

# LEED v4 BETA PROGRAM: STAYING AHEAD OF THE CURVE

A CONVERSATION WITH HKS DESIGNGREEN LEADERS

The U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) LEED certification program continues to influence our industry and forge new guidelines for a cleaner, greener path toward sustainable communities. The newest version, LEED v4 beta program, addresses important multi-faceted strategies that advance building performance to superior levels, as well as ensure that construction worker and building occupant health is part of the equation.

The USGBC selected HKS – just one of a handful of firms – to pilot the LEED v4 beta program on its behalf, and provide feedback on how the proposed new rating system works. Here, HKS DesignGreen professionals break down what we can expect in this latest LEED version. Our experts include:

**Chris Mundell**, AIA, CSI, CDT, LEED AP BD+C, vice president/sustainable design coordinator

**Ellen Mitchell**, AIA, LEED AP BD+C, associate/sustainable design coordinator

**Nancy Hulse**y, LEED AP BD+C, executive sustainability administrator and resource center manager

#### What are the advantages of enrolling in the LEED v4 beta program?

Mundell: The biggest advantages are direct contact with USGBC personnel and first viewing of the new version, which helps all of us better understand the various changes and requirements for future projects.

#### Are there any new building types addressed in this new version?

Mitchell: There are three new building types in LEED v4 beta program including data centers, warehouses/distribution centers

and hospitality projects. When LEED first began, its focus was primarily on office buildings. Other building types with different factors such as hours of operation, water or energy demands, and materials requirements often have a difficult time fitting within the commercial office building framework.



With an overwhelming **86 percent vote**, the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) membership approved the fourth version of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program on July 1, 2013. LEED v4 will be released at the Greenbuild Conference and Expo in Philadelphia in November 2013.

#### What is the biggest change in LEED v4 beta program?


Hulse: The biggest change is in the materials and resource category. This new version of LEED will truly change the way we select materials and products for our buildings. A big push is taking place in the industry for more sustainable and healthier materials through product disclosure. LEED v4 beta program is looking at organizations, like the Cradle to Cradle Products Innovation Institute and the Health Product Declaration Collaborative, to provide teams the opportunity to evaluate other aspects of materials and products such as lifecycle assessment and chemicals of concern. In December 2012, HKS started asking all manufacturers to provide Health Product

Declarations (HPD) for their products.

#### Will there be any new requirements for LEED documentation?

Mitchell: As with every new version of LEED, there will be a learning curve on what is required for credit documentation. After reviewing the proposed LEED v4 beta program reference guide, it is clear that we can anticipate more rigorous documentation on the part of the design and construction teams. This added level in complexity appears to be consistent across all credit categories, but especially in the materials and resources category, which has been completely overhauled in v4. It will be imperative for teams to look closely at each credit at the beginning of a project in order to understand what is required of them.

#### Any final thoughts about this new version of LEED?

Mundell: HKS has been involved in LEED projects since the certification program began about 13 years ago. We have seen the transformation of our buildings over the years to address site conditions, finding ways to reduce energy and water consumption, and provide a healthy indoor environment for building occupants. This new version of LEED will continue to elevate our pursuit of a sustainable future. 

**11/13**

LEED v4 to be released concurrent with v3

**6/15**

LEED v3 closes and v4 becomes the sole certification option