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### New Stories From 'Urban Agriculture Notes'

# International Living Building Institute Addresses Urban Agriculture

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LIVING  
BUILDING  
CHALLENGE™  
2.0

A Visionary Path to a Restorative Future



November 2009

## **Radical Green Building Takes a Giant Leap Forward as The International Living Building Institute's New Standard Addresses Social Justice, Urban Agriculture and Community Scale Impacts**

“The program introduces a new focus on urban agriculture, requiring a minimum amount of site square footage be dedicated to food production except in the densest urban environments – the more suburban a site is, the more food production is required.

“All projects must integrate opportunities for agriculture appropriate to the scale and density of the project using its Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.) as the basis for calculation.”

This basic chart outlines mandatory agricultural allowances:

Transect	F.A.R.	Percent of Project Area <sup>22</sup> that must be used for Food Production
2	< 0.05 <sup>23</sup>	80%
	0.05 ≤ 0.09	50%
3	0.10 ≤ 0.24	35%
	0.25 ≤ 0.49	30%
4	0.5 ≤ 0.74	25%
	0.75 ≤ 0.99	20%
	1.0 ≤ 1.49	15%
5	1.5 ≤ 1.99	10 %
	2.0 ≤ 2.99	5 %
6	> 3.0	No mandatory requirement

The User's Guide defines acceptable urban agriculture practices and the formula for determining how much square footage must be given over to agriculture. Specific agricultural strategies (e.g., crops, orchards and/or husbandry) should be determined by the project team based on the surrounding location, climate, and culture.

The density of a project is inversely related to the agriculture requirement. Refer to the User's Guide for more detailed information, including a strict interpretation of how to calculate the F.A.R. for your project and for acceptable agricultural uses on your site. Project area is equal to the total site square meters. This figure should be uniformly applied to all Imperatives.

Projects with this F.A.R. are considered to be farm or ranch land. There is an exception for projects whose primary purpose is related to protection or interpretation of sensitive ecological habitats as defined in Imperative 01: Limits to Growth.

[See Living Building Challenge Version 2.0 here.](#)

#### **Press Release:**

#### **Version 2.0 of the Living Building Challenge expands its focus to local food production, unrestricted access to nature, no gated communities and other equity issues**

(Phoenix, AZ) Nov. 10, 2009 – The concept of Living Buildings was first introduced three years ago and quickly gained recognition as the world's most revolutionary approach to green building. The newest iteration of the Living Building Challenge was released today at Greenbuild, the U.S. Green Building Council's annual conference. The International Living Building Institute (ILBI), in conjunction with the Cascadia Region Green Building Council, launched version 2.0 with the ultimate goal to fundamentally change the built environment.

Most green building certification programs have focused on individual buildings, but the new Living Building Challenge program is both more comprehensive and more expansive, including small in-home remodels, community or campus-wide initiatives and infrastructure projects – including bridges, roads and parks.

The expanded breadth of version 2.0 brings more people to the table. "This standard is a unifying tool, bringing together many disciplines and players for the first time under one green building standard – architects and developers with urban planners and landscape architects, environmentalists and social activists, as well as affordable housing advocates

and preservationists – to form a visionary pathway to a restorative future,” says Jason F. McLennan, CEO of the Cascadia Region Green Building Council.

The new Living Building Challenge standard is designed to address critical social and economic issues, including the collapse of domestic manufacturing, global trade imbalances, urban sprawl, the marginalization of those that can't purchase the 'American dream' and the lack of community distinctiveness and culture. Version 2.0 is the first green building certification program to integrate urban agriculture, social justice and universal access issues as mandatory requirements. A new section addresses equity, examining ways to create equal access for all citizens, incorporate Universal Design considerations, promote culture and interaction, and end economic segregation of public and semi-public places. The new standards even require unrestricted access to rivers, lakes and shorelines, as well as other important natural elements – even when built on private property.

The program also introduces a new focus on urban agriculture, requiring a minimum amount of site square footage be dedicated to food production except in the densest urban environments – the more suburban a site is, the more food production is required. A new 'car-free living' imperative does not mandate the elimination of cars from development; rather, it is defined by the potential for a majority of people living in a neighborhood to have a productive and rich lifestyle without needing a car.

“The simple concept of green buildings has generally produced more efficient buildings and smaller footprints. But that is no longer enough,” says McLennan. “With version 2.0 addressing issues of food, transportation and social justice, we expect a considerable leap forward will happen once again.”

Version 2.0 represents the collective wisdom and feedback of the community of design professionals who have been working on Living Buildings over the last three years. Many of the changes incorporated into the new version were spurred by commentary from project teams within the Living Building Community.

There are approximately 70 projects pursuing certification under previous versions of the Living Building Challenge throughout North America, as well as one registered project in France. The Challenge is gaining international interest, with program ambassadors emerging in additional countries, including Australia, New Zealand, England, Ireland, India, Colombia and Mexico. Three projects have completed construction and have entered their verification phase: Tyson Living Learning Center in Eureka, MO; Omega Center for Sustainable Living in Rhinebeck, NY; and Eco-Sense, a private residence in Victoria, British Columbia. The Living Building Challenge is primarily performance-based, requiring a minimum of twelve months of operation prior to certification.

[Visit the ILBI website to download the new version.](#)

This article originally appeared at this URL:

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