

Greenbuild 2009: Of Certifications, Solar and Smart Grid

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PHOENIX, United States — The latest version of the [Living Buildings Challenge](#) standard expands to address issues some may not associate with green buildings, such as the collapse of domestic manufacturing and global trade imbalances.

But the standard from the [International Living Building Institute](#) aims to go beyond a building's efficient use of energy and water or its indoor air quality to address things like social justice and urban agriculture, the product of three years worth of feedback from design professionals within the Living Building Community.

The Institute unveiled Version 2.0 Tuesday during the opening night of [Greenbuild](#) (read all our coverage [here](#)), the industry's largest event showcasing the virtues and innovations driving the green building movement. As usual, the breadth of announcements to come out of the conference is dizzying, ranging from new products and corporate commitments to the latest research and milestones.

Originally introduced three years ago, the concept of Living Buildings is more comprehensive, its creators say, bringing a wider swath of stakeholders to the table to join architects and developers, such as environmentalists, social activists, affordable housing advocates and preservationists. Roughly 70 projects in North America are pursuing certification under the Living Building Challenge's older standards, which are performance-based and require operation for at least a year.

"The simple concept of green buildings has generally produced more efficient buildings and smaller footprints. But that is no longer enough," Jason F. McLennan, CEO of the [Cascadia Region Green Building Council](#), which founded the Institute, said in a statement. "With version 2.0 addressing issues of food, transportation and social justice, we expect a considerable leap forward will happen once again."

Among some of new additions to the standard: a minimum amount of site square footage must be used for food production, excluding dense urban environments; unrestricted access to rivers, lakes and shorelines; and the ability for a majority of people residing within a neighborhood to live without needing a car.

Betting on Solar Power and the Smart Grid

Phoenix, the host city of the 2009 Greenbuild, is now also home to the largest city-sponsored residential solar financing program in the country, its mayor announced Tuesday.

The city partnered with Arizona Public Service, National Bank of Arizona and SolarCity to develop [Solar Phoenix](#), a program that will allow up to 1,000 area homeowners to install rooftop solar energy systems without shelling out any upfront investment. Homeowners will pay a monthly lease for the panels, in addition to smaller utility bills that will cover electricity used at night and any electricity used above and beyond the amount generated by the panels.

Electric lighting control firm [Lutron](#) said today it would focus on revamping its technologies to take advantage of potential energy savings and smart grid development. The company has created a new energy solutions business unit and smart grid initiative, it announced at Greenbuild.

The energy solutions business unit will lead the new technology efforts and create a strategy to partner with utilities, policymakers, customers and energy service companies and other manufacturers to drive energy efficiency and smart grid development with interoperable systems.

"Smart grid and other demand response regulations are going to be a big part of the future," Ian Rowbottom, principle engineer for Smart Grid Products at Lutron, said in a statement. "Because of our expertise in whole home and whole building total lighting controls and solutions, we believe Lutron is uniquely positioned to help utilities create the kind of connection that will make demand response really productive and accepted. We know that if we can control lighting throughout a space -- in many cases wirelessly -- we can control other electrical loads as well."

A consortium of global building sector companies on Wednesday announced at Greenbuild the publication of its first

open specification for energy-harvesting wireless sensors. The [EnOcean Alliance](#)'s standardization guidelines aim to ensure interoperability of devices from different manufacturers and now include 50 equipment profiles.

"Publication of the first specification for EnOcean sensors is extremely important for the EnOcean Alliance because it ensures continuing seamless interoperability between EnOcean-enabled solutions across the spectrum of manufacturers," EnOcean Alliance CEO Graham Martin said in a statement. "Moreover, it's the first step taken by the Alliance towards formal recognition as an international standard."

With Greenbuild just one-third complete, there is sure to be no shortage of additional news coming out of Phoenix. To read about the research that has been published on green buildings in the past week, read "[Greenbuild 2009: Research Explores Buildings' Impact on Jobs, Water, Real Estate](#);" for all of our Greenbuild coverage, visit GreenerBuildings.com/Greenbuild2009.

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