STATE-OF-PRACTICE OF LEED IN THE UNITED STATES: A CONTRACTOR’S PERSPECTIVE

Mehmet Emre BAYRAKTAR¹, Clayton R. OWENS² and Yimin ZHU³

¹Assistant Professor, 10555 West Flagler St., Department of Construction Management, Florida International University, Miami FL 33174, USA. Ph: (305) 348-3174, E-mail: bayrakm@fiu.edu
²Former Graduate Student. Currently: Law Student, University of Miami School of Law, Miami FL 33146, USA. E-mail: clayton.owens@gmail.com
³Assistant Professor, 10555 West Flagler St., Department of Construction Management, Florida International University, Miami FL 33174, USA. Ph: (305) 348-3174, E-mail: zhuy@fiu.edu

Abstract
This paper evaluates the state-of-practice of LEED amongst general contractors in the United States through a comprehensive questionnaire survey. The results received from 177 responses are summarized in five sections namely general information, green experience, green prospects, practical LEED application, and green risks and benefits. The study revealed that construction companies are presently between the research phase and the action phase of implementing LEED into business strategy. Use of consultants by general contractors was found to be common in LEED projects. Owner’s request, company philosophy, marketing, and competition were identified as the most important reasons for respondents to consider LEED. The respondents almost unanimously indicated that cost increases were the most important barrier to LEED usage. Design, material prices, material selection, project planning, and sub-contractor selection were identified as the most important project components with respect to LEED.

Keywords
Green Buildings, LEED usage, sustainable construction, United States Green Building Council

LEED: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

The United States Green Building Council (USGBC) was established in response to both the public’s growing desire to reduce buildings’ negative impact on the environment and the need to control and standardize the building process to accomplish this goal. Its aim is to influence design, engineering, and construction practitioners to incorporate environmentally friendly elements in their design and construction processes while remaining cognizant of both profit and occupant health (Building Design and Construction 2003). USGBC achieves these objectives by aggressively promoting education and awareness, but, more importantly, advocating adoption of its green building certification program, known as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). Since its release in 2000, LEED has become a standardized green building certification system as well as a framework for green design, construction and