



Michaels Engineering LEED® Brief

GREEN WASHING...BE VERY CAREFUL



SUGGESTIONS...

Do you have certain LEED® topics you'd like to know more about? Send an email with your suggestion to the author listed below and your topic might become a future LEED® Brief!

DID YOU KNOW...

...The LEED® process... holds architects, engineers, and contractors accountable for delivering a real sustainable building.

MEET THE AUTHOR



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→ WHAT IS GREEN WASHING?

Green Washing (*verb*): the dissemination of misleading information and/or concealment of corner cutting during the construction of a "sustainable" building.

As the momentum to construct more sustainable green buildings grows, many building owners are embracing LEED® elements such as sustainable land use, energy efficiency, green materials, recycling, and indoor environmental quality. While nearly all building owners desire these elements, most are not willing to pay for the costs associated with LEED® certification.

Sustainability sans LEED® begins with good intentions but the owner needs to be careful about the pitfalls of such an approach and how to avoid getting "green washed". Green washing may include insinuations that architectural, engineering, and landscape features of your new building are green and sustainable, when in fact they may be standard construction practice.

→ SUSTAINABILITY AND LEED®

To avoid green washing, make sure that the process of designing and constructing a measurably sustainable building is followed and accountability is integrated into the process. LEED® certification guarantees this because the supporting design documentation and sustainable construction efforts are submitted and reviewed by an independent third party – the United States Green Building Council (USGBC).

The LEED® process integrates sustainable design features and goals into design and construction phases and holds architects, engineers, and contractors accountable for delivering a real sustainable building.

Another critical step is the commissioning effort. In short, commissioning includes documentation of the owner's requirements, oversight during construction, and system testing after construction (commissioning will be covered in a future LEED® Brief). As crunch time approaches, certain low priority items such as functional performance testing and design reviews may get pushed off the table. A vigilant commissioning agent, whose sole responsibility is to ensure the owner's interests are met, will help prevent this from happening.

→ AVOID SHORTCUTS

Without the LEED® Certification objective, it becomes too easy for the design team to push a green initiative without actually accomplishing it, leaving you with a green building in name only. Without the certification end goal, it is too easy to skip things, cut corners, and value engineer the sustainability right out of your building. Don't fall into this trap.