



The Green Architect

By Blair Seibert, AIA, LEED AP

Originally published August 2007 in the San Fernando Valley AIA Elevations Newsletter

Build It Green's GreenPoint Rated System

When it comes to building green, you'll find there are quite a few rating systems around, reflecting different standards. You're probably familiar with CHPS, or the Collaborative for High Performance Schools, and LEED, the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

Several communities have also established green guidelines. Among them are the Chicago Standard, Boston's Article 32 and Santa Monica's Green Building Program for large commercial projects in their cities.

One of the most exciting green ratings systems I have recently learned about is one specifically geared to California housing called **GreenPoint Rated**.

The GPR system addresses green building in relation to California building codes and laws. It currently supports single family, multi-family and multi-family mixed-use projects. It is extremely popular in Northern California probably because components of it originated in the Bay Area in 1999. Two years ago, after the merger between two non-profits, the Green Resource Center and

Bay Area Build It Green, a new non-profit known as Build It Green or BIG and the GPR system were the result.

The GreenPoint Rated system is community based and was developed and continues to be refined through input by:

- o State, County and City Governments
- o Supplier Councils
- o Green Professional Councils
- o Real Estate Professionals
- o Production Home Builders
- o Affordable Housing Coalition
- o Developers, Architects and Contractors

BIG's goal is to rate 10,000 homes by the end of 2008. Anaheim Public Utilities hosted the four day Green Point Rater class that I attended in late July. Anaheim is experiencing tremendous growth and they want their future homes to be built "green".

The USGBC and BIG have an amicable relationship, mutually supporting one another's LEED-Homes and GPR programs. Green Building Professionals are encouraged to cross train to act as raters for both programs. While the USGBC focuses on reaching the upper tier builders (top 25%), BIG recognizes that the remaining 75% have the potential to make a huge impact on the environment. Their goal is to open the green market to a wide percentage of builders to help the odds of their impact being good.

When builders and developers recognize how easy the GPR system is to use and that it provides them with added long-term benefits (i.e. fewer call backs from home owners about problems) they return to the system and increase their rating time and again.

Computer software is being developed to allow registrants in either LEED-H or GPR to compare their building in both systems.

Similar to other systems, third parties verify GPR compliance. Like LEED-H there are prerequisites; four for multi-family projects and three for single family:

1. 50% Waste Diversion by Weight (Recycled or Reused)

2. The GPR checklist must be included in the set of construction documents
3. The building must perform 15% above Title 24
4. A 3-year warranty must be provided for shingle roofs on multifamily projects

From a list of 345+/- optional points a minimum of 50 must be met to participate in the program. Because some of the points conflict (like in LEED) and others support each other, attainment of all points is not possible. To date, the highest rated development received 180 points.

In addition to the prerequisites, there are a minimum number of points in four of the five categories that must be obtained: 30 in Energy, 5 in Indoor Air Quality/Health, 6 in Resources and 9 in Water. There are no requirements for the Community Category.

I was delighted to see many of the points reminiscent of Best Practices I had learned in architecture school. Builders can obtain points for installing termite shields and designing in 24" modules (optimal value engineering).

Depending upon the points selected an additional HERS (Home Energy Rating System) rater may be required.

I am working with a home owner/builder working on a 3,000 s.f. in Venice. He considered dual certifications: LEED-Homes and GreenPoint Rated. As a LEED accredited professional I totally support the USGBC's programs but for his first residential project the GPR system is more economical and regionally specific.

Many of the GPR guidelines are taken directly from state and local government agency requirements. The requirement to review one out of every seven homes after the initial thorough review of three homes relates to HUD guidelines.

BIG also provides customer service and on-line information for green products and California vendors that is tremendously helpful to homeowners. They offer an "Ask An Expert Hotline" customized response service to building professionals and the

general public from the nine County San Francisco Bay Area and Anaheim. Until some arrangements with Los Angeles and other Southern California cities are made I am certain BIG will offer this valuable service to people who have registered for the GreenPoint Rated program. It's a win/win situation for my client.

BIG will also play a large role in this month's West Coast Green Conference set to take place in San Francisco September 20-22, 2007. This conference is open to the trade for a couple of days and the public on Saturday.

BIG and the Green Point Rated program have proven very popular in Northern California and with Anaheim's help, stands to become equally popular in Southern California.

To find out more about Build It Green and their upcoming GreenPoint Rater classes see: www.builditgreen.org

To learn about the West Coast Green Conference see:
<http://www.westcoastgreen.com/>

Link to the Santa Monica Green Building Program: <http://greenbuildings.santamonica.org/>

Link to Boston's Green Building Program: <http://www.cityofboston.gov/bra/gbtf/documents/Boston%20Zoning%20Code%20Green%20Bldg%20Amendments.pdf>

Blair Seibert, AIA, LEED AP is a member of the San Fernando Valley and Los Angeles AIA. If you have any questions or comments about this article or would like to be notified of local "green building" events, contact her at: 310-422-2417 or blair@verdearchitects.com.