

LEED – A ‘green’ building program

As concern for the environment increases, new ways of promoting ‘green’ practices are being developed. Forestry certification movements such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the labeling of the recycled fiber content in paper are two examples that involve forest products. A new “green building” certification system has been developed that also has big implications for wood.

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System evaluates the design, construction, and operation of buildings. The LEED system awards points in five areas: site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality. Developers who want a ‘green’ building can demand a building with a certain number of LEED points.

Buildings use a lot of wood, and using wood has a lower impact on the environment than using materials such as concrete or steel. This is reflected in a couple of areas in the LEED system:

- Locally-produced materials receive points, and many forest products used in housing fit this requirement, for example hardwood flooring and framing lumber.
- Recycled and FSC-certified wood receives points.

There are many other environmental benefits to using wood that currently are not recognized in the LEED system. As the LEED system develops and concern for the environment continues to grow, the ‘green’ benefits of building with wood will become more important.

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