunities for everyone from product manufacturers to specifiers to be involved with environmentally responsible building projects. Along with this growth you can expect more information, and unfortunately, more misinformation, about green construction materials and methods. To help you separate fact from fiction, this issue of StarLog focuses on the most often asked questions that designers, specifiers and facility managers have about how flooring can contribute to earning LEED points and play a role in environmentally responsible projects.

### **Q:** Can flooring contribute to LEED certification?

**A:** Only buildings (not floors) can be LEED certified. But, flooring can contribute towards earning LEED credits.

The United States Green Building Council (USGBC) developed the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system to provide a national standard for green building design. The rating system is based on achieving a certain number of points, which are allocated for design choices defined within the standard. The points are accrued within specific credits. Flooring products and installation materials can contribute to earning points in three of the six LEED categories, and in a number of credit areas. *Your StarNet Member can recommend product choices that contribute to LEED.*

## LEED Categories and Credits that Apply to Flooring

Category	Flooring & Installation Materials Can Contribute Points Towards LEED Credits	Credits Impacted by Flooring & Installation Materials Choice
Indoor Environmental Quality	Yes	4.1, 4.4
Materials & Resources	Yes	1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6, 7
Sustainable Sites	No	Not applicable
Water Efficiency	No	Not applicable
Energy & Atmosphere	No	Not applicable
(Bonus) Innovation & Design Process	Yes	Innovation credits

### Q: What LEED programs are impacted the most by commercial flooring?

**A:** LEED-NC (New Construction and Major Renovations) and LEED-CI (Commercial Interiors).

LEED-NC and LEED-CI are two programs (of four total) where flooring can play a role in earning LEED points. LEED-NC has performance criteria that apply to commercial and institutional buildings that are either new or undergoing major renovations. LEED-CI is a newer program designed to address the specifics of tenant spaces primarily in office and institutional buildings.



### Q: Are there LEED experts who can assist with projects?

**A:** Yes. LEED awards professional accreditation to those who have studied and passed rigorous training.

Understanding the standards within these programs takes education and experience. The benefit to working with accredited professionals is their ability to help you understand the documentation and certification process, and assist you with design and construction phase submittals. *Some StarNet Member contractors have LEED-accredited professionals on staff, and other StarNet Members can network with them to help you when you are planning a LEED project.*

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*To coordinate and communicate needs, questions and decisions throughout a sustainable building project, the USGBC and Building Operating Management magazine suggest using a design “charette.” Charettes facilitate collaboration across all the project phases, which is the key to efficient green design and construction.*

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### Q: Are there any recent changes in LEED that can affect my flooring choice if I’m working towards LEED certification on my project?

**A:** Yes. A new version of LEED-NC released in November, 2005 has updates that relate specifically to flooring.

LEED-NC version 2.2 includes major credit changes that affect your floor product choice, including updates to recycled content, new requirements on what constitutes regional materials, and an enhanced standard on low-emitting materials-carpet systems. *Your StarNet Member contractor has access to the broadest product selection available on your search for flooring that meets the new NC v2.2 criteria.*

**Q: Does it cost more to specify flooring that contributes to LEED certification?**

**A:** Not necessarily.

Building green can pay off in reducing the environmental impact a building has on its surroundings and on the bottom line. If you look at just the “first-cost” figures, it can cost approximately 2% more to construct a LEED certified building. But that cost can be recovered through faster lease-up rates, rental premiums and increased market valuation. A study by acclaimed architectural consultants Davis Langdon reported that sometimes the first costs of constructing a sustainable building are comparable to constructing a non-green structure, especially if LEED-savvy professionals are used and building systems synergies are identified early in the construction process. *StarNet Members can help you keep “first-cost” floor expense lower, thanks to their buying clout with the nation’s leading floorcovering manufacturers. And, because of their tremendous experience, they can control installation costs and related expenses better than less-qualified contractors.*

**Q: How can I justify the cost of green flooring on my project if the initial cost is higher?**

**A:** Use Life Cycle Costing (LCC) methodology to evaluate the economic performance of investments in building materials. LCC is a tool to assist the user in more accurately identifying and understanding the true financial costs versus just the purchase price.

StarNet has long advocated that best value is not always the best initial price.

For green projects, that translates to specifying for long life cycle rather than specifying for first-costs. LCC analysis methods are becoming more standardized and tools are emerging from manufacturers and organizations to provide comparable product evaluations. *StarNet professionals can assist you with LCC evaluations and provide you with the best possible high performance flooring solutions for your projects.*



*The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)  
Tips for Controlling Costs on LEED Projects*

- *Define your environmental target and decide what level of LEED certification you’re going after.*
- *Set a clear and adequate budget: higher levels of LEED certification do require additional expenditure.*
- *Maintain the economic and environmental integrity of your project at every stage.*
- *Engineer for optimum life cycle value and sustainability.*
- *Hire LEED-knowledgeable professionals to assist with your project.*

**StarNet Takes the LEED**

StarNet is a proud member of the USGBC. Member contractors strongly support the goals of LEED by offering specifiers objective product advice, technical assistance, and installation documentation. As you work through your LEED planning, ask us questions early in the process. We promise to give you credible answers and may be able to point out ways to earn additional LEED points. Although flooring has a small role in the total LEED picture, the old saying, “there are no small parts, only small actors,” holds true. So, when you need flooring help on your next LEED project, call on the nation’s largest independent cooperative of floorcovering professionals — StarNet Members.

# McGraw-Hill Fast Facts About Green Growth

By 2010, the green building market is expected to be **5% - 10%** of all commercial construction starts.

Over **70%** of a representative sample of architects, engineers, contractors and building owners anticipate sales growth from green buildings.

**60%** of architects, engineers and contractors are specifying and installing green building products in their construction projects.

Operating costs of green buildings are expected to be between **8% - 9%** lower than other buildings.

Green buildings are expected to have increased values of **7.5%**.



StarNet's one-stop, reclamation and recycling program is a completely environmentally friendly service. It is LEED compliant and can be used for LEED accreditation. We'll handle the whole process and provide you with documentation that old carpet did not go to a landfill.

#### Resources:

- The USGBC and LEED: [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)
- The NRDC: [www.nrdc.org](http://www.nrdc.org)
- McGraw-Hill Construction: [www.construction.com](http://www.construction.com)
- [www.wbdg.org/design/lcca.php](http://www.wbdg.org/design/lcca.php)
- Building Operation Management: [www.facilitiesnet.com/bom](http://www.facilitiesnet.com/bom)
- Davis Langdon and Seah International: [www.davislangdon.com](http://www.davislangdon.com)
- [www.lifecyclecosting.org](http://www.lifecyclecosting.org)

To locate a StarNet Professional near you call or visit us online at  
**1-800-787-6381** [www.starnetflooring.com](http://www.starnetflooring.com)



One in a series of Bulletins from your  
Commercial Floorcovering Professionals at: