



LEED and Historic Structures

It is often maintained that LEED is very difficult to apply to historic buildings, and that LEED does nothing to recognize the inherent benefit of restoring historic structures. Fortunately, this is not the case. Trident Sustainability Group has been involved in numerous historic buildings that achieve LEED certification – all the way to LEED Platinum. Based on these experiences, here's a fact sheet on how LEED works hand in hand with historic preservation.

The Myths

Traditional concerns of applying LEED to historic buildings

1. LEED makes you change out historic, single pane windows
2. LEED doesn't give credit for preserving buildings or embodied energy
3. LEED makes you put all sorts of crazy new technologies and space age materials into buildings

The Truth

1. LEED does not require, necessitate, dictate or even suggest you replace historic windows!!! There are NO PENALTIES for using historic windows.



In fact, existing buildings are modeled using the EXISTING CONDITIONS as the baseline – NOT the current code. This affects the entire building envelope, including wall insulation, roof insulation, and yes, windows. By maintaining and preserving the existing single pane windows, the building is modeled from an energy perspective as having single pane windows as the standard – thus there is NO penalty associated with using them.

2. LEED gives multiple credits specifically for reusing both the existing building shell as well as interior, non-structural features (up to four points total). In addition, historic buildings tend to inherently earn at least 17 points simply from features typically associated with historic buildings, such as preferable locations near mass transit, in urban areas, with limited site. While this doesn't apply to every historic structure, it applies for a heck of a lot of them! Throw in the other 18 no-brainer LEED credits available, and a historic building can already have earned 35 points (certification requires 40 points total).

3. LEED does not require any sort of renewable energy, or using any 21st century technology. Points are given for using reused or salvaged materials, as well as materials that are produced locally. Lighting, plumbing, and HVAC must be brought up to code, but there are no set requirements that threaten the historic integrity of any particular building.