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# **GREEN BUILDING: Rating system aims to encourage green building, define critical characteristics**

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When people think of energy and our impact on the environment, they often think of cars and traffic jams or old factories pumping out pollution. In actuality, the buildings we live and work in consume far more energy than transportation or industry, and are responsible for nearly half of all greenhouse gas emissions.

The building community is well aware of this burden and is making a significant shift in how it builds. Over the past eight years, schools, hospitals, corporations, libraries, and governments have all adopted the LEED Green Building Rating System as a new standard for their buildings. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) was developed by the nonprofit U.S. Green Building Council, as a voluntary national standard for rating energy efficient, sustainable buildings.

The program was created to help define green building, establish a common standard of environmental measurement for buildings,

and help reduce false green building claims or “green washing.” LEED also stimulates green competition and recognizes environmental leaders for their achievements in the building industry. These goals and achievements have begun to transform the building market to the tune of nearly 2,000 registered projects covering all 50 states and 13 countries. Nearly 30,000 professionals have been trained as LEED accredited professionals.

North Carolina has 47 registered projects, 10 of which are in Western North Carolina: The Eblen Center For Social Enterprise in Arden; 310 South Main Condominiums in Hendersonville; the Blue Ridge Visitor Center; EastPointe Office Building in Asheville; Ravensford School Project developed by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians; and The Campbell Building in Black Mountain. Warren Wilson College boasts four projects: the EcoDorm; the Village Apartments; Jensen Hall; and the Orr Admission and College Relations Building.

LEED uses a point system and checklist of green performance goals that address the five basic areas of green building: site, water efficiency, energy, materials and resources, and indoor environment. Buildings of all types are included in LEED as well as the new pilot program, LEED for Neighborhood Developments. At this time there are no federal incentives for the LEED program, however many local and state governments have established LEED as a requirement for their new buildings. In Asheville, any development in the city that receives LEED certification will get a 50 percent rebate on development fees. On Dec. 12, Asheville City Council passed a resolution that all new municipal buildings will be built to LEED specifications.

For more information visit [www.usgbc.org/leed](http://www.usgbc.org/leed) or [www.leadbuilding.org/](http://www.leadbuilding.org/).

For more information about the WNC Green Building Council, go

to [www.wncgbc.org](http://www.wncgbc.org), call 232-5080 or e-mail [info@wncgbc.org](mailto:info@wncgbc.org).

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