



Using LEED for Good

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Written by [Rick Fedrizzi](#)

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Kobe Bryant and President Clinton display the LEED Platinum plaque for the Step Up on Vine project. (KelleyWestPhotography.com)

It's not everyday you see President Clinton & Kobe Bryant together holding a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) plaque. But this Monday was no ordinary day.

Monday marked the grand opening of Step Up on Vine, a LEED Platinum, permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless in Hollywood, owned by the non-profit organization [Step Up on Second](#).

The Los Angeles Homelessness Services Authority estimates that 50,000 people are homeless in LA County on any given night. Of those, around 6,000 are considered both chronically homeless and mentally ill. While these statistics are bleak, Step Up on Second has risen up as a game-changer and a cause for immense hope. In 2010, the organization made a [Clinton Global Initiative \(CGI\) Commitment to Action](#) to "Sustainably end homelessness in Hollywood." Together with Shangri-La Industries, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, and the American Roundtable to Abolish Homelessness, they set a goal to acquire, develop and operate 200 LEED-certified permanent supportive home units by 2014. As of Monday, they are now half way to reaching that ambitious goal.

The opening of this incredible facility is further realization of this promise. At Step Up on Vine, “LEED Platinum” is more than just a plaque. It says that these residents matter. They deserve a Platinum building with clean air, daylight and rooftop vegetable garden. This is sustainable housing that will offer shelter, a healthy environment, and the opportunity to grow their own food to eat and to sell locally. It’s a place to call home, where people can “step up” to better lives.

Through their call for Commitments to Action, President Clinton and CGI have been a catalyst for massive societal and sustainable change across the world. Being on-site to witness Step Up on Second’s commitment realized was incredibly moving - and the chance to celebrate with the Step Up folks, President Clinton himself, as well as Kobe Bryant, who is active in ending homelessness, this was a pretty unforgettable night. Like I said: far from a normal Monday!

The point is: In spite of all the politicking, the fighting, the everyday hurdles and perpetual crises, there is good happening all around us. BuzzFeed recently ran a post featuring [21 moments that restore our faith in humanity](#) - meeting the folks at Step Up on Second was my most recent moment. Witnessing their use of LEED to make the lives of formerly homeless residents better and healthier was invigorating and inspirational. It’s the same feeling I get as we continue to work on our own CGI Commitment to Action - our [Project Haiti](#) initiative to build a LEED Platinum orphanage and children’s center in Port-au-Prince. It’s what motivates the affordable housing developer to work renewable energy and healthy building materials in to a project. It’s why more than 30 USGBC staff members volunteer serving meals and supporting the homeless community in Washington, DC at [Miriam’s Kitchen](#). It’s the reason thousands of USGBC’s community members and chapters volunteered more than 300,000 hours toward the missions of green building & social equity in 2012.

I’m proud to be a part of a community that brings together architects, engineers, change agents, pro-athletes and Presidents - all for the sake of doing the right thing. You should be, too.



Rick Fedrizzi

President, CEO & Founding Chairman
U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC)



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