



## LEED for Commercial Interiors It's More Than Just an Additive

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Most design professionals know that by USGBC definition, LEED for Commercial Interiors is the benchmark for the tenant improvement market. The program gives the power to make green interior choices to tenants and designers who do not always have control over whole building operations. LEED-CI is the companion rating system to LEED Core and Shell, and together they establish the building criteria for commercial projects.

LEED-CI follows the same basic format as some of the other LEED rating systems, but the main differential is that it focuses on the tenant space. It's simpler to work on a LEED-CI project when linked to a LEED-CS structure. It's when you don't have that option that LEED-CI becomes more challenging and sometimes non-achievable, since various factors in pursuing this certification revolve around buildings' operational systems and agreeable landlords.

Because LEED-CI is frequently packaged with the LEED-CS system, its importance is often overlooked as an "additive." However, LEED-CI is more than just an afterthought, and the role that interior designers play in the implementation of this rating is an important one.

With early involvement, design professionals can facilitate the evaluation process of an existing site. It is important that clients understand the value of selecting the appropriate tenant space inclusive of enlisting landlords' support to achieve many of the credits in a LEED-CI project. This clearly denotes what an important function LEED-CI can play in the future of green buildings and their interior settings.

Interior designers should be stewards for market transformation. We must help educate our clients on establishing their priorities and the benefits of LEED-CI such as improved indoor air quality; individualized controls over lighting and temperature; and an overall design methodology which can enhance productivity by its environmental involvement.

We must be resourceful in utilizing a holistic approach to the design of commercial spaces. Tenants don't think of their leased space as having an impact - sustainable design becomes an additive to a structural component that may have started out being environmentally correct as with LEED-CS. Instead, it could end up having the reverse effect in the individual tenant spaces. It's not just about the energy savings or the water efficiency, but about total project orchestration where systems and materials support the total work environment and enhance indoor air quality to improve risk management. There's plenty of supporting data and information on how the design of a space can affect its occupants, such as how it improves morale, lowers absenteeism and promotes healthier surroundings, but are clients aware of all this? This is why interior designers must continue their efforts in market transformation about the role they play in sustainable development and how they must be considered an integral part of building structures.

Interior designers can identify products and finishes that minimize excess and optimize utilization of specified materials within a space. For example, designers can improve acoustics, use recycled materials and improve indoor air quality to increase productivity all at once. They can



### Atrium lobby, Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing, Florida Atlantic University

Creating buildings that are healthy to occupy is a primary goal of green design. The Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton exemplifies this principle.

find creative, cost-effective solutions to work within the client's budget in many different types of projects.

LEED for Commercial Interiors should be identified as a method to help support life and business, as it is an investment in the future. Just as the USGBC's core purpose is to transform the way buildings are designed, built and operated, interior designers must become adept at communicating the transformation they're able to provide for companies that seek to be environmentally responsible. Putting together all these components and educating the public on LEED-CI furthers the message: LEED-CI is not just an additive.