

LEED Gold Motion

The United States is the second largest contributor to climate change in the world, behind only China. Buildings, which use a great amount of energy, water, and other resources, are responsible for nearly forty percent of the United States' carbon dioxide emissions, a key contributor to global climate change. Green buildings, however, use significantly fewer natural resources, and provide significant cost savings over the life of a building's operations. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) building standard, promulgated by the US Green Building Council, provides third-party verification of buildings to ensure that they are truly sustainable. The LEED standard offers several levels of building certification, with "Platinum" reserved for the buildings that incorporate the most significant sustainability features, and "Certified" offered for those buildings that meet minimum levels of sustainability. The next level above "Certified" is "Silver," followed by "Gold." In addition to guiding sustainable building, LEED encourages and rewards innovative approaches and technologies not addressed in the LEED system that achieve significant, measurable

MOTION

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environmental performance through site selection and design decisions appropriate for existing site conditions.

In 2007, the Board of Supervisors adopted the LEED policy for new County facilities, and required that new buildings achieve at least the LEED Silver level. Earlier this year, the Board of Supervisors adopted the Envision rating system that requires County infrastructure projects to incorporate sustainability measures. As a result, the County's new buildings and, more recently, infrastructure projects, are being built with greatly enhanced performance, optimized water and energy use efficiency, extended useful life, healthier indoor work environments, and reduced operation and maintenance costs.

The State of California has also passed legislation over the last decade relating to sustainable building design, known as the California Green Building Standards Code (CAL Green Code), which improves public health, safety and general welfare by enhancing the design and construction of buildings through sustainable practices. According to some industry professionals, the CALGreen Code's sustainability principles approach those required to achieve the LEED Silver level certification.

As technologies and green building techniques become more ubiquitous, the incremental cost of constructing more efficient buildings goes down. As these costs decrease, building owners and tenants are demanding ever more efficient buildings. The building industry is satisfying this demand by constructing a significant number of buildings that are certified at the LEED Gold or Platinum level. According to data provided by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC), 40% of LEED rated

buildings have been certified at the Gold or Platinum level. In recent years, the total number of LEED Gold certified buildings has been greater than those certified as LEED Silver. A similar trend is observed in County buildings: more than 50% of LEED certified projects have achieved Gold or Platinum-level certification since 2007.

Although there may be increased initial capital improvement costs associated with pursuing higher levels of LEED certification, studies performed by construction firms and the United States General Services Administration have shown that the incremental capital cost increase from the LEED Silver to Gold level is minimal, ranging from approximately 0.5% to 5%. Several analyses make clear that the increased upfront costs are more than offset over the useful life of a building due to lower operations and maintenance costs, as well as savings from increased productivity and health. In fact, these additional upfront costs are often recouped within just a few short years due to reduced energy and water bills.

In light of the relative decrease in up-front costs associated with designing and building LEED Gold buildings since the County first adopted its LEED Silver policy, as well as the lower operations and maintenance costs associated with maintaining greener buildings, the County should update its current LEED policy to require that new County buildings of 10,000 square feet or more achieve at least a LEED Gold rating. Moreover, before the County undertakes a significant retrofit of an existing County building, the County should undertake a cost-benefit assessment to determine whether it makes environmental and fiscal sense to retrofit the existing building to be LEED certified, and at what level of certification. If a determination is made that seeking LEED

certification for an existing building retrofit makes financial and environmental sense, that building retrofit should be LEED certified.

A LEED Gold policy for new buildings will not only enhance environmental resource conservation, but it will also support the County's building and energy efficiency industries that are part of our growing green economy. Many other local governments across the country have mandated LEED Gold certification for public buildings, including municipalities as diverse as San Francisco, Portland, and Kansas City.

A LEED Gold policy will support the State's energy efficiency and conservation efforts, as well as the State and County's long-term climate goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as established in recent legislation such as Assembly Bill 32 (Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006), Senate Bill 350 (Clean Energy and Pollution Reduction Act of 2015), and Senate Bill 32 (California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006: emissions limit).

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors require all new County buildings 10,000 gross square feet or more in size that are authorized on or after the Board of Supervisors' approval of this motion to achieve at least the LEED Gold level of certification (or a successor, equivalent standard established by the USGBC).

I FURTHER MOVE that the Board of Supervisors require that before the County undertakes a significant retrofit of any existing County building, the County must undertake a cost-benefit assessment to determine whether it makes environmental and fiscal sense to retrofit the existing building to be LEED certified, and, if so, to identify the appropriate level of certification. If a determination is made that seeking LEED

certification for an existing building retrofit makes financial and environmental sense, that building retrofit should be LEED certified.

I FURTHER MOVE that the Board of Supervisors authorize and direct the Chief Executive Officer to take the necessary steps to implement a LEED policy that includes the criteria of the two immediately preceding paragraphs and to reference such policy in the next update of the Countywide Environmental Sustainability Policy (Policy Number 3.045).

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