



Determining Equivalency:

Comparison of the National Green Building Standard and LEED

National Green Building Standard (NGBS) Overview

The National Green Building Standard (NGBS) is the first and only residential green building rating system to receive approval from the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). ANSI approval is important because it is third-party confirmation of balance, representation, openness, consensus, and due process in the standard's development process. The 2008 NGBS Consensus Committee was comprised of 42 individuals representing a variety of government agencies, municipalities, home building industry professionals, and non-profit organizations, including the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). The 2012 NGBS followed a similarly rigorous and inclusive ANSI development process.

The NGBS is also the first and solely residential green building standard to be amongst the International Code Council's (ICC) suite of I-codes. As the industry standard for green residential development, the NGBS is embedded within the International Green Construction Code (IgCC).

Although USGBC's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification pre-dates the NGBS, **it is incorrect to assume that LEED is more stringent than the NGBS.** The truth is that the NGBS is just as rigorous, if not more rigorous, than the LEED rating systems. In addition, the flexibility of the NGBS provides an effective and affordable tool to encourage a green transformation. Further, if we are to be successful in transforming the way we design, build, maintain, and operate our buildings, homes and communities, we will need to provide architects, builders, remodelers, developers, engineers, building scientists, realtors, appraisers, financiers, homeowners, renters, government agencies, and code officials with a truckload of innovative, effective, affordable, tools to help them reach that goal.

NGBS vs. LEED NC Scope

The NGBS is designed specifically for residential construction, development, and renovation. LEED NC is intended for use in the construction of both commercial office buildings and multifamily residential buildings. While commercial and multifamily buildings may share construction materials and methods, occupancy matters and thus the NGBS is uniquely suited to residential occupancy.

Side-by-Side Comparison: NGBS and LEED Practices

| NGBS | LEED NC |
|---|---|
| 6 categories of green practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lot & Site Development • Resource Efficiency • Energy Efficiency • Water Efficiency • Indoor Environmental Quality • Operation, Maintenance, and Building Owner Education | 7 categories of green practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Site • Materials and Resources • Energy & Atmosphere • Water Efficiency • Indoor Environmental Quality • Regional Priority • Innovation in Design* |
| <i>(* Each NGBS category includes an innovative practices section.)</i> | |

Categories of Green Practices

The NGBS and LEED have practices in five identical categories: (1) Water Efficiency; (2) Energy Efficiency; (3) Sustainable Sites; (4) Resource Efficiency; and (5) Indoor Environmental Quality. LEED offers a separate category for Innovation in Design. The NGBS alternatively recognizes innovative green practices in each of its six categories. LEED also offers a section for Regional Priority. The NGBS provides greater flexibility for architects and developers to recognize regional priorities because the NGBS is a more expansive, flexible point-based system. The NGBS has a category for Building Operation, Maintenance, and Building Owner Education; LEED NC has no comparable category.

Mandatory Requirements Comparison

Both NGBS and LEED have mandatory practices necessary to attain certification at any level.

LEED NC has a total of eight Prerequisites. One LEED Prerequisite is identical to an NGBS Mandatory Practice (Minimum Energy Performance at the Certified/Bronze level). For six LEED Prerequisites, the NGBS has an identical non-mandatory practice that awards points toward certification. Only one LEED Prerequisite is not exactly duplicated in the NGBS (Minimum Indoor Air Quality Performance), however, the NGBS has numerous practices intended to ensure improved indoor air quality.

The NGBS has 36 Mandatory Practices, 12 of which are not required by LEED. Some, but not all, of these NGBS Mandatory Practices are covered by LEED credits, with the notable exception being the NGBS Mandatory Practices for Operation, Maintenance, and Building Owner Education.

Verification Requirements Comparison

| NGBS | LEED |
|---|--|
| Every NGBS project is <u>required to be inspected</u> at least twice by an independent, third-party accredited NGBS Green Verifier. No self-certification or affidavits are allowed. Practices must be visually inspected to receive points, except for a few practices where visual inspection is not applicable or practical and specific alternative verification methods are permitted. | Buildings are <u>not required</u> to be inspected on site for every point claimed toward certification. Documentation, photos, or written assertions are allowed in lieu of a visual inspection. |

Certification Requirements

Both programs offer four levels of certification. NGBS offers Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Emerald. LEED offers Certified, Silver, Gold, or Platinum.

Within the NGBS, no one category of green practices is weighted as more important than another. All projects must achieve a minimum point threshold in every category of green building practice to be certified at any level. The NGBS is the only national program with this level of cross-category stringency, making it the most rigorous and comprehensive green building rating system.

For LEED, buildings may attain points in any category to achieve the total points required for a given certification level; LEED does not require point minimums in every category of the green building rating system.