

# SERF FOR HEALTHCARE

SOCIETY OF ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE FACILITIES



You have done a lot to enhance the sustainability of your health care facility. And now you want to let your constituents know about it. Because, for each group of people, knowing the work you have done yields a direct impact to your bottom line. But how best to tell your sustainability story?



*Sparrow Hospital  
Lansing, Michigan*

The Society of Environmentally Responsible Facilities (SERF) was founded in 2010 by real estate owners and industry professionals to provide an alternative sustainable building certification which is streamlined, easy to navigate, and affordable.

We promote the *triple bottom line* of sustainable buildings: buildings that are good for business, good for the environment and good for the community.

Our drive to recognize and promote *Practical Environmental Stewardship*<sup>™</sup> does not end with the certification process. We work with certified property owners, managers and administrators in the research and production of materials, including property *Profiles* and *Case Studies*, to tell your sustainability story.

These materials, which we produce in colorful and engaging hard copy and electronic form, have proven a valuable tool in communicating essential, but often hidden, sustainable materials, systems and processes to multiple audiences which include:

- Patients and their families
- Healthcare workers
- Donors
- Government agencies
- Accreditation authorities
- Community at large

SERF's approach is, by design, in marked contrast to that of the United States Green Building Council's (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, although SERF supports the USGBC's mission and their success in making sustainable design and operations an industry priority.

Depending on the needs of the facility, SERF allows either a prescriptive or performance based path to certification. The sustainability benchmarks used in the process are a smart blend of proprietary standards resulting from SERF's own research, third party standards such as ASHRAE, ANSI, BIFMA, USDA, as well as industry-specific standards.



[SERFgreen.org](http://SERFgreen.org)

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The process is structured to eliminate the necessity of using third party consultants such as commissioning agents and building energy simulation consultants for the purpose of documentation. Additionally, SERF requires only minimal documentation for the entire process.

Other healthcare facility certification programs amount to little more than minor variations to their standards they utilize for new construction. This causes problems for healthcare facilities as most medical equipment is highly sensitive to building design and operation; incorrect operation of medical equipment resulting from facility failures can be fatal. This is also true for standards applied to patient and surgical rooms.



*The Medical Center at Ocean Reef  
Key Largo, Florida*

Reduction in a facility's water and energy usage are universally accepted steps to sustainability, and a requirement to achieve LEED certification. The obvious methods to achieve such reduction are to use low-flow water fixtures and reduced temperature levels. These are unfit for environments like hospitals where high levels of hygiene and comfort have to be maintained every time. With 100,000 deaths per year from Hospital Acquired Infection (HAI), and HAI's being driven in part by hand washing, the need for high-flow water fixtures is evident as it reduces bacteria formation and increases hand washing comfort.



*The American Medical Association's new headquarters are located in the SERF certified 330 North Wabash, Chicago.*

Yet, high-flow fixtures are counter to LEED certification requirements. Healthcare facilities are in a quandary: engage in unhealthy building practices in order to comply with an out-of-touch standard, or forgo certification. With SERF, healthcare facilities should not be asked to put lives at risk to attain incompatible green certifications.

SERF understood the unique needs of healthcare facilities and has industry-tested them before releasing its certification standards. Hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, outpatient surgery centers, and physician office buildings have responded positively to the criteria. Certification standards are logical and represent forward-thinking in facility design. In fact, SERF has incorporated guidelines from across the industry, including organizations such as the Facility Guidelines Institute (FGI) Guidelines for the Design and Construction of Health Care Facilities.

**For more information about SERF, contact us at 517.337.8367 or online at [SERFgreen.org](http://SERFgreen.org).**

