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Living Building Challenge
spreads its petals
by Charles Redell -
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SEATTLE



Omega Center for Sustainable Living seeks certification.

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It may be hard to imagine improving a building standard that requires net-zero energy and water use. Yet the creators of the [Living Building Challenge](#) say that [by updating the building rating system](#), they have improved it.

The Seattle-based International Living Building Institute (ILBI) recently launched an entirely re-worked version of the Living Building Challenge, which pushes designers, engineers and developers to constantly redefine the [highest levels of sustainability attainable in the built environment](#), according to ILBI's Web site.

Originally launched by Cascadia Region Green Building Council (Cascadia GBC) at Greenbuild 2006, the Living Building Challenge requires projects to meet a set of "imperatives" (formerly known as prerequisites). Designers then earn "petals" for achieving excellence in seven performance areas.

Currently, about 60 buildings around the world are registered with ILBI. Three are fully operational, occupied and in the process of verification, which can cost between \$5,000 and \$25,000 depending on square footage. Though no building has yet been certified as meeting the standard, the experience of working closely with the early pioneers helped ILBI understand what's missing from the earlier versions of the standard.

The new version—called Living Building Challenge 2.0 (LBC 2.0)—expands its scope to include renovations; landscape or infrastructure projects such as roads,

bridges, plazas and sports facilities; and entire neighborhoods in addition to the new construction of a single building.

The expanded focus means ILBI would end up reaching out to more constituencies than it has in the past. Companies and other entities that are interested in creating “Living Infrastructure” and “Living Neighborhood” projects contacted ILBI well before LBC 2.0 was released, says Jason McLennan, CEO of both Cascadia GBC and the nonprofit ILBI.

LBC 2.0 encompasses many significant changes that are “paramount to our success as a movement,” says Eden Brukman, ILBI’s vice president. Among the most notable is the inclusion of a new petal called “Equity” and the addition of six new imperatives, bringing the total number to 20. The new imperatives in LBC 2.0 address space requirements for urban agriculture; push developers and designers to make efforts to enable residents to lead a car-free lifestyle; and address various aspects of the new Equity petal.

The Equity petal goes “way beyond” affordability, according to McLennan. It requires project planners to create equal access for all users by incorporating universal design components; it promotes culture and interaction; and it states “that aspects of a community should never be off limits or gated to those without wealth as a passport.”

Ralph DiNola, principal at Portland-based [Green Building Services](#) and a board member for both Cascadia GBC and ILBI adds, “Green building as a concept has become very mainstream. It has taken hold among the design community, owners, managers and contractors. Still, it only captures about 15 percent of the market.

“Looking at one building at a time is not going to get us there. [LBC 2.0] is focused on trying to address some critical issues that have been some of the more challenging issues to understand and put metrics to. We need to be looking at social equity and social justice.”

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