Applying LEED to manufacturing projects

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What are the advantages of using LEED for manufacturing facilities?

LEED-certified manufacturing facilities put the triple bottom line into action—benefiting people, the planet, and profits. LEED certification supports healthier, more productive workplaces; reduces environmental impacts; delivers impressive savings through lower utility costs; and enhances building value. These facilities are designed and operated to use less water and energy, consume fewer natural resources, and ultimately reduce the overall impact of development on local, regional, and global environments. Factories around the world are using LEED to ensure a more efficient, equitable, and sustainable future.

For manufacturers, operational efficiency underpins a healthy business and can save owners and operators millions at an industrial scale. Green buildings help manufacturers act as responsible community stewards, protect residents and workers, and foster a healthier environment and economy.

How can manufacturing facilities earn LEED certification?

Manufacturing facilities can achieve LEED certification using different LEED rating systems at various stages of the building lifecycle.

- LEED for Building Design and Construction (BD+C): New Construction and Major Renovation is the most appropriate rating for projects that are new builds or major renovations. At least 60% of the project's gross floor area (GFA) must be complete by the time of certification, and the project must include the entire building's GFA. For manufacturing spaces, this may include areas dedicated to administrative functions, warehousing and distribution (if less than 60% of the total GFA), and production-related functions.
- LEED for Operations and Maintenance (O+M): Existing Buildings applies to buildings that are fully operational and occupied for at least one year. The project may be undergoing improvement work or little to no construction, and it must include the entire building's GFA.

How many manufacturing facilities are registered and certified under LEED?

As of June 2026, there are 6,275 LEED-certified and registered industrial manufacturing facilities representing 1.87 billion square feet (174 million square meters) of built space. These figures exclude light industrial and warehouse/distribution projects. To learn more about those facilities, please check out the relevant FAQ page on LEED for warehouse and distribution center projects

What issues are unique to industrial projects?

Manufacturing and industrial facilities often have distinct energy and water demands, specialized ventilation needs, heavy process loads, 24/7 operations, and programmatic interdependencies with other buildings—all of which can complicate the pursuit of high efficiency. In response, USGBC has developed industry-specific guidance and adapted select LEED credits to better reflect the sector's needs.

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How does LEED address the unique challenges of industrial projects?

LEED v5 is the most current version of the rating system and is available for all commercial projects pursuing certification under New Construction, Core and Shell, Commercial Interiors, and Existing Buildings. Many strategies developed for manufacturing and industrial high process load facilities in earlier versions of LEED have been adapted for LEED v5 or will appear in the new Project Priorities and Innovation credit category. Credits in this category offer greater flexibility to address unique project contexts and priorities, including typology, culture, location, areas of innovation, and specific performance objectives. Sector-specific Project Priority credits are continuously being developed and will be released in the Project Priority Library for use.

When developing LEED v4 and v4.1, certain prerequisites and credits were tailored to the industrial sector. Informed by feedback from manufacturing stakeholders, USGBC published industry-specific guidance through Alternative Compliance Paths (ACPs), reference guide content, and pilot credits. For example, LEED Interpretation LI 10493 allows LEED v4 BD+C projects with more than 50% unregulated process loads that use a whole-building energy simulation approach to apply the BD+C: Core and Shell energy performance improvement thresholds in lieu of the BD+C: New Construction thresholds. Guidance on documenting receptacle and process load assumptions for energy models is provided in the LEEDv4 BD+C Reference Guide.

LEED BD+C manufacturing projects also have the option of applying the following LEED BD+C: Warehouses and Distribution Centers strategies where appropriate:

- Surrounding Density and Diverse Uses
- Electric Vehicles
- Thermal Comfort
- Quality of Views

Contact GBCI before applying these strategies to confirm they are appropriate for your project.

How does the Arc platform relate to manufacturing projects?

The LEED v4.1 O+M rating system offers a unique, performance-based pathway to certify existing buildings and interior spaces. It leverages legacy Arc, a state-of-the-art platform for collecting, managing, and benchmarking performance across five categories: energy, water, waste, transportation, and human experience.

