



# STAR COMMUNITY INDEX

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As the imperative to address the economic crisis and climate change becomes ever clearer, the STAR Community Index promises to chart a clear path for local governments to pursue economic vitality, environmental stewardship and social responsibility. Being developed for release in 2010, STAR is a voluntary rating system for sustainable communities modeled after the highly successful LEED™ green building program. STAR will use a consensus-based approach to develop options that cities and counties can choose to make their communities more sustainable and livable. STAR will also help communities shine when they achieve significant success.

## A Collaborative Program

The partnership behind STAR includes ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, an international association of governments committed to climate protection and sustainable development, the U.S. Green Building Council, which developed LEED, the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System™ and the Center for American Progress, a think tank based in Washington, D.C. ICLEI is managing STAR and will develop the tools, workshops and other resources needed to implement it.

Just as LEED™ transformed the building industry by bringing together a wide spectrum of interests in agreement on specific improvements that define green buildings, STAR has convened volunteer committees drawn from an array of expertise and organizations that represent local governments, federal agencies, universities, non-profits and corporations to identify effective actions on all three pillars of sustainability: environment, economy and society.

## The Basics

There will be a point system tied to various measures and an award system for cities and counties that achieve certain point thresholds. Like LEED™, STAR is not a ranking system; there will not be a “first place” or a “last place.” But the ratings will give local governments recognition for their achievements and encourage them

to make improvements over time. They will also be able to compare their progress with actions in other communities.

STAR is not the first attempt to rate sustainable communities. But with its partnership approach and its use of LEED’s proven model of success, it aims to become the established national program for local government action. STAR’s founding partners believe that adoption of a single national program will lead to more innovation and efficiency because it will encourage collaboration.

With a common agenda developed through a broad-based consensus process, cities and counties will be more likely to share best practices and lessons learned. Model programs are likely to emerge. STAR will likely include points for local innovations, which will inspire keen interest in new ideas that bubble up for communities small and large.

STAR will lower program development and administrative costs for local governments. Further savings are likely as communities will not have to develop their own strategies or sort through an h disparate programs in search of ones that can be adapted to local conditions. Instead, cities and counties can focus more of their scarce resources on implementing projects that make a real difference.

To encourage action in small communities with tight budgets, STAR's benchmarking system will be freely available online. Performance standards will be tied to readily available data whenever possible. And some points will likely be awarded for policy changes, which are easier to document.

### Development Process

STAR is being developed under an aggressive schedule because the need for action on economic, environmental and social priorities is so pressing and because so many cities and counties are eager for clear direction. The founding partners came together in November 2007, and hired Lynne Barker, formerly Sustainable Communities Planner for the City of Seattle, as the program director.

A Steering Committee of 45 people was formed, with representatives of the founding partners plus a diverse group of elected officials and executive staff from cities and counties, national associations, federal agencies, and non-profit organizations. At a two-day inaugural retreat in September 2008, the Steering Committee elected an Executive Committee, which is headed by Sadhu Johnston, Chief Environmental Officer for Chicago, Illinois. The Steering Committee also began to map out the organizing structure and issues that STAR should address.

These were translated into a recommendation to form eight Technical Advisory Committees. Each Technical Advisory Committee will address a range of issues and require a diversity of expertise. To formulate the Technical Advisory Committees staff analyzed the issues identified by the Steering Committee, indicators contained in existing sustainable community frameworks, disciplines responsible for specific areas, and the inter-relationship between issues.

The committees are comprised of a broad diversity of experts from an array of organizations and institutions. The 120 members were selected with the aim to create a balance among a variety of perspectives which is imperative to address the breadth of issues under the purview of each committee. The Technical Advisory Committees will work through 2010 to develop the STAR system. All interested stakeholders, will have a chance to review the system, ask questions and make suggestions. After a public comment period, revisions will be incorporated with the official launch of STAR anticipated at the end of 2010.

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## STAR COMMUNITY INDEX TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Environment	Economy	Society
<p><b>Natural Systems</b> (ecosystems, habitat, water, stormwater, air quality, waste, environmental management and resource conservation)</p> <p><b>Planning &amp; Design</b> (land use, transportation, mobility, parks, open space, recreation, urban design, livability, preservation, brownfields)</p> <p><b>Energy &amp; Climate</b> (energy, emissions, renewable energy, and green building)</p>	<p><b>Economic Development</b> (clean technologies, green jobs, local commerce, tourism, local food, local commerce, sustainable industries)</p> <p><b>Employment &amp; Workforce Training</b> (Jobs creation, training, living wages, youth skills, services for economically disadvantaged)</p>	<p><b>Equity in Access, College Rediness, Lifestyles</b> (education excellence, arts, culture, and community engagement)</p> <p><b>Children, Health &amp; Safety</b> (Youth wellness, crime prevention, emergency preparedness)</p> <p><b>Affordability &amp; Social Equity</b> (affordable housing, poverty, community revitalization, services for basic needs, civil rights, race and social justice)</p>

