The Second Generation of GBCI: A new look for a powerful and promising future
The Story of GBCI

Awareness and Early Adoption

GBCI was founded in 2008 to drive implementation of the LEED green building program. For more than a decade, with a trusted, quality commitment, rigorous third-party certification, and customer-centric focus, GBCI has proved instrumental in ensuring LEED remains the world’s most widely used green building program.

Largely responsible for LEED’s unrivaled global presence, GBCI has delivered access to the environmental, social and human health benefits of its flagship certification standard to a vast spectrum of projects of all sizes, covering nearly every type of space. From hotels to hospitals, offices, schools, convention centers, homes and more to even entire neighborhoods, communities and cities in 181 countries and territories, GBCI continues to further its global impact.

With GBCI’s stewardship, there are now over 104,000 registered and certified LEED commercial projects, nearly 2 million registered and certified residential units, and more than 205,000 professionals transforming buildings and implementing LEED around the world. For LEED to remain a global, universal standard, it must also function as an effective rating system with national and local impact. Because of that, GBCI’s most urgent work is done through a system of regional offices (Canada, China, Europe, Latin America, India and the Middle East). By providing regional support, GBCI delivers on-the-ground customer support for local project teams and stakeholders. As codes, policies and regulations vary across the world, GBCI’s local implementation of standardized practices is helping combat fragmented building practices, ensuring LEED reaches all corners of the globe and enabling professionals to address their countries’ unique requirements.

During the organization’s first generation, GBCI inspired a greater sense of awareness and understanding of LEED in the global real estate, development and construction industries. But today, GBCI is evolving its strategy to prepare for a major cultural shift in the sustainability field — one where the organization helps the world move from a passing societal awareness of the merits of LEED best practices, to a universal, mainstream acceleration and adoption of LEED.

Partners in Progress

USGBC was founded in 1993 as a mission-driven, membership-based nonprofit organization. For more than 20 years, its LEED rating system has retained its status as the crown jewel of green building standards primarily because of USGBC’s in-depth, ongoing improvement process — an undertaking designed and executed with the tremendous contributions of GBCI.

Together, USGBC and GBCI have created an organizational ecosystem that provides real-time adaptability and a future proofing LEED development and implementation process. With around the clock advancements in strategy and execution, USGBC maintains the LEED rating system by setting the goals for any updates made to the rating system, drafting proposed improvements that make up a new version of LEED, releasing beta versions as needed, considering stakeholder recommendations and public feedback and getting a final draft approved by the LEED Steering Committee, as well as a vote from its membership base.
GBCI is responsible for implementing both the beta and approved LEED rating system versions, and physically delivering both the LEED projects that transform the market and the credentialed professionals that bring these projects to fruition. USGBC sets the overall vision, strategic direction and long-term strategies for the market, and with each professional, each project and each credential GBCI delivers, the global green building community is one step closer to realizing a shared vision for a world where healthy people, in healthy places, equals a healthy economy.

A Regenerative Future

The latest version of the rating system, LEED v4.1, is the most comprehensive, collaborative, accessible and effective system to date. Importantly, it is also the first true performance standard for green buildings. In LEED v4.1, there is a renewed focus on strengthening LEED by raising its energy reference standard, and also adding a carbon metric to the ratings systems for both new and existing buildings. This way, we can directly measure the impact buildings are having on the climate. We've also made improvements to the renewable energy credit — so buildings are incentivized to invest in the kind of clean energy technology that lowers emissions even further.

GBCI has also asked the teams working on LEED projects to better understand the embodied carbon in the selection of the materials they use. Additionally, GBCI is seeing more projects including sustainable and healthy materials, positively impact the health and wellness of their occupants, and the organization has also established a publicly available better materials platform to help project teams and product manufacturers accelerate this vision for sustainable materials.

GBCI understands that to move the needle on tackling climate change, the organization must set its sights at zero. Net zero is a powerful target that will move the entire industry forward to a regenerative future, and with LEED Zero, the net zero certification program for LEED, sustainability leaders are effectively able to transition to net zero milestones. These include zero carbon emissions, as well as zero energy use, water use and waste.

While LEED Zero is made for individual buildings, GBCI endeavors to accelerate progress on every possible scale. And that means not only addressing isolated projects, but the cities and communities they belong to. With the creation of LEED For Cities and Communities, GBCI is helping cities develop responsible, sustainable and specific plans for green energy, water, waste and transportation. In fact, LEED for Cities and Communities supports improvements in quality of life, health, prosperity, equity, education, resilience, infrastructure and energy.

In an effort to ensure better communities equal better lives, more than 200 cities and communities around the world are participating, with more than 110 having achieved LEED for Cities or LEED for Communities certification. In total, more than 65 million people live in these engaged cities and communities. And with these programs, GBCI is helping the market understand how LEED can be layered to support people, businesses, neighborhoods and cities. Imagine if every LEED building asked their community and city to get certified? And imagine if we connect all of the data from those projects. We’ll know exactly the impact our buildings, communities and cities are making. Imagine that world.

But it is also necessary to reimagine how to grow and scale projects while also creating truly regenerative spaces. In the years ahead, LEED buildings must not just do “less harm” than traditional construction. USGBC believes they should generate more energy than they consume, save more water than they use, remove more carbon than they produce, and have a positive impact on the physical, mental and social health of their occupants. In short, LEED buildings need to become LEED Positive by giving back more than they take from their respective communities. And with LEED Positive, GBCI’s long history of excellence in implementation will continue with a landmark goal of requiring all LEED new construction projects to achieve LEED Positive beginning in 2025, and all existing buildings
to be LEED Positive by 2050.

