



Recycled content means the total percentage of recovered material in a product, including pre-consumer and postconsumer materials. Pre-consumer refers to materials or byproducts recovered and reused during the manufacturing process, such as faulty or excess items. Postconsumer refers to materials that would usually be disposed of as a solid waste, having reached its intended end-use and completed its life cycle as a consumer item.¹

Recycled materials reduce the need for virgin resources, decreasing the environmental impact of extraction and manufacturing. Recycling typically requires less energy than producing new materials from scratch, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the project's overall carbon footprint. Incorporating recycled materials also helps divert waste from landfills, promoting sustainable waste management and reducing environmental issues associated with landfill disposal.

Within the construction industry, the largest volume of waste comes from building demolitions. 98% of structural steel and 70% of rebar from demolition will

be recycled, due to its high recyclability.² Non-ferrous metals, such as aluminum, copper, nickel, lead, tin, and zinc are the only known construction materials that can be recycled and repurposed indefinitely, without losing their chemical properties during the recycling process. This allows recycled steel to maintain its quality while also being more environmentally friendly and sustainable.

LEED® and other market-based systems award credits towards building certification for using recycled content materials, due to the reduced impacts resulting from extraction and processing of virgin materials.

SUMMARY

Using recycled content materials in LEED projects offers several environmental and sustainability benefits, including resource conservation, energy efficiency, waste reduction, and economic benefits. Incorporating recycled content materials aligns with the core principles of LEED, which aims to promote sustainable, environmentally responsible, and resource-efficient construction and design practices.

While we strive to provide accurate and up-to-date information, the intricacies of LEED certification may change, and individual project circumstances may vary, making it essential to consult with a knowledgeable professional for precise and tailored advice. For more information on LEED® certification visit [usgbc.org](https://www.usgbc.org).

References

1. "When looking for recycled content products, what do the terms "postconsumer," pre-consumer" and "total recycled content" mean?" [stopwaste.org/faq/when-looking-recycled-content-products-what-do-terms-postconsumer-pre-consumer-and-total](https://www.stopwaste.org/faq/when-looking-recycled-content-products-what-do-terms-postconsumer-pre-consumer-and-total) Retrieved 30 October 2023.
2. "How the Construction Industry Can Better Use Recycled Building Materials" projectsight.trimble.com/blog/reclaimed-recycled-building-materials/ Retrieved 30 October 2023.