

Certification Programs at a Glance

There are many different green building programs. How do you select which to follow for your project? Whether new construction or renovation, each program focuses on improving the performance levels of the home as compared to that of a traditional home. They divide into categories such as energy use, material selection, waste management and other best building practices. Emphasis is also placed on the integration of the architect, builder, and trade contractors in the planning and construction phases of the project.

Below is a brief description of four of the more well known programs. As the green building industry grows and develops, so do these programs. We highly suggest visiting their websites to learn more information.

LEED® for Homes (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)

Developed By: US Green Building Council (USGBC)

Certification Levels: Certified, Silver, Gold, Platinum

Project Type: New construction or gut rehabs

Cost¹: Registration fee: \$150; Certification fee: \$225; Rater fee: varies.

For more information: www.usgbc.org



Description: Developed in 2008, LEED for Homes is a rating system for new construction homes. It is arranged into 7 categories: locations and linkages, sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, indoor environmental quality, and awareness and education. The certification process works through 3rd party verification. The contractor works with a local LEED for Homes Provider and their team of raters before, during, and after construction to complete inspections, testing, and paperwork. The USGBC then reviews and completes the certification.

This program can be used for gut rehab projects and additions if the ENTIRE house can meet LEED requirements. A project typically must replace all of the systems and components (HVAC, water heater, windows) and must open up the exterior walls. See LEED for Homes Guidance for Gut-Rehab Projects for more information.

EarthCraft House

Developed By: Greater Atlanta Home Builder's Association and Southface

Certification: Certified, Select, and Premium

Project Type: New construction or renovation

Cost: New construction \$950 plus \$.15/SF over 3000SF, Renovation \$1425

For more information: www.earthcrafthouse.com



Description: EarthCraft House is a new construction program developed in Georgia and available in Alabama, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia. EarthCraft is similar to LEED in that it is a points based system divided into categories: site planning, energy efficient building envelope and systems, resource efficient design, resource efficient building materials, waste

management, indoor air quality, water conservation, homeowner education, and builder operations. There is also an EarthCraft renovation program that is similar in process, but includes a pre-renovation home assessment. The renovation project then needs to achieve a minimum 30% overall improvement in energy efficiency to be certified.

REGREEN

Developed By: American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) and USGBC

Certification: This program currently doesn't offer certification.

Project Type: Remodeling only

Cost: N/A

For more information: www.regreenprogram.org



Description: A set of general guidelines for residential remodeling projects. This program focuses on the same issues as LEED and EarthCraft, but also takes into account the unique aspects of remodeling.

ENERGY STAR

Developed By: US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Certification: Energy Star Qualified

Project Type: New homes for certification or existing homes for assessment

Cost: Varies per sponsor, testing, some tax refunds may apply

For more information: www.energystar.gov



Description: Energy Star is a strict set of guidelines for new construction that improves the energy efficiency of a house by 20-30% over traditional homes. The categories are: effective insulation systems, high-performance windows, tight construction and ducts, efficient heating and cooling equipment, and Energy Star Qualified lighting and appliances. This program requires 3rd party verification from a Home Energy Rater. Home Performance with Energy Star is the program for existing homes, and focuses on sealing leaks, adding insulation, sealing ductwork, improving heating and cooling systems, and upgrading lighting and appliances. A local Home Performance with Energy Star sponsor will assess the home, perform inspections during construction, and test the home after construction is finished.

AND FINALLY . . .

While these and other programs are very useful for guiding a construction project, there is no requirement to have your house certified.² If you are simply interested in implementing green building methods for your project, we are more than happy to work with you on developing strategies. There are also independent testing companies that can be brought in to consult or verify results.

¹Costs listed are subject to change and are for the certification programs only. This does not include any materials or equipment upgrade costs.

²The City of Alexandria currently requires any public or private development that requires a development site plan (DSP) or development special use permit (DSUP) to achieve green building standards. More information can be found on the City's website.