Building on LEED

During GBCI’s first generation, the organization began focusing on how to expand on the extraordinary legacy and unparalleled pedigree of LEED. By administering additional complimentary rating systems that cover nearly every facet of the sustainability industry, GBCI has grown to include a suite of nearly 10 certification programs and 15 professional credentials and certificates. While LEED is at the heart of everything GBCI does, the organization is empowering its community with a progressive, curated series of market tools, resources and opportunities to dive deeper into the issues this community cares about most.

With the addition of these programs, GBCI is consistently advancing its strategy to create new markets, build capacity, and create value. From sustainable landscapes, to resilient design, to reliable and resilient power systems, to the people in buildings — together these programs complement the impact of LEED and ensure GBCI is addressing the vast spectrum of sustainability challenges as it works toward a common goal of ensuring a sustainable, healthy, resilient and equitable future for all.

By investing in GBCI and in new rating systems and with a dependable and deliberate examination of its performance, GBCI is doubling down on how to augment LEED, how to add layer after layer, how to promote the climate-related issues that most affect today’s communities — such as waste, equity and resilience — and how to protect universal human health and wellbeing for generations to come.

Certification Standards

GBCI administers a suite of standards that can be integrated into the development or maintenance of projects:

LEED is a global symbol of sustainability excellence that signifies a building is lowering carbon emissions, conserving resources, reducing operating costs, prioritizing sustainable practices and creating a healthier environment.

SITES promotes sustainable landscape development and can be used to enhance a project’s sustainability, implement green infrastructure and improve resilience.

TRUE measures, improves and recognizes zero waste performance by encouraging the adoption of waste management and reduction practices that contribute to positive environmental, health and economic outcomes.

RELI takes a holistic approach to resilient design and can be used to assess and plan for acute hazards buildings and communities face during unplanned events, prepare to mitigate against these and design and construct buildings to maintain critical life-saving services.

PEER measures and improves power system performance and electricity infrastructure. It encourages the adoption of reliable, resilient and sustainable practices and helps utilities solve aging infrastructure, save money, share best practices, build for resiliency and prevent failures.

ICP is a global underwriting standard for developing and measuring energy efficiency retrofits for commercial and multifamily residential buildings.

WELL is an evidence-based standard that sets performance requirements in seven categories: air, water, nourishment, light, fitness, comfort and mind.

EDGE focuses on making buildings in emerging more resource-efficient. EDGE empowers developers and builders to quickly identify the most cost effective ways to reduce energy use, water use and embodied energy in materials. GBCI is a certification provider for EDGE in over 140 countries around the globe.
A New Vision: Healthy People In Healthy Places Equals a Healthy Economy

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in May 2020, USGBC announced its re-imagined vision for its second generation: **Healthy people in healthy places equals a healthy economy.** To complement this, USGBC also released an economic recovery strategy to articulate the interconnected role buildings and communities play in people’s health and the economy at large. This strategy outlines a series of near and long-term actions and priorities that will support the global recovery effort in the wake of COVID-19 and that will leverage the power of USGBC’s worldwide community to shape a healthier future for all and prepare for a more resilient, post-pandemic world.

Correspondingly, GBCI’s second generation will focus on the implementation of this vision. In addition to expanding the certification field to nurture sustainable business and building practices, GBCI’s second generation will be rooted in scaling its global business model to be more accessible — and to include a full portfolio of its offerings in countries all over the globe via its local and regional branch offices. The expansion will also include training a global sustainability workforce equipped with a growing list of professional credentials, and helping customers across the globe create cohesive, integrated plans for resilient development and building. And while 205,000 LEED APs is an exceptional roster for today’s work, GBCI plans to match or improve upon that number with hundreds of thousands of professionals from underserved markets tackling issues in the world’s most vulnerable communities.

A New Look For a Powerful and Promising Future

People, planet and profit have always been the triple bottom line behind GBCI’s sustainability success story. At the heart of GBCI are the people and projects ensuring a viable, healthier and sustainable future for all human beings. And while green buildings and communities promote a stronger, more resilient planet in the face of climate change, they also save money. GBCI’s portfolio of rating systems offers a constructive, certified approach to protecting human health and well being, preserving the planet by mitigating the impacts of climate change and investing in a global green economy.

The second generation of GBCI is about ensuring that that triple bottom line gets first rate priority. It’s about establishing leadership, fostering social equity, and committing to inclusivity. With a desire to create lasting health benefits for everyone, regardless of background or circumstance, GBCI’s lasting future will be found in its renewed commitments to transparency, adaptability, quality, integrity and excellence in customer service.

Healthy people in healthy places equals a healthy economy is an ambitious vision — and one that warrants an illustrative new symbol. GBCI’s commitment to ensuring that vision becomes a reality— to creating and maintaining a healthier world — deserves an all-encompassing identity that represents the compassionate, innovative and unified vision for the second generation of USGBC, GBCI and the green building industry as a whole. GBCI has created a confident, guiding, and sincere new brand identity that will carry the organization and its customers into a resilient, equitable and regenerative future — a future where every person has a higher purpose powered by an unequivocal access to a higher standard of living.

GBCI cares deeply about affecting change, locally, nationally and globally. As the organization handling third-party verification services for certification and credentialing, GBCI is helping businesses demonstrate credibility, provide a metric for comparisons and add significant value. Accordingly, the GBCI new identity communicates an energized, optimistic and inclusive voice — one that harnesses the humanity at the heart of the green building process, embodies GBCI’s long tradition of quality and depicts its mission to inform, inspire and expand on the impact of LEED.
This new identify celebrates the accomplishments of the thousands of projects and professionals around the world who rely on GBCI to deliver meaningful work to their stakeholders and advance our collective vision to ensure healthy people in healthy places in a healthy economy.