



# Language of Sustainability

---

## **Definitions of Acronyms and Technical Terms**

## Commonly Used Acronyms and Technical Terms

**Ac Acre:** 43,560 square feet.

**BL Baseline:** Existing conditions.

### BMP - Best Management Practice

**Brownfield:** Real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.

**CO2 - Carbon Dioxide:** A colorless, odorless, gas produced by burning fossil fuels, contributes to global warming and is the most common greenhouse gas.

**Carbon Sequestration:** Provision of long-term storage of carbon in the terrestrial biosphere, underground, or the oceans so that the buildup of carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere will reduce or slow.

**Conservation Easement:** Voluntary legal agreement between a property owner and a conservation organization or public entity that permanently limits some or all of the uses of a property.

**Cradle to Cradle:** A holistic economic, industrial and social framework, that seeks to design products and systems that are efficient and waste free.

**DU - Dwelling Unit:** A single unit which provides a kitchen or food preparation area, in addition to rooms and spaces for living, bathing, sleeping, and the like.

**Down-cycling:** The recycling of a material into a material of lesser quality.

**EEP – NC Ecosystem Enhancement Program:** Innovative program combines an existing wetlands-restoration initiative by the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources with ongoing environmental efforts by the N.C. Department of Transportation. [www.nceep.net](http://www.nceep.net)

**EIS - Environmental Impact Statement:** A report that documents the information required to evaluate the environmental impact of a project.

**EP - Equator Principles:** A benchmark for the financial industry to manage social and environmental issues in project financing.

**ESA - Endangered Species Act:** The ESA was enacted by Congress in 1973 in response to an alarming decline of many animal and plant species with the goal to return threatened and endangered species to the point where they no longer need the law's protections.

**Embodied Energy:** The quantity of energy required to manufacture, and supply to the point of use a product, material or service.

**Energy Star Program:** Joint program of the Environmental protection Agency and the Department of Energy that administers a labeling system for over 50 categories of energy efficiency products.

**FERC - Federal Energy Regulatory Commission:** Federal agency that regulates the interstate transmission of electricity, natural gas, and oil. FERC also reviews proposals to build liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals and interstate natural gas pipelines as well as licensing hydropower projects. [www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov)

**Footprint (Carbon):** Measure of human demand on the environment in terms of amount of greenhouse gases produced, measured in carbon dioxide.

**GBCI - Green Building Certification Institute:** Administers program to certify LEED Accredited Professionals (LEED APs) which have demonstrated a thorough understanding of green building techniques. [www.gbci.org](http://www.gbci.org)

**GDP - General Development Policies:** Broad policies that are used to provide direction in developing future land use plans as well as in making rezoning decisions in Charlotte, NC.

**GHG - Greenhouse Gas:** Any gas that absorbs infra-red radiation in the atmosphere.

**GIS - Geographical Information System:** Spatial display of data.

**GWP - Global Warming Potential:** A measure of how much a given mass of greenhouse gas is estimated to contribute to global warming.

**Greenfield:** Farmland or open spaces where there has been no commercial or industrial activity.

**Green roof:** Vegetated roof designed to conserve energy and water.

**H3034 - House Bill 3034 (SC):** Requires that all state-owned and state-funded construction greater than 10,000 ft<sup>2</sup> and any major renovation projects of greater than fifty percent of total building space or value achieve LEED-NC Silver certification. (ratified 6/7/07)

**HCP - Habitat Conservation Plan:** A legally binding plan, agreed to by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, to protect a specified area as habitat for a threatened or endangered species.

**HOA/BA - Home Owner's Association/Business Association**

**HVAC - Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning**

**High Performance Building:** A building with energy, economic, and environmental performance that is substantially better than standard practice.

**IPCC - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change:** A panel set up by the United Nations in 1988 to review scientific information on climate change. [www.ipcc.ch](http://www.ipcc.ch)

**Impervious Surfaces:** Hard surfaces, such as sidewalks, streets, and rooftops, that don't allow water to seep into the ground which then becomes runoff into nearby bodies of water.

**LED - Light-emitting Diode:** An electronic component in which electric current is converted directly into visible or infrared light.

