

Planning & Development

Home » Planning & development projects » LEED-ND

Practice areas

- Arts & Culture
- Building
- Economy
- Education
- Energy
- Food
- Health
- Land
- Spirit
- Transportation
- Water
- Zero waste

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LEED-ND

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- Planning & development projects
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- Canalway
- City Sustainability
- Combined Sewer Overflows
- Convention Center
- Cuyahoga Valley Initiative
- EcoVillage
- Euclid Corridor
- Flats District
- Innerbelt
- LEED-ND
- Lakefront
- NEOECO urban ecology
- Northeast Ohio Green Map
- Opportunity Corridor
- Reimagining a Greater Cleveland
- Sustainable Communities Northeast Ohio
- University Circle
- Voices & Choices
- Warehouse District
- Youngstown Shrinking City

LEED for Neighborhood Development: Pilot projects in Northeast Ohio

Green building is moving "up scale"—in impact—as the U.S. Green Building Council launches its new [Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design-Neighborhood Development \(LEED-ND\)](#) program this year. The good news for Greater Cleveland is it can boast four projects in the pilot phase, which is better than average for a region this size.



Of the 120 projects selected to be a part of the pilot program, the following four are from the Greater Cleveland area:

- [East College Street](#) (in Oberlin)
- [Flats East Bank Neighborhood](#)
- [St. Luke's Pointe](#)
- [Upper Chester](#)

Local organizers hope to capitalize on the catalytic strength of these four high profile projects as anchors for green neighborhoods that, someday, stretch for blocks.

LEED for Neighborhood Development's principal aim is to improve land-use patterns, neighborhood design, and technology in the United States. Project size and strict definitions for what comprises a neighborhood aren't specified. The only requirement is that projects must be able to meet all prerequisites and anticipate that the minimum number of points through credits to achieve certification can be earned.

The project can achieve a variety of points from four separate categories: Smart Location and Linkage, Neighborhood Pattern and Design, Green Construction and Technology, and Innovation and Design. Like the other LEED rating systems, projects can achieve Certified, Silver, Gold or Platinum ratings, based on how many points they submit.

"LEED-ND goes after big picture stuff, like, don't build on sites you shouldn't, capture as much stormwater as possible, reduce overall energy use and deliver an environment where people can walk or bike to work and shop," explains Lillian Kuri, who manages special projects for the Cleveland Foundation, including the LEED certification for Upper Chester and St. Luke's. Kuri will coordinate green plans with private developers and with Neighborhood Progress Inc. (NPI), a nonprofit organization, respectively.

Since all of the local pilot projects are still preparing plans, Kuri expects they will share ideas about good urban design, and leverage funding resources to help diffuse the cost for big ticket items like renewable energy systems. It's also important that they make a strong visual statement.

"There ought to be visible clues to the residents and to people who drive by that this is a new way of building a neighborhood," Kuri says.

For starters, Kuri is mulling over details of a recycling program with specially designed bins in public

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|-----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 | | | | | |

About

- About us
- Contact
- Donate
- Join
- Network map
- Sustainability jobs

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- Forums
- Image galleries
- Latest images
- My account
- Node locations
- Quotes

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and private spaces, sidewalks stamped with wayfinding symbols to a recycling center where she hopes to negotiate curbside pickup with the city.



Solar panels may be prominently located at the three Cleveland sites. Other bells and whistles that earn points in Green Construction and Technology will be decided on a more site specific basis. For example, NPI and Kuri are exploring a “gang geothermal” unit for St. Luke’s that would heat and cool multiple buildings there from the earth’s constant temperature. A collaboration at Upper Chester with the Cleveland Clinic and the Site Center might produce a fully accessible neighborhood. “It can be very tactile and have sound

elements,” Kuri says.

Green roofs, bioswales and porous pavement are being explored as ways to slow stormwater in the Flats East Bank, says Justin Glanville, who is managing the project’s LEED certification. Glanville is director of [Building Cleveland by Design](#), a nonprofit group that wants to “influence everything in the Flats so that it’s well designed.”

“We’re focusing on the Flats because it’s one of the highest-profile locations in Northeast Ohio (where the river meets the lake) and because several large development projects are underway or planned there,” he adds. “Our aim is to elevate the level of design and sustainability of the built environment throughout Cleveland. By influencing several projects in a concentrated area, we think the Flats can be a model for sustainable, quality design within the region and nationally.”

Glanville’s group hopes to work with Flats Oxbow on its master plan, and to usher in a coherent plan that balances industry, recreation and green space (with the future Canal Basin Park and Towpath Trail) and a neighborhood with a vibrant cultural scene.

“If we have champions like (Developer Scott Wolstein), LEED-ND has the potential to change the market,” Glanville says of the \$230 million, 23-acre [Flats East Bank](#). “With three projects going online, I hope it will be the new standard.”

Kuri, who also serves on the Cleveland Planning Commission, adds that she is working with the city to introduce a green overlay district to encourage developers and target areas for more LEED neighborhoods. Upper Chester, like the Flats project, is a private development, however, groups like NPI and the Cleveland Foundation have expressed interest in expanding the green building aspects to the surrounding neighborhood.

“At Upper Chester we’re looking at 49 acres with existing residences mixed in,” Kuri says. “So, creating an overlay or green design guides is a way of pulling multiple developments into the plan.”

Kuri and Glanville don’t think LEED-ND Gold certification is too ambitious for these projects, mainly because it awards points to dense, infill development and for locations close to existing centers of employment and retail. They plan on spending the next six months honing the plans before submitting them to USGBC for certification.

The Flats project has a completed master plan; public space consultants are about to be hired, and architects will be selected in 2008. The project is aiming to have 20% of its buildings LEED certified, and for the total (about ten mid-rise buildings) to perform better than [industry standards](#) for energy use. It will include sidewalks, boardwalks, public spaces, proximity, and at 30 to 40 dwelling units per acre, it’s the ideal density for a downtown project, Kuri says.

Heading up the Oberlin project is Naomi Sabel, Josh Rosen, and Ben Ezinga—2002 Oberlin graduates and founders of the Sustainable Community Association in Oberlin. According to the Sustainable Community Association website, The East College Street Project is a sustainably designed mixed-use development in downtown Oberlin featuring new condominiums, restaurants, and shops within a high-performance green building.

We asked Sabel to describe how the shift from individual buildings to neighborhood scale might impact smaller projects like theirs. “Regardless of the LEED-ND pilot we will still design the individual buildings to achieve LEED Gold-New Construction,” Sabel [told GCBL](#) back in June.

“LEED-ND is much more focused on context while LEED-NC focuses primarily on building systems and performance,” she observes. “They do overlap a lot but I think that’s the general difference. It seems as though LEED-ND rating is heavily influenced by where you develop and how the structures integrate into the community.”

The East College Street Project expects to break ground in the fall of 2007 and is a public-private-philanthropic partnership with funders including the Enterprise Foundation, Cleveland Foundation, the City of Oberlin, the Kendeda Fund and private banking institutions.

