

BY THE PARKING INDUSTRY, FOR THE PARKING INDUSTRY

By Rachel Yoka, LEED AP BD+C, CPSM

I recently had the opportunity to participate in the first joint meeting of the boards of directors of the International Parking Institute (IPI) and the Green Parking Council (GPC), which became an affiliate and the “sustainability arm” of IPI last summer. Our recent meeting of the minds inspired both organizations, especially with regard to the new Green Garage Certification program.

When I first met with GPC leaders more than two years ago, we had a lively and challenging discussion about whether a specific certification program should be developed for parking structures. At that time, we had applied for building certification under the United States Green Building Council’s LEED New Construction Rating System. The Green Globes program was also applying its rating system to garages. Multiple applicable frameworks existed, so why re-invent the wheel?

Reasoning

Ultimately, the GPC, its certification committee, and more than 200 volunteers and subject matter expert reviewers uncovered the why:

- **Retrofits.** Existing rating systems may cover the design of new parking or mixed-use structures, but they do not apply to existing parking structures. Our parking infrastructure was designed to last upwards of 40 years—how would we address these structures? Sustainability measures should not be limited to new designs; people, planet, and profit benefit when we retrofit existing buildings.
- **Parking structures are a unique building type.** The new program addresses opportunities specific to parking that other systems do not, not only from a design standpoint, but from the perspective of both programs and operations. These opportunities, which are unique to parking structures, are now captured and integrated in a comprehensive system that applies to our industry.
- **A parking industry-specific approach can transform our industry.** All green building ratings systems aim to increase cleaner energy sources, energy efficiency, and multiple modes of transportation while decreasing carbon emissions, pollution, waste, and of course, life cycle cost. The development and implementation of a rating system designed specifically for parking structures can most rapidly strengthen and coalesce the movement towards greater sustainability in our industry.

The certification standard is now in a critical period of development and evaluation. We have progressed



the standard to the public comment and beta period. These two steps, designed to refine and improve the standard, are happening simultaneously. The standard is available via free download on the GPC’s website (greenparkingcouncil.org/certification) and is ready for your comment.

Feedback

Get your red pen out—we want to gather your expertise, experience, and feedback on the beta version of the system. We are also benchmarking the system against at least 30 of the greenest garages in the U.S. to gauge not only the garages’ performance against the standard, but the standard’s performance against a portfolio of built projects. These garages include some LEED-certified structures as well as those that have not yet been recognized under any standard. The comment and benchmarking processes will be finalized and this valuable input will be used to calibrate the rating system before the launch of the first formal version of the Certified Green Garage standard. We will launch the first version to market in 2014.

We recognize that the triple bottom line is essential to the definition and application of sustainability. People, planet, and profit must be carefully considered and measured in the decision-making process. For long-term sustainability to take root, the return on investment must be realized within an operational timeframe. This is both a challenge and an opportunity, and I am confident that IPI, GPC, and our industry are well-equipped and ready to take parking and sustainability to the next level. **P**



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