



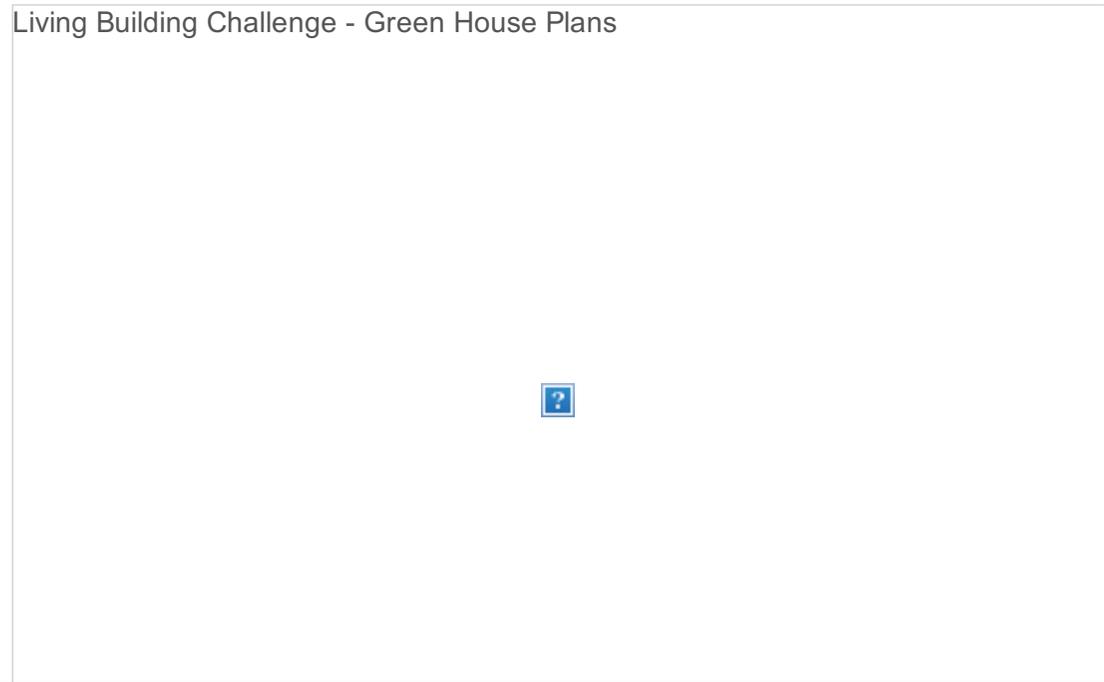
The Blog



Living Building Challenge: A Unique Net-Zero Water, Net-Zero Energy Building Standard

Posted on 09. Apr, 2012 by [Maryruth Belsey Priebe](#) in [Articles](#)

Living Building Challenge - Green House Plans



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Just when you thought you'd learned everything there was to know about green building standards, you discover another one. Introducing the [International Living Future Institute's](#) (ILFI's) [Living Building Challenge](#) (LBC). Though not new (the program was launched in November 2006), it certainly is one of the lesser known green building programs, and definitely worth exploring.

The Living Building Challenge is based on the idea that nature (a flower) provides a metaphor for sustainable buildings. Just as a flower generates all of its own energy, recycles water within a closed system, and adds beauty to its surroundings, so too should a building. In essence, this standard asks: "What if every single act of design and construction made the world a better place?"

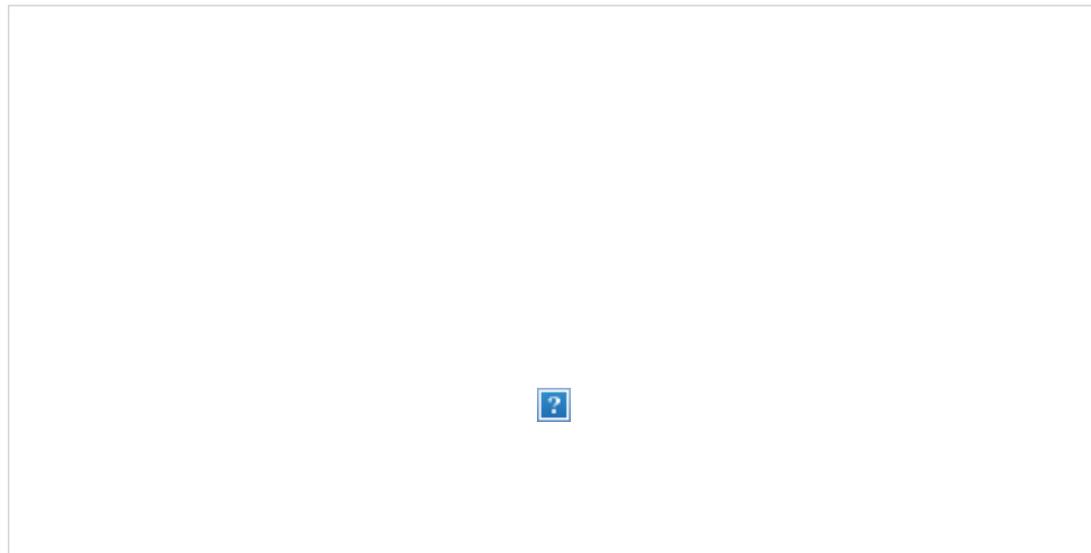
The Living Building Challenge is a certification system that is based on this idea, encompassing [7 different petals](#), or sets of principles, as follows:

- **Site:** This includes limits of growth, urban agriculture, habitat exchange, and car-free living.
- **Water:** The aim is to achieve net zero water, as well as to enhance the ecological water flow.
- **Energy:** Ultimately, buildings that achieve the certification need to be net zero energy.
- **Health:** Certified buildings must contribute to a civilized environment, healthy air, and biophilia.
- **Materials:** When selecting materials for an LBC building, care must be taken to avoid Red List products, and to look for materials that minimize embodied carbon, come from responsible industry, are appropriately sourced, and stress conservation and reuse.
- **Equity:** A Living Building will consider human scale, humane places, democracy, social justice, and a right to nature.
- **Beauty:** This means incorporate beautiful, even spiritual concepts that inspire and educate.

Though few buildings have yet to meet the standard, the ones that have are truly

extraordinary. Check out the Phipps Conservatory, for instance, whose newest building is both net zero water and net zero energy.

The Living Building Challenge standards are being touted as the most stringent in North America, and though they are typically applied to commercial buildings, they can be applied to residential ones as well. It certainly is something to which to aspire.





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