Managing the possibilities and options out there for green certification for your project can be really complicated and overwhelming. Each program has its own focus, process, standards, and not every certification project is right for your project. We’ve created this guide to help you identify, early on in the process of community development, what certifications might be right for you based on basic features and priorities of your project. We’ve found that if you can set your green goals and an intention to certify at the beginning of the project, you’ll find that the project is right for your project. We’ve created this guide to help you identify, early on in the process of community development, what certifications might be right for you based on basic features and priorities of your project. We’ve found that if you can set your green goals and an intention to certify at the beginning of the project while you are still formulating the budget, you can make the key upfront decisions in your funding applications and work with building professionals that actually allow you to later meet those goals—and put the processes in place to certify so that you’re not scrambling at the last minute in a pile of certification paperwork.

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WHY CERTIFY ANYWAY?

Pursuing green certification can make your project better and set your organization apart from your competitors. There are many reasons to choose green certification, including:

- **Increased Marketability:** Green buildings sell faster and at a higher price than non-green buildings.
- **Long-term Savings:** Green buildings use less energy and water, which can result in lower operating costs.
- **Improved Health and Comfort:** Green buildings are designed to provide better indoor air quality and thermal comfort.
- **Improving Your Reputation:** Certifications can help you stand out from the competition.
- **Enhanced Sustainability:** Green buildings reduce the environmental impact of the building and its operations.
- **Funding Opportunities:** Many organizations and governments offer incentives for green buildings.

WHAT KIND OF YOUR COMMUNITY'S NEEDS AND HOUSING GOALS?

Pursuing X certification? How about Y certification? How would that change the typical design process? The project that you’re not scrambling at the last minute in a pile of certification paperwork building professionals that actually allow you to later meet those goals—and put the processes in place to certify so that you’re not scrambling at the last minute in a pile of certification paperwork.

Having a clear site boundary is important when pursuing green certification. The process of green certification allows you to record design and construction changes that you can learn from in future projects so you don’t have to reinvent the wheel.

Some certification programs require being on-site during the construction process, while others only require the inclusion of sustainability consultants to achieve. Much of what work is done is left to the green building certifying organization to ensure that programs that don’t require outside certification will allow you some staff time, knowledge and capacity.

ENERGY STAR FOR HOMES

ENERGY STAR has two levels of certification: Energy Star for New Homes and Energy Star for Existing Homes. The Energy Star for New Homes program is for new construction homes, while the Energy Star for Existing Homes program is for homes that are being retrofitted.

ENERGY STAR FOR BUILDINGS

ENERGY STAR for Buildings includes specifications for commercial buildings, retail, hospitality, data centers, and healthcare. The program includes tools for evaluating energy use and water systems.

ENERGY STAR FOR CHALLENGE

The Living Building Challenge (LBC), administered by the International Living Future Institute, is a philosophy, advocacy platform, and certification program that promotes a high standard for sustainable building.

PLATINUM LEED FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

A LEED program for new or existing land developments with sustainable design, residential, or mixed-use use. It can be applied at any stage of development from conceptual to design.

ECODISTRICTS

A holistic neighborhood certification program that focuses on equitable development, economic development, biodiversity, and climate protection areas.