

Sustainable Options: LEED™ and Green Globes™ – a Comparison –

Part One of a Three Part Series

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A real world comparison of sustainable rating systems is a fortunate opportunity.

At the University of North Carolina (UNC) Charlotte, we were able to take two similar Residence Hall buildings, on adjacent sites, and have one of them Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Certified and one Green Globes Certified. The process of taking LEED Certified Miltimore Hall (at 172,000 square feet, and with a Guaranteed Maximum Price [GMP] of \$32,000,000) and Green Globes Certified Belk Hall (at 168,000 square feet, and with a GMP of \$27,000,000) from programming through construction, offered a close-up



comparison of the rating systems.

Each of these rating systems has its benefits and detriments. This comparison will help with selecting which rating system suits a specific project and may clarify some of the assumptions many of us have made in the past about one system or another.

Costs

The cost of becoming Sustainably Certified has been a topic of discussion for over twenty years. LEED has gotten a reputation for being the leader in expensive Certification. Although there are legitimate reasons for this impression, our findings in the Miltimore Hall/ Belk Hall comparison differ from the common perception. The cost of Membership in the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) for LEED is close to the cost of a Green Building Initiative (GBI) subscription for Green Globes, at \$1,500 and \$1,000, respectively. Other costs associated with submittal and review of the design and the final building vary with building size.

For these two projects at UNC Charlotte, the LEED Registration, Design Application, Construction Application, and three Appeals was \$11,000. The Green Globes Stage I and State II Assessments and the Assessor's travel expenses totaled \$12,500. A plaque to hang in the completed building with the LEED logo cost the project \$585, and Belk's Green Globes plaque was \$945. These numbers represent the totals to USGBC as \$13,805 and GBI as \$14,445. Why then, do people have the impression that LEED Certification is much more costly than Green Globes Certification?

The cost for the architecture and engineering services to attain LEED Certification on Miltimore Hall was nearly four times what it cost for Green Globes design and submittal on Belk Hall, making the total cost added to the LEED project \$71,785 and the total cost added to the Green Globes project \$29,425. These services were provided by the same team.

This is not a fluke. A similar study of one building that obtained both LEED and Green Globes Certifications, the Papadakis Integrated Sciences Building (ISB), found that the major items contributing to cost increases for LEED over Green Globes were in Design and Certification Consultant fees and Owner time for Certification Processing.² Enhanced Commissioning also played a role for their project, however with State Funded buildings, like Miltimore and Belk, those services would be provided by law for greater lifetime energy savings.

At Papadakis ISB, the total estimated hours for LEED tasks added to 180-315 hours, while the Green Globes process was estimated at 45-95 hours. This is the biggest contributing factor to the increased fees from the Designer or Consultant on LEED projects.²

Considerations

Why does it take so many hours to become LEED Certified? The Green Globes process allows far fewer hours to perform related tasks; is the program less stringent? How does this impact the building? The perception is as you would imagine: If it takes more time, and therefore costs more, the end result must be better. Our results for Miltimore and Belk Hall are not that simple.

Next month, we will issue a detailed comparison of the USGBC and GBI requirements and procedures in order to provide answers to these important questions.

References:

1. Beard, J: *A Study of Comparative Sustainability Certification Costs/Green Rating System Cost Comparison Study*
2. Melton, P. and Roberts, T.: *LEED vs. Green Globes A Definitive Analysis*
3. Roberts, T: *LEED Certified or Certifiable? Architects Make the Case for Earning the Plaque*

For more information about the Belk Hall Project, please visit
http://www.thegbi.org/content/misc/ProjectProfile-GreenGlobes-Belk_Hall.pdf