

Was that an EBOM?

WHY GOING FOR LEED-EB: O&M CERTIFICATION SHOULDN'T MAKE YOUR HEAD EXPLODE.

>> BY TOMMY LINSTROTH

What's 4.5-inches tall, 11-inches deep, and weighs 12 pounds? The three new LEED reference guides, of course! The newly released reference guides for LEED 2009 come in three versions: Green Interior Design and Construction (aka, Commercial Interiors), Green Building Operation and Maintenance (aka, Existing Buildings and Operations), and the behemoth — Green Building Design and Construction (aka, New Construction/Core&Shell/School). The last one alone comes in at whopping 645 pages.

For those of you studying for the newly released LEED AP exams — happy reading! For the rest of us, it simply means some changes to how we're pursuing LEED certification for our projects. The changes from the old system have been widely detailed, so I'm not going to delve into them here. However, I'll note the basic framework is the exact same although the point system is now different (110 points are available for each rating system for consistency), and there are a few minor credit changes.

For those of us in multitenant existing buildings, there are a few nuances to the new LEED-EB: O&M (EBOM) worth mentioning. As always, EBOM certification applies only to whole buildings — nothing new there. At least 90 percent of total gross floor space must be included, but that's what you would expect — we can't just ignore some tenant areas (or at least more than 10 percent of them!). The bigger issue comes next. The authors of the EBOM reference guide come right out on page xxiii and say what many of us already know: "Multitenant buildings may face particular challenges in earning LEED for Existing Buildings Operations & Maintenance credits."

Super! At least there is a forewarning for those diving in and reading every page of the introduction. They do acknowledge that all prerequisites should "generally" be possible in multitenant buildings but that many credits require commitment and cooperation from tenants.

Commitment and cooperation from tenants...that made me think to the buildings and tenants in our portfolio. Some have more



than 30 different user groups, others have tenants I know would commit and cooperate only if it involved committing to show up for a free breakfast and cooperating by eating it.

Alas, what are we to do with these multitenant buildings, which make up a huge portion of the existing building stock? Abandon them? Force every tenant entering the building to check off how they got to work today to see if we comply with the alternative transportation credit? Require proof of purchase of recycled copy paper in order to gain access to the elevator? What next?

As enticing as those options sound, I decided to take a run through the new scorecard and see how many credits I felt I could achieve without having to engage the tenants in any way whatsoever. What could be done just at the building level and property management level?

The results came back...positive. The potential is certainly there to relatively straightforwardly obtain basic certification, and even get well into silver or gold, all without having "commitment and cooperation" from the tenants. That's not to say it'll be

easy or cheap by any means. For example, by not working with tenants on commuting practices you lose the opportunity to earn 15 points — which is almost half the number needed for certification!

My back-of-the-envelope calculation earned 53 points — enough for silver — and that was with taking only two points on Optimized Energy Performance. Another 16 are available under that credit for Energy Efficiency, which could easily elevate a project to LEED Gold. Now, some buildings will inherently get some of these points and others will not. For example, if you're already managing stormwater, you will likely get the credits whereas it's not likely you'll rip up the parking lot and install porous pavers or bioswales simply for the point. Similarly, buildings with automation systems and submeters will have the leg up, but you can certainly still have them added if they are lacking. The same holds true for airflow devices, plumbing fixtures and irrigation systems, to name a few. I've certainly ripped out and replaced a number of toilets and urinals with low-flow and waterless devices in my time, so it can be done easily and relatively inexpensively — but some buildings may need to and others won't.

In the end, it still comes down to how much effort you want to direct into your asset and whether you have the flexibility to do so. Just don't get thrown off by a system that looks like it requires all the tenants to participate. While establishing tenant buy-in and involving them in the process certainly yields benefits down the road, you can still achieve pretty high levels of certification through sound operational policies and some investments in better building technologies and equipment. **SF**



Tommy Linstroth, LEED AP, is head of Sustainable Initiatives with Melaver, Inc. Melaver owns and manages approximately 1.5 million square feet of LEED-certified space. Look for more columns from Linstroth in past and future issues of Sustainable Facility.