



Fidelity ramps up green division

An exclusive agreement with the U.S. Green Building Council allows Fidelity National Financial to offer a new green data product and expand its environmental programs division

By Chris Crowell

Fidelity National Financial announced the creation of its Green Transactions, Strategies and Products (GTSP) group in November 2009. The purpose of this group was to implement energy-saving initiatives and other eco-friendly business practices throughout the company to support sustainability.

That effort has now led to a collaboration with the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) and Fidelity's launch of the first-ever Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification data report.

LEED is an internationally recognized green building certification system that provides third-party verification that a building or community was designed and built using strategies aimed at implementing energy savings, water efficiency, carbon emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts. The certification was developed and promulgated by the USGBC.

LEED provides building owners and operators a framework for identifying and implementing practical and measurable green building design, construction, operations and maintenance solutions. Achieving LEED certification today can bring about on-property energy and operation savings or trigger tax benefits and much more.

Fidelity's product, the LEED Project Certification Data Report, provides confirmation of LEED Project certification status to brokers, counsel, lenders, investors, sellers, tenants and appraisers using information supplied directly from the USGBC database. The report is available for properties domestically and internationally, is ordered online through www.disclosuresource.com/LEED is priced at \$1,500.

"The report is not a title product; it's a stand-alone product backed by an E&O policy, and it's specifically geared toward providing the current certification status of LEED-certified buildings," said **Michele Skupic**, vice president and national director of sustainable strategies for Fidelity.

Skupic said operational efficiencies and certification status are big issues on LEED projects, and Fidelity believes it has created a valuable product for the LEED marketplace.

Prior to this data report, interested parties could either call or email USGBC customer service or independently research and gather documentation from owners, general contractors, engineers, architects, etc. This system would often produce incomplete and indefensible information.

"Our LEED Project Certification Data Report creates an opportunity to have a written report as part of the due diligence process for any stakeholder," Skupic said. "When you have a LEED-certified building, either commercial or residential, it may be important to confirm the details and status of the LEED certification, such as the level and version of LEED, the point

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structure and whether or not there's been a challenge to the certification.”

Certification status may be called into question for a variety of reasons:

- Certification may be temporary.
- Certification may have been challenged.
- A project may have been de-certified.
- A project may only be registered and not certified.
- Misrepresentation of certification status.

Skupic said the LEED Project Certification Data Report is the first phase of product roll-outs for Fidelity's GTSP.

“We see this growing in a number of different directions because of the trends that are happening in sustainable real estate and development and alternative energy projects,” she continued. “We consistently track market trends with regard to alternative energy investments,

what's happening with the brokerage and development community with LEED, and all of the legislative initiatives and incentives coming down the pike. We want to continue to create products that will serve all of these market niches as they evolve.”

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– **Michele Skupic,**
VP, National Director, Sustainable Strategies,
Fidelity National Financial

As part of this rollout, the company is training all of its key commercial, industrial sales staff, national builder sales representatives as well as corporate escrow administrators on LEED certification and eco-friendly practices that can benefit the company and its clients.

“We're excited about our exclusivity with the USGBC; that was a real key component of creating value for the market and making this project a reality,” said **Jeffrey Howell**, vice president, associate counsel and director for sustainable products for Fidelity. “It's an exciting product to bring to the market.”

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