**LEED - Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design:** Green Building Rating System, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council.

**LID - Low-impact Development:** Design strategy with the goal of maintaining or replicating the pre-development hydrologic regime through the use of design techniques.

**Life Cycle Cost:** The total cost of owning, operating and maintaining a building over its useful life (including its fuel and water, energy, labor, and replacement components).

**MND - Mitigated Negative Declaration: When an Initial Study (EIS)** has been prepared and a determination can be made that no significant environmental effects will occur because revisions to the project have been made or mitigation measures will be implemented which will reduce all potentially significant impacts to less than significant levels.

**MPO - Metropolitan Planning Organization:** Responsible for coordinating transportation policy for local governmental jurisdictions for all urban areas over 50,000 in population. NC MPOs can be found at <http://www.ncdot.gov/doh/preconstruct/tpb/SHC/concept/Activity/Urban/>

**MT - Metric Tons:** A measurement of mass equal to 1,000 kilograms.

**MWH - Megawatt Hours**

**NAAQS - National Ambient Air Quality Standard:** The Clean Air Act requires EPA to set these standards for pollutants considered harmful to public health and the environment.

**NC DENR - North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources:** Department houses many of the North Carolina state agencies that deal with land, air, water and other environmental concerns. [www.enr.state.nc.us](http://www.enr.state.nc.us)

**NC Healthy Built Homes:** Program that provides a certificate for homes meeting "green home guidelines" built by residential builders who practice sustainable, high performance building strategies. [www.healthybuilthomes.org](http://www.healthybuilthomes.org)

**NC PUC - North Carolina Public Utility Commission:** State agency which regulates electric, telephone (including payphone service and shared tenant service), natural gas, water, wastewater, water resale, household goods transportation, busses, brokers, and ferryboats. [www.ncuc.commerce.state.nc.us](http://www.ncuc.commerce.state.nc.us)

**NEV - Neighborhood Electric Vehicles:** Speed limited electric vehicle.

**NGO - Non-governmental Organization:** A non-profit organization which is independent from government.

**NOX - Oxides of Nitrogen:** Typically refers to any binary compound of oxygen and nitrogen, or to a mixture of such compounds. NOx is a generic term for mono-nitrogen oxides (NO and NO2). These oxides are produced during combustion (e.g. fossil fuels burnt at high temperatures)

**NPDES - National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System – Phase II:** NPDES permit program regulates point sources that discharge pollutants into waters of the United States. The Phase II program expands the program by requiring additional operators of municipal separate storm sewer systems in urbanized areas and operators of small construction sites to implement programs and practices to control polluted storm-water runoff.

**Non-attainment:** Designation that an area violates a national ambient air quality standard or contributes to a nearby violation.

**Nonpoint Source Pollution:** Water pollutant that cannot be identified with a specific source.

**OVE - Optimum Value Engineering:** Design and framing techniques for wood construction that were developed by the Forest Products Laboratory and the National Association of Home Builders approximately two decades ago to use less lumber while maintaining the building's structural integrity, which lowers costs for both the builder and the owner.

**O3 - Ground level ozone:** Ground-level ozone is the primary constituent of smog and is a regulated air pollutant. Ozone is created by a chemical reaction between oxides of nitrogen and volatile organic compounds in the presence of sunlight.

**PPA - Power Purchase Agreements:** A long-term agreement to buy power from a company that produces electricity.

**PSC-Public Service Commission of South Carolina:** South Carolina regulatory agency for the gas and electric utility industries. [www.psc.sc.gov](http://www.psc.sc.gov)

**PV - Photovoltaic:** Solar cell that converts solar energy into electricity.

**Partners for Livable Communities:** Non-profit organization that promotes livable communities through technical assistance, leadership training, workshops, charettes, research and publications. [www.livable.com](http://www.livable.com)

**Passive Solar Design:** Building design that utilizes the sun's energy for the heating and cooling of living spaces.

**Precautionary Principle:** When an activity raises threats to the environment or human health, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically.

**Post-construction Ordinance:** Ordinance requiring limits/management of storm-water runoff from sites after the construction phase.

