



Applying LEED to retail projects

June 2026

What are the advantages of using LEED for retail spaces?

LEED is an internationally recognized green building standard that provides rigorous, third-party certification of a building's sustainable features, supporting the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of resource-efficient, high-performing, healthy, and cost-effective retail spaces. LEED certified spaces typically operate at lower costs and often attract and retain more customers than comparable non-certified spaces. Retailers also use LEED to differentiate their brands, performance, and strategies.

LEED offers a comprehensive framework that helps retailers communicate progress on ESG goals to investors, customers, and other stakeholders, sending a powerful message about a company's values and priorities. By using LEED, retailers demonstrate to employees and customers that they care about human health, community resilience, and environmental protection.

How can retail projects earn LEED certification?

Retail spaces can earn LEED Certification using different LEED rating system at various stages of building lifecycle

- [LEED BD+C:Retail](#) - Whole, ground-up buildings that are newly constructed or undergoing major renovations, with at least 60% of the project's gross floor area complete by the time of certification. Typically used for buildings conducting the retail sale of consumer goods. Includes both direct customer service areas (showrooms) and preparation or storage areas that support customer service, completed by the time of certification.
- [LEED ID+C: Retail](#) - Interior retail spaces with complete fit-outs, with at least 60% of the project's gross floor area complete by the time of certification. In context of ID+C, the term "complete spaces" refers to interior areas that are fully finished with furnishings, fixtures, and equipment (FF&E) installed at the time of certification.
- [LEED BD+C: Core and Shell](#) - Buildings undergoing new construction or major renovation of the exterior shell and core mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems, without a complete interior fit-out. LEED BD+C: Core and Shell is the appropriate rating system if more than 40% of the gross floor area is incomplete at the time of certification.

For more information on what does 'complete/incomplete' means in the context of LEED BD+C & ID+C rating, please refer to our [Help Center page](#)

- [LEED O+M: Existing Buildings](#) - Whole buildings that are fully operational and occupied for at least one year. The project may be undergoing improvement work or little to no construction. The entire building's gross floor area must be included in the project. Typically used for retail buildings conducting the sale of consumer goods, including both showrooms and support areas.

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- [LEED O+M: Existing Interior](#)- Existing Interior Spaces contained within a portion of an existing building, defined by a clear boundary such that the LEED project is physically distinct from other interior spaces within the building.

How many retail projects are registered and certified under LEED?

As of June 2026, there are 24,155 LEED - certified and registered retail projects representing over 1.47 billion square feet (136 million square meters) of built space. This includes projects certified through the one-off process and those certified through multiple building applications such as campus and volume.

What issues are unique to retail projects?

Retail spaces often have distinct energy and water use patterns, varied space distributions—Front of House (FOH), Back of House (BOH), and sales areas, greater parking needs, and unique occupancy demands for staff and visitors. To handle these uniqueness of LEED projects, USGBC has developed a retail-specific LEED rating system with credits and prerequisites tailored to the sector's need. For example, the Indoor Water Use Reduction prerequisite under the LEED Building Design and Construction rating system sets minimum requirements for appliances and process equipment commonly used in retail facilities (e.g., kitchen equipment).

How does LEED address the unique challenges of retail 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 retail projects 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.

How does the Arc platform relate to retail 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.

LEED v4.1 O+M can be used to compare and benchmark retail stores against similar facilities worldwide. The Arc portfolio feature allows retail owners and operators to continuously monitor performance and make informed decisions to optimize outcomes based on real-time data and analytics. The legacy Arc platform can be used to certify and recertify projects under LEED v4.1 O+M.

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[LEED v5 BD+C](#), [ID+C](#) and [O+M](#) rating systems allow for all space types to certify utilizing the new [Arc experience](#), offering greater fluidity and flexibility for users. Performance tracking, certification, and reporting are all delivered in one place.

What is the LEED volume program and how can retailers benefit from the offering?

For organizations planning to certify multiple new construction projects, LEED Volume certification can simplify documentation and accelerate reviews for portfolios where uniformity and standardized LEED requirements are embedded in the project delivery process. This option streamlines certification by leveraging similarities in building design and construction practices—regardless of project location. For organizations certifying several buildings within a set timeframe, LEED Volume offers valuable economies of scale for both new construction and commercial interior projects. Learn more about the [Volume Program](#)

What technical resources are available for retail projects pursuing LEED?

There are various USGBC resources and educational courses available on our USGBC website to help retailers apply LEED to their projects. Listed below are few important links to the resources:

USGBC Resources

- [Practical Strategies in Green Building: Retail](#)
- [Tenants: Learn how to get the most out of your LEED-certified space](#)

Educational Resources

- [LEED in Motion: Retail](#)
- [Energy Efficiency in Grocery and Convenience Stores](#)
- [Culinary Creations: Designing a LEED Kitchen](#)

Project Profiles and Case Studies

- [LEED for the retail sector](#) - apparel stores, food service, and malls
- [Portobello Shop Jardim Social](#), Brazil – 1st LEED v5 O+M certified project in the world
- [Emirates NBD, UAE](#) – Holding highest number of LEED platinum certified bank branches
- [Kama Ayurveda Retail Store, India](#)
- [Megamayi Wayra](#), Ecuador
- [Vivo City Shopping Centre](#), Vietnam
- [Pizza 4Ps Lotte Mall West Lake](#), Vietnam

Where can I find owner profiles and case studies for LEED retail projects?

View non-confidential LEED registered and certified retail projects in the [USGBC Project Directory](#) by entering ‘retail’ and/or other relevant terms in the search bar. You can also filter by region and rating system type to get more specific results.

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Who can I contact for more information on applying LEED to retail projects?

For more information about LEED and retail, [contact us](#).