

# Let the Green Rating Games Begin

Green Globes attempts to lessen LEED's impact on the green-building community

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**W**ith the passing of another World Cup, I was reminded of the spirit of competition. Competition is a method of developing one's full potential. Friendly, spirited competition is a good thing. It allows for a test of an individual's or organization's conviction and skill. The United States currently has some competition in the commercial green-building-rating-system arena.

In 2002, Green Globes evolved from a Canadian eco-rating program called Green Leaf, which, in turn, was based on the British-developed Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM). In 2004, the Green Building Initiative (GBI) acquired the rights to distribute Green Globes in the United States. In 2005, Green Globes emerged as a viable green rating system, alongside the well-established Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system offered by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC).

LEED and Green Globes are not the only commercial rating systems available in the U.S. marketplace, but they are by far the most visible and promoted. LEED, established in 1999, was aimed at the commercial market first. LEED has a suite of commercial rating systems for new construction, existing buildings, core and shell, and commercial interiors. The LEED for Homes

program is being developed by the USGBC with input from local and national stakeholder groups.

LEED for Homes is in the pilot phase, with LEED for Neighborhood Developments expected to enter its pilot phase in late 2006. The challenge with LEED for Homes is complementing and unifying the nearly 50 existing (and growing) local and regional green-home-building programs in the United States.

The GBI was created as a marketing arm for the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and initially was focused on the residential market. NAHB's voluntary Model Green Home Building Guidelines were published in 2005, providing a nationally recognized baseline for green home building. The GBI is working with local home-building associations to incorporate the guidelines into local residential-green-building programs across the country.

On the commercial side, Green Globes developed a rating system for commercial new construction and has an existing-building application in the works. A few commercial U.S. buildings are Green Globes-certified, one of which previously was LEED-certified. Roughly 400 buildings are LEED-certified, with another 3,500 seeking certification.

Green Globes is being mentioned in legislative

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arenas across the country. Some legislators are arguing that Green Globes is an alternative commercial rating system to LEED and have succeeded in several states. To many, Green Globes and LEED seem similar. Both the USGBC and GBI have applied to be American

National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards developers. They also both have online-certification processes, point categories that are set up similarly, and four certification levels. But there are significant differences. One of the main differences concerns third-party certifica-

tion: LEED requires it, while Green Globes suggests it as an option. In place of third-party certification, a user may self-certify his or her building with Green Globes. This results in the opportunity to reduce certification costs to about \$500, which may tempt small-building owners. However, the credibility contest is not often won by taking the cheap and easy way out.

Since its debut, Green Globes has made LEED better by affording the USGBC an opportunity to scrutinize its rating system and come out the wiser. The USGBC responded to Green Globes' entrance into the marketplace with enhancements of its own, including online certification and opening membership to trade associations.

Green Globes has attempted to tackle its credibility issue and its image as a "black box" organization. It still has some significant work to do. GBI has applied to make Green Globes a consensus-based ANSI standard, a process that should conclude in 2007. Being credible in the marketplace will require a fully open process currently more exemplified by LEED.

Green Globes or LEED: Does it even matter? As time goes by, each organization will continue to define what sets it apart from the competition. If the past two years have been any indication, each organization will continue to listen, conduct itself professionally, and grow. Comparison studies will be conducted, and the General Services Administration plans to commission one such study.

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