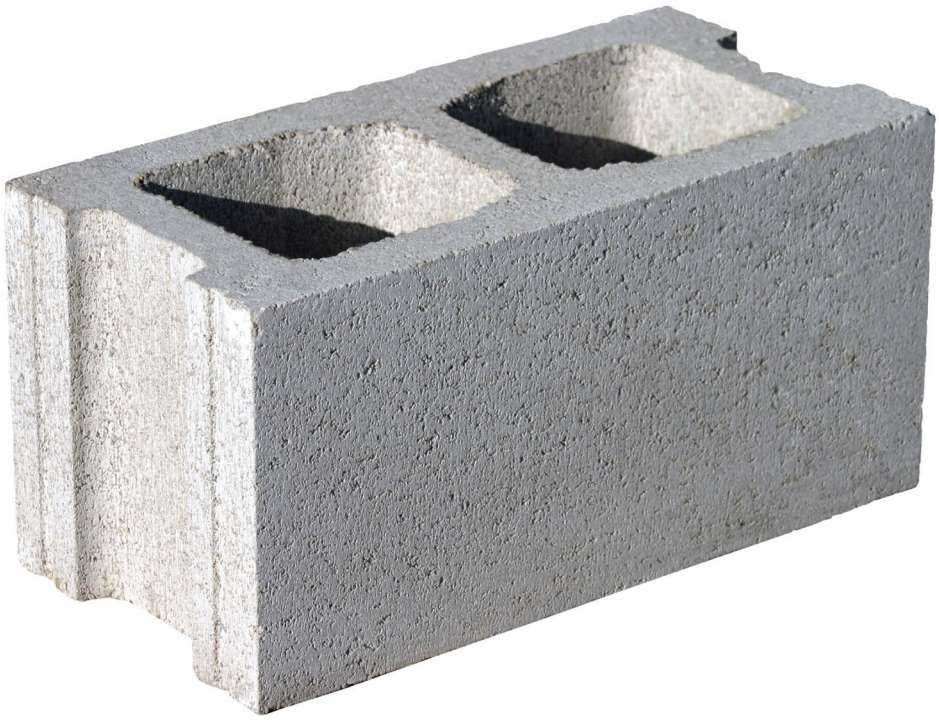
Sometimes, you have to look at the big picture.



Smart, sustainable construction is about earning LEED credits – but it's also about looking down the road and realistically assessing the lifecyle of a building. Where will it be in 50, 75 or 100 years' time? How much maintenance will it require? What will its upkeep cost?

Concrete block is one of the most durable, sustainable and cost-efficient building materials available. In addition to offering outstanding strength and fire protection, concrete block:

- Is produced using significant amounts of recycled material – in some cases up to 100%
- Is produced locally, so it minimizes the carbon footprint associated with transportation
- Contains no volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that can contribute to pollution
- Requires no finishes or cladding

When it comes to being green and achieving sustainability, sometimes you have to look at the big picture – and weigh ALL your options.

Canadian Concrete Masonry Producers Association
Region 6 of the National Concrete Masonry Association

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Build it to last. Build it with Block.

While LEED ratings have established important benchmarks for smarter, more environmentally-friendly construction (as have similar systems such as Green Globes and Canada's more consumer-focused EnerGuide), many building professionals will agree that quantifying green value can be challenging within the confines of LEED. To accurately measure environmental impact, you need to look more closely at a building's sustainability and ongoing lifecycle assessment.

Concrete block earns high marks in two key areas of LEED measurement: regional material, and recycled content. Regional material refers to material sourced within 800 kilometres of the building site. Recycled content refers, in the case of block, to the replacement of some of the cement and aggregate (sand and gravel) in a block mixture. About 20 to 25 percent of the cement content can be replaced with supplementary cementing materials (SCMs), which are typically ground blast-furnace slag in eastern Canada, and fly ash in the west. Aggregates can also be replaced with various recycled materials. There is now lightweight block produced in Ontario that in some cases is credited as having 100 percent recycled content.

But concrete block also offers other benefits that aren't readily recognized under LEED. These include:

- **Thermal mass** Concrete block helps maintain indoor temperatures by moderating the temperature swings that cause furnaces and air conditioners to kick in.

- **No VOCs** Concrete block contains no volatile organic compounds, potentially harmful gases that contribute to smog and can cause respiratory problems. Ironically, concrete block earns no LEED points for indoor environmental quality, and would need to be covered by a low-VOC material (such as paint or carpet) in order to qualify.

- **Fire safety** Concrete block doesn't burn. It saves lives when used as a firewall — and can be re-used when the flames are finally extinguished.

Where sustainability and lifespan are concerned, no building material lasts longer and requires less maintenance than concrete block. Build it today with block and you can expect it to be around for many years to come.

To learn more about the environmental benefits of block, contact the Canadian Concrete Masonry Producers Association.

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