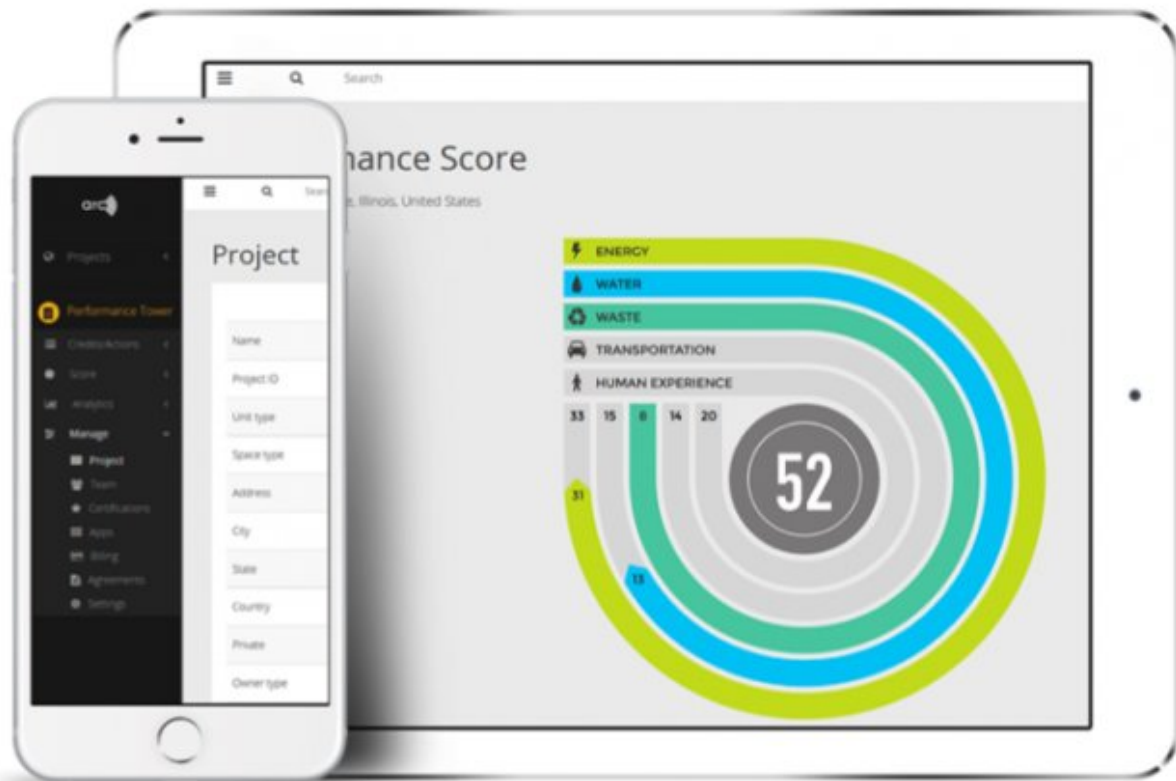


Finally, a way for cities to track and meet sustainability benchmarks

August 23 2018, by Dina Farone



Credit: usgbc.org

We have apps that track our caloric consumption, our impulsive spending, and how many steps we take in a day. They help us keep tabs on ourselves so we maintain an optimum lifestyle. They even foster

competition among our virtual followers. So why couldn't we have something similar for energy or water consumption? Imagine an app that tracks how an entire city performs, how much fuel it needs or how much waste it generates. This is the concept behind the [LEED for Cities](#) platform.

Certain buildings that have achieved a standard of sustainability are awarded a "Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design" (LEED) certification by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). You may have seen a plaque celebrating this achievement affixed to the entrance of your office building. This has become the most widely recognized symbol for green buildings around the world. But even though greener buildings play an essential role in preventing [climate change](#), cities can have a much bigger hand in these efforts.

Through the implementation of a new platform called Arc, the LEED rating system for buildings can now be applied to cities. A single building can achieve certification by gaining points in different credit categories such as energy, water, waste, transportation, and human experience. Once the [building](#) has been built and gained its points, it is awarded its LEED certification. But a city is fluid and constantly changing. So how can it achieve a similar certification?

LEED for Cities is not about rewarding the final product. Instead, this certification recognizes cities that are taking the steps to track their operations and reduce their [environmental impact](#). Similar to FitBits tracking human health, LEED for Cities will track the well-being of a whole city. Cities are centers for commerce, culture, and consequently, [greenhouse gas emissions](#). Larger cities consume two-thirds of the world's energy and create about a quarter of the global [carbon dioxide emissions](#). But as the root of the problem, cities have the opportunity to be the solution. By using the Arc platform, cities can track their environmental impact by sharing data across various metrics.

Our world today is filled with an abundance of data that is waiting to be harnessed and translated into something impactful. Arc is an online scoring and benchmarking tool that analyzes data within the five performance indicators mentioned previously: energy, water, waste, transportation, and human experience. The data then generates a performance score that changes instantaneously as the city does. This allows a city to check themselves when Arc displays an increase in carbon emissions, for example. As one could imagine, the program is also designed to generate healthy competition among cities.

This program kickstarted in early 2017 and is already being implemented in five cities globally: Washington, D.C.; Phoenix, Arizona; Arlington, Virginia; Songdo, South Korea; and Savona, Italy. D.C., for example, has outlined a very detailed sustainability plan with ambitious targets for carbon and waste reduction, among many other goals. LEED for Cities is set up to support the goals of cities like Washington D.C. and provide a platform for reaching these targets. If a city is already taking the steps to be a part of the solution, this new platform can accelerate these efforts.

And with climate change happening more rapidly than ever, we must make bigger strides to address the damage we've caused as humans. By using the LEED rating system for buildings, an owner or developer can set a prominent example for a sustainable future. And now, [city](#) leaders can take these steps and do good on a much larger scale. Cities are the future, and LEED for Cities is helping shape that future into a sustainable one.

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