

Articulation of the Planning Commission Environment Committee's position on the issue of third party certifications and performance guidelines (i.e., MITRE's recommendation supporting augmentation of the Policy Plan's green building policy with Designed to Earn the ENERGY STAR), based on the discussion at the September 29, 2016 committee meeting

The Environment Committee spent a considerable amount of time discussing and debating this issue and identified two distinct questions that need to be answered:

1. Should the Comprehensive Plan's green building policy be revised such that it would establish a greater emphasis on energy efficiency over other green building design strategies?
2. If so, should the Designed to Earn the ENERGY STAR program be the preferred mechanism to implement this recommendation?

The committee notes that MITRE's recommendation is implicitly focused on the component of the county's green building policy that addresses nonresidential development and residential development proposals that would be eligible to attain the LEED-NC (New Construction) or LEED-CS (Core and Shell) Certification. The policy addressing other residential development proposals (e.g., single family and low-rise multifamily) already includes an energy emphasis, in that it supports certification under an established residential green building rating system that incorporates multiple green building concepts and that includes an ENERGY STAR Qualified Homes designation or comparable level of energy performance. This emphasis on energy efficiency was established within the original policy as adopted in 2007 because, at that time, comprehensive residential green building rating systems were not widely available while the ENERGY STAR Qualified Homes program was. In its development of recommendations leading to the 2014 revision of the green building policy, the committee recommended a broadening of the residential policy to recognize that such comprehensive residential green building rating systems were now available, but it did not wish to do this at the expense of the adopted emphasis on energy.

The component of the green building policy addressing projects eligible to attain the LEED-NC or LEED-CS Certification has not, to date, emphasized any one particular green building design strategy, although the committee notes that stormwater management guidance that has been adopted within Area Plans for a number of the county's growth centers does provide explicit support for the stormwater-related LEED credits (or equivalent). During the committee's recent deliberations on the revision of the green building policy, there was considerable discussion as to whether any particular green building strategies should be emphasized over others, and the committee ultimately recommended against establishing such emphases within the Policy Plan guidance. MITRE has effectively asked the county to revisit this approach.

In considering the questions above, the committee sees merit to a range of perspectives—it acknowledges that energy efficiency and conservation are increasingly critical needs in light of global climate issues and also notes that the public comments it received during its review were

supportive of a policy emphasis on energy. However, the committee also recognizes that all components of green building rating systems have merit and that, if an emphasis on energy were to be established, it would likely come at the expense of other meritorious green building strategies. The strong merits of differing perspectives caused the committee to have considerable difficulty in addressing these questions.

After considerable discussion and review, the committee has reached the following conclusions:

- **There would be merit in revising the green building policy in the Policy Plan volume in order to establish more explicit, but general, support/encouragement for energy efficiency and conservation efforts.**
- **Applicants and their development teams should be encouraged to emphasize energy efforts within their green building strategies. However, there should not be a prescription or expectation set for any additional specific levels of energy performance.**
- **While a general emphasis on energy efforts should be encouraged, the Policy Plan guidance should not establish a preference for any particular approach or certification system (e.g., Designed to Earn the ENERGY STAR) relating to energy efficiency/conservation. Rather, the Policy Plan should be amended to provide general encouragement for such efforts, applicants should be apprised of this preference, and applicants should then decide, if, how, and to what extent they should incorporate such an energy emphasis into their green building commitments. An applicant's energy and green building commitments could then be considered within the broader context of the application's proffer package.**