**Post-consumer Recycled Content:** Contains recovered materials that have completed their life as a consumer product and would have otherwise been disposed of in a landfill.

**Pre-consumer Recycled Content:** Contains recovered materials that were never in the consumer market and would have otherwise been disposed of in a landfill.

**RPO - Rural Planning Organization:** Responsible for coordinating rural transportation policy for local governmental jurisdictions. NC RPOs can be found at [http://www.ncdot.gov/doh/preconstruct/tpb/PDF/RPO\\_Contact\\_List.pdf](http://www.ncdot.gov/doh/preconstruct/tpb/PDF/RPO_Contact_List.pdf)

**R-value:** Insulation values – the higher the number, the better insulated your home will be. In general, ceilings (with attic or cathedral pitches) call for R-49.

**Reconnecting America:** Non-profit organization that is working to integrate transportation systems and the communities they serve, with the goal of generating lasting public/private returns, improving economic and environmental efficiency, and giving more housing and mobility choices. [www.reconnectingamerica.org](http://www.reconnectingamerica.org)

**SB 3 - Senate Bill 3 (NC):** Establishes a renewable energy and energy efficiency portfolio standard (REPS) requiring 12.5% of electricity to come from renewable energy and more efficient operations by 2021. (Ratified 8/2/07)

**SC DHEC - South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Concerns:** Department houses many of the South Carolina state agencies that deal with air, water, health and other environmental concerns. [www.scdhec.net](http://www.scdhec.net)

**SEER - Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio:** This is a measure of the cooling performance for rating central air conditioners and central heat pumps.

**SeqCO<sub>2</sub> - Sequestered CO<sub>2</sub>:** Mass of sequestered CO<sub>2</sub> per unit area [ton CO<sub>2</sub>/acre].

**SO<sub>x</sub> - Sulfur Oxides:** Compounds containing sulfur and oxygen, such as sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and sulfur trioxide (SO<sub>3</sub>).

**Smart Growth:** An urban planning and transportation strategy that concentrates growth in the center of a city to avoid urban sprawl.

**TOD - Transit Oriented Development:** Compact, mixed use development near new or existing public transportation infrastructure that serves housing, transportation and neighborhood goals.

**USACE - US Army Corps of Engineers:** Authority to issue 404 permits which allow for fill in wetland areas on development projects. [www.usace.army.mil](http://www.usace.army.mil)

**USGBC - United States Green Building Council:** A non-profit organization devoted to shifting the building industry towards sustainability. [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)

**VMT - Vehicle Miles Traveled:** The total number of vehicle miles traveled within a specific geographic area.

**VOC - Volatile Organic Compound:** A highly evaporative, carbon-based substance, which produces noxious fumes; found in many paints, caulks and adhesives; evaporates readily into atmosphere. See O3.

**Xeriscaping:** Landscaping and gardening techniques that do not require supplemental irrigation.

In 1987, the Brundtland Commission created the definition of sustainability most often cited today. Sustainability is “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Twenty-one years later there has been a rapid increase in the awareness and importance of sustainability in the public and private sectors.

This list of acronyms and technical terms, and the respective definitions, was prepared by the Urban Land Institute and Centralina Council of Governments to help clarify any ambiguity in the rise of terms used in the land use planning and real estate development industry.

**Green highlighted terms indicate organizations.**

### **About ULI Charlotte**

ULI Charlotte, a District Council of The Urban Land Institute (ULI), is an international, nonprofit research and educational organization that serves to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. The ULI is based in Washington, DC and is connected throughout the Americas, Europe and Asia by a network of District Councils.

### **About Centralina Council of Governments**

The Centralina Council of Governments (CCOG) is the state-designated lead regional organization for the greater Charlotte region. It serves as a conduit of grants, a staff resource for members, and a forum for local governments to address current problems and future needs. Centralina staff administers state and federal grants, maintains a comprehensive Regional Data Center and provides local and regional planning and technical services.

*Produced February, 2009*

### **For more information contact:**



Phone: (704) 940-7388  
<http://charlotte.uli.org>



Phone: (704) 372-2416  
[www.centralina.org](http://www.centralina.org)