With LEED v4.1 O+M, industrial facilities can compare and benchmark their facilities against similar facilities worldwide. Factory owners and facility managers can monitor ongoing data and analytics to make informed decisions and optimize operations. This performance pathway can be used to certify and recertify projects on a three-year cycle. Learn more about the LEED v4.1 O+M rating system.

Some manufacturing and heavy industrial O+M projects may face challenges from significant process loads (energy, water, and waste) that impact performance scores and prerequisite compliance. If this applies to your project, please contact us.

LEED v5 BD+C, ID+C and O+M rating systems allow for all space types to certify utilizing the new Arc experience, which offers fluidity and flexibility for users. All performance, certification and reporting will be delivered in one place.

How can multiple buildings and structures in a campus setting earn LEED certification?

Manufacturing and industrial facilities often operate at a campus scale, with multiple, interconnected buildings on a single site. LEED Campus Guidance provides a framework for projects on shared sites under the control of a single entity, accommodating the complexity of site-wide buildings, infrastructure, and operations. It is especially useful for campuses with multiple facilities, common utilities, and site-wide management policies. By using LEED Campus Guidance, owners and project teams can benefit from a streamline documentation and review process, leading to successful implementation of LEED project.

What technical resources are available for manufacturing projects pursuing LEED?

A variety of technical resources are available to support manufacturing facilities seeking LEED certification. Examples include:

- LEED Interpretation 10493 allows LEED v4/v4.1 BD+C projects with more than 50% unregulated process loads that use a whole-building energy simulation approach to apply the BD+C: Core and Shell energy performance improvement thresholds in lieu of the BD+C: New Construction thresholds.
- Whole Project Water Use Reduction Pilot Credit allows LEED v4/v4.1 BD+C projects to quantify water use through whole-building water balance modeling like whole-building energy modeling, to capture significant water savings that previously went unrecognized, including process water.
- LEED v4 Energy Update - Projects with a high percentage of unregulated (process) loads may continue to use the BD+C: Core & Shell thresholds and are encouraged to consider LEED v4.1 credit substitution .
- Energy Efficiency and GHG for Non-Benchmarked Buildings allows non-benchmarked buildings including industrial manufacturing to show compliance and earn credit points for 'EAp3 Minimum Energy Performance', 'EAc2 Optimized Energy Performance' and 'EAc1: Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Performance, Option 3, Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Building Energy Use' using this Pilot ACP. This ACP is only available for **LEED v5 O+M: Existing Building** Rating

USGBC has published several Industry Articles and reports, including:

- Unilever Hefei Leverages LEED Zero to make manufacturing sustainable
- LEED in Motion: Industrial Facilities
- Five myths about using LEED for manufacturing facilities (5 series articles)

Where can I find owner profiles and case studies on manufacturing projects?

- Ngai Cau Green Factory- The Main Workshop Building
- Huy Hoang Lock Factory, Vietnam
- FOCUS New Global R&D and Plant, China
- Techtronic Tools Vietnam Factory-1,Vietnam
- Mars Lietuva Manufacturing extension, Lithuania
- Core5 Quang Ninh 1 - Factory Village, Vietnam
- Intel Ocotillo Campus Case Study, USA
- Method Soap Factory,USA
- Colgate-Palmolive New Jersey facility,USA

You can find more projects in the USGBC Project Directory by searching through keywords such as "manufacturing" or "industrial." Or "plant". You can also filter by region and rating system type to get more specific results.

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Does USGBC offer any education for project teams wanting to learn more about manufacturing facilities pursuing green building measures?

Yes. Explore these sessions in the USGBC online course catalog:

- LEED Zero: Lessons Learned from 5 Case Studies
- LEED and Manufacturing Facilities Educational Resources
- Busting Five Myths for LEED and Manufacturing Facilities
- LEED and Industrial Facilities: Meet four of the top users of LEED [videos]

Who can I contact for more information about this?

For questions about LEED and manufacturing facilities, please contact us.