



Working with Landlords – Green Leases

Working together to make commercial buildings more energy efficient and environmentally sustainable benefits landlords and tenants alike. Sustainability improvements can lower a tenant's utility costs and create a healthier environment for employees. For landlords, improvements can lead to higher occupancy rates and rental rates and provide access to renewable energy credits, grants, and tax credits.

While tenants and landlords can work together informally towards sustainability goals, many are turning to “green leases” as a way to formalize their sustainability commitments. A [green lease](#) sets parameters on how a building will be occupied, operated, and managed in a sustainable way – typically including provisions on energy efficiency measures such as the use of LED lighting and efficient HVAC equipment, policies such as sharing of utility data between landlord and tenant, and operational practices such as recycling and waste provisions and use of environmentally friendly cleaning supplies.

Tips for Maximizing Green Power in an Office Space

- Designate a motivated and knowledgeable sustainability advocate who is adept at communicating benefits to all levels of the company.
- Leverage the direct financial benefits of green, efficient space and, more importantly, the potential positive impact on employees, organizational brand, and community relations. For example, calculate how much savings in dollars the company has had since switching to energy efficient light bulbs and explain how the company can now use that money for other goals or programs.
- Consider asking your landlord for help in finding guidance and partners in your green build-out or revamp. This may inspire or motivate your landlord to take steps to implement green building practices.
- Take advantage of a move or lease renewal to design and build a green, high-performance space.

What is LEED?

LEED, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is a program that provides third party verification of green buildings – buildings that are environmentally responsible and resource efficient throughout their lifecycles. The LEED-certification program has been among the key barometers used to measure energy-efficient building practices globally since 2004. It consists of a rating system devised by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) to evaluate the environmental performance of a building and encourage market transformation towards sustainable design. The system is credit-based, allowing projects to earn points for environmentally friendly actions taken during the construction and use of a building.

A project can receive one of four LEED rating levels: Certified, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. LEED-certified buildings are resource-efficient, use less water and energy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and overall save more money. LEED-certified buildings can range from hospitals to data centers, from historical buildings to those still in the design phase. LEED v4 provides credits for selecting building materials and products that have expert vetted Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs). For more information, visit www.usgbc.org.

Other Rating Systems for Accredited Green Buildings

Aside from LEED, there are other rating systems that can help turn a space into an accredited green building. These are all voluntary programs, and obtaining LEED or other green building certification demonstrates a positive environmental image to the community. Other rating systems include:

The [Living Building Challenge](#) is a green building certification program and sustainable design framework that requires projects to meet a series of ambitious performance requirements, including zero net energy, waste, and water over a minimum of 12 months of continuous occupancy.

[Passivhaus](#), or 'Passive House' is a growing energy performance standard that encourages homes to be designed with excellent thermal performance and exceptional airtightness with mechanical ventilation.

[Sustainable Sites Initiative](#)™ (SITES™) is a comprehensive rating system designed to distinguish sustainable landscapes, measure their performance, and elevate their value. SITES-certified landscapes help reduce water demand, filter and reduce stormwater runoff, provide wildlife habitat, reduce energy consumption, improve air quality, improve human health, and increase outdoor recreation opportunities.

[ENERGY STAR](#)™ is a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy. The program aims to help people save money and protect the environment through energy efficient products and practices.

The [ICC 700 National Green Building Standard](#) is a certification system that encourages increased environmental and health performance in residences and residential portions of buildings.

The [Green Globes](#) system is an online green building rating and certification tool. It is structured as a self-assessment to be done in-house using a project manager and design team. The platform includes optional interactive guidance.

Resources

- The Institute for Market Transformation's [Green Lease Library](#) provides guidance and case studies on green leases
- The [Rhode Island Green Building Council](#) (RIGBC) offers educational and outreach events statewide on the merits of green building and energy efficiency
- The [US Green Building Council](#) website provides relevant educational materials
- The Green Building Alliance discusses [Green Building Financial Incentives & Grants](#)
- [The Green Building Information Gateway](#) provides a detailed overview of Rhode Island's green building activity

Associated Resource Guides

- Energy Conservation & Efficiency
- Recycling Programs



[Best for Rhode Island](#) is an initiative of [Social Enterprise Greenhouse](#) in partnership with business and community organizations across the state.