

June 14, 2022

## MEMORANDUM

To: City Council

From: Emily Fernandez, Management Analyst and EAC Staff Liaison

CC: Thom Sheridan, Interim City Manager; Greg Hannan, Community Development Director

Subj: Preliminary Discussion Regarding Green Certification Initiatives

The Environmental Awareness Committee (EAC) is requesting discussion with City Council about different types of green certification. The purpose is to make Council aware of sustainability initiatives that cities are pursuing and to provide information about sustainable opportunities within the City of Hudson. Green certification enhances environmental protection and may result in cost savings for residents. To assist with the scheduled EAC attendance at the Council Workshop of June 14, 2022, staff is providing general background information.

### **What is “Green Certification”?**

Independent verification that projects or entities (ex. buildings, developers, land codes, cities, etc) have met established sustainability criteria. Criteria may include minimum standards for energy efficiency, water conservation, air quality, or other metrics.

### **What Are the Certification Standards and Who Sets Them?**

Numerous organizations have developed standards that are tailored to various sustainability goals. Projects and entities may meet one or multiple sets of standards.

Most standards are established by government agencies and nonprofit organizations, though some are created by private organizations.

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), a nonprofit, developed the most widely accepted standard: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) ([details about LEED here](#)).

## Who, or What, Can Receive Certification?

- **Organizations:** manufacturers, realty agencies, and other organizations can become certified “green” by adopting practices that encourage sustainability
- **Places:** cities, neighborhoods, and other communities can become certified by implementing sustainable building code requirements and other development standards
- **Individuals:** builders, architects, designers, and other individuals can achieve professional certifications for studying and applying sustainable practices
- **Projects:** individual projects, typically single buildings, can be certified for meeting sustainability criteria; an example is “zero-energy” certification, which indicates the building produces at least as much energy as it consumes

## How Do Cities Participate in Green Certification?

Cities can educate the community about certification options and encourage or require that development meets green standards. Cities may offer flexibility in land use codes to encourage green development, incentivize or require minimum green standards for new development, or even seek certification for the City as an entity. Additional study would determine financial and staffing resources needed to support such programs.

### Possible Methods to Advance Green Certification:

- **Educate the community about available incentives & certification programs**
  - Initiatives such as ReEnergize Ohio ([here](#)) for businesses
  - Green home certification for residents ([see LEED home program here](#)) which may increase resale values ([details here](#))
- **Offer incentives for development that meets sustainability criteria**
  - Rebates, fee reductions or waivers, grants, tax abatements or credits, technical assistance, expedited permitting, density bonuses, or other incentives ([Cleveland abatement example here](#))
- **Consider a “green audit” of City regulations**

Further review the code to identify language that may unintentionally restrict sustainable investment (ex. Council recently increased the allowable size of inverters. The new limit allows greater utilization of solar energy). A green audit could also result in additional language that encourages or requires sustainable development.

  - Ex. require energy-efficient utility features, such as high-efficiency plumbing ([examples here](#))
  - Ex. Require electric vehicle charging stations for commercial and/or residential development

City standards could be adapted from standard language in the National Green Building Standard (NGBS) ([see standards here](#)).

- **Seek LEED for Cities and Communities certification from the USGBC**
  - This certification encompasses not only building standards, but also standards in transportation and land use, water management, materials and resource management, and other areas ([certification details here](#)).

In 2021, Shaker Heights became the first city in Ohio to receive LEED Gold Certification ([details here](#)).