Costa Mesa wins prestigious LEED Gold certification from U.S. Green Business Council

The City of Costa Mesa has been awarded LEED Gold certification, joining a growing group of more than 100 cities and municipalities from around the world to be certified under the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED for Cities and Communities rating system.

LEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, was created by USGBC and is the world's most widely used green building rating system. The certification recognizes the city's efforts to implement practical and measurable strategies aimed at improving sustainability and the living standard for residents.

Costa Mesa is one of only four cities in the United States to have received LEED Gold certification using the latest LEED standard, LEED version 4.1. The other three are Orlando, Santa Fe and Las Vegas.

In early 2020, Costa Mesa was named one of 20 local governments to receive additional educational resources and technical support as it pursued LEED for Cities certification. The support and resources throughout the certification process were made possible by Bank of America, which has provided $1.25 million to USGBC's LEED for Cities and Communities program since 2018, supporting a total of 41 U.S. cities and communities to date as they pursue certification.

"I'm so proud of our staff for receiving this LEED certification," Mayor Katrina Foley said. "This achievement demonstrates Costa Mesa's commitment to sustainability, human health and economic prosperity, and that's why we remain a place where people want to live, work and play."

USGBC cited Costa Mesa for its integrative planning and leadership processes, green spaces, transportation performance and policies, water efficiency, energy and greenhouse gas emission management, quality of life and innovation. These practical and measurable strategies and solutions are aimed at improving human and environmental health.

“LEED has been a transformative tool for buildings, and we are now seeing the impact it can have at the city and community level,” said Mahesh Ramanujam, president and CEO, USGBC. “By prioritizing issues such as sustainability, resilience, health, green infrastructure and more, Costa Mesa is leading the way to a better world and helping USGBC continue toward our vision of healthy people in healthy places.”

Indeed, Costa Mesa has received LEED Gold certification for Fire Station No. 1 and for the Donald Dungan Library.

“As a community that deeply cares about the environment, it is exciting to have Costa Mesa recognized as one of the world’s first LEED Gold-certified cities,” said Allen Staff, Bank of America Orange County market president. “Bank of America’s support for USGBC’s LEED for Cities initiative is part of our larger capital deployment commitment to address climate change and build resilience in communities like Costa Mesa.”

The LEED Gold certification was pursued by Salem Afeworki, the city of Costa Mesa’s first Sustainability and Energy Service Manager and Mayor Pro-Tem Andrea Marr, who is a former Navy veteran and current engineer for an energy solutions firm.

“I would like to say thank you to Southern California Edison, Mesa Water District, Costa Mesa Sanitary District, various City Departments and consultants for the data and input they provided to help us achieve recognition as a LEED Gold City,” Afeworki said.

City leaders believe that LEED for Cities and Communities is a great guiding framework that can help staff identify top

priorities and foster initiatives that enhance the quality of life. This grant allowed the city to pursue the following initiatives:

- Plan, build, operate and maintain projects that promote inclusive and responsible growth citywide;
- Identify gaps and opportunities in policy or budgetary needs;
- Develop realistic and achievable strategies, tactics and metrics that would allow City staff to compare Costa Mesa with other cities;
- Identity synergies, multi-benefitted projects and initiatives that are cost effective; and
- Create a better framework for collaboration that dismantles silos, increase transparency and cultivates new partnerships.

About the U.S. Green Building Council

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) is committed to a prosperous and sustainable future through cost-efficient and energy-saving green buildings. USGBC works toward its mission of market transformation through its LEED green building program, robust educational offerings, an international network of local community leaders, the annual Greenbuild International Conference & Expo, the Center for Green Schools and advocacy in support of public policy that encourages and enables green buildings and communities. For more information, visit usgbc.org and connect on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.