

# ARCHITECT

---

July 2008

## AIA, USGBC to Form 'Strategic Alliance'

Partnership will focus on advocacy, education, and research.

By Margot Carmichael Lester

In June, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) said it would form a "strategic alliance" with the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) to advance shared goals for sustainable development through coordinated advocacy, education, and research. Partnerships between the organizations date back 15 years.

Despite the announcement's proximity to the May release of "Quantifying Sustainability," the AIA's study of Green Globes, SB-Tool 07, and LEED-NC 2.2 released in May, the agreement was in the works before results were tallied. (LEED performed well in the study, the introduction of which notes that the AIA "maintains a position of neutrality regarding rating systems currently available.")

"The study was conducted independently based on criteria established by AIA," explains Peter Templeton, USGBC's senior vice president for education and research. "This alliance is based upon our long-standing relationship." Conversations to date have focused on potential areas of cooperation rather than specific details, Templeton says. As such, it's unclear how the alliance might affect CEUs and LEED certification, if at all.

But feelings about the pact are mixed. Seattle planner and architect Myles Huddart says LEED certification requires a lot of work that can prove burdensome, particularly for small firms. However, Ed Mc-Mahon, the Charles Fraser Senior Resident Fellow for Sustainable Development at the Urban Land Institute, thinks the alliance could ease the pain. "It's possible AIA will try to work with USGBC to simplify LEED, make it less time-consuming and expensive so people can use it top to bottom," McMahan says. "If it's going to work in the marketplace, it's got to work for everybody."

Others are more bullish. "As the advocate for the built environment, AIA has a responsibility to take a position on sustainability and offer the profession and the public the tools by which we can measure our successes," says Margit Whitlock, principal at Architectural Concepts in San Diego.

Adds Christine Law, a LEED-accredited associate at Boston-based Margulies & Associates, "This confirms to the building community that we can and are working together to reach our future goals for sustainability in our field."