

Q. Who is MBDC?

A. MBDC is McDonough Braungart Design Chemistry (MBDC), a private firm based in Charlottesville, VA. It is a collaboration between renowned architect William McDonough and pioneering chemist Dr. Michael Braungart, whose Cradle to Cradle (C2C) Design process is an innovative approach to sustainability that addresses the human and environmental health impacts of products.

Q. What is Cradle to Cradle (C2C) Certification?

A. Cradle to Cradle is one of the first "green" certification programs that uses a multi-criteria approach to address product design and manufacturing from a broad-based sustainability perspective. It moves beyond traditional single-criterion programs that focus only on aspects such as energy or recycling by considering the product itself, the manufacturing processes, and the manufacturer's practices and policies.

Q. How does C2C Certification relate to the USGBC's LEED® rating system?

A. In April of 2007, The US Green Building Council (USGBC) announced that projects seeking certification under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating systems can earn an "Innovation in Design" point by using the Cradle to Cradle certification program for building products. The quotes shown below are from the USGBC press release announcing the decision.

"Awarding a LEED innovation point for Cradle to Cradle is the latest example of USGBC's dedication to continuous improvement," said Tom Hicks, Vice President of LEED, USGBC. "C2C is in harmony with our guiding principle of reconciling human activities with nature, and cuts a trail for exciting new directions in LEED to address the impacts of materials in the building industry in a much more sophisticated scientific manner."

"We are delighted and honored that LEED projects can earn an Innovation in Design point for using MBDC's Cradle to CradleSM Certification program. This helps expand LEED's environmental focus to what's being used, reused or recycled and not just on the amount of recycled content," commented William McDonough, co-founder of MBDC.

The LEED innovation point is based on the cost value of the C2C products, as a percentage of the total building costs. The USGBC requirement states: "Use Cradle to Cradle Certified building materials and products for 2.5% of the total value of all building materials and products used in the project, based on cost. The "cost value" of products for the purposes of this calculation will be discounted by 50% for Silver level products and doubled for products certified at the platinum level." Source: http://www.mbdc.com/cert_innovation_credit.htm

Q. What other companies offer C2C Certified building products?

A. Presently, Litecontrol is the only lighting manufacturer that has achieved C2C Certification for any of its products. However, a growing list of leading building product manufacturers offer C2C Certified products. The list includes Haworth, Herman Miller, MechoShade, Milliken, Pendleton, PolyVision, Shaw Industries, Steelcase, and the United States Postal Service. Litecontrol is unusual in that its entire product line has been certified.

Q. Why should architects and lighting designers care about using C2C Certified products?

A. While the LEED rating systems have become an important part of sustainable design practices today, those systems do not directly address the materials and processes used by manufacturers of building products. Furthermore, although the LEED ratings do address the recycled content of some building materials, electrical equipment (including lighting) is not permitted to be included in the determination of LEED credits for recycled content. By specifying C2C Certified products, the design community can help to take sustainable design considerations to the next level in their evolution.

Q. What are the criteria by which products are certified?

A. C2C Certification rates products by five criteria: 1) the environmental and human health implications of the materials used in the products; 2) the considerations for material reutilization in the design of the products; 3) the energy-efficiency and the use of renewable energy in the manufacturing of the product; 4) the efficient use of water associated with manufacturing of the product; and 5) the implementation of socially responsible policies by the manufacturer.

Q. Which Litecontrol products are covered by the C2C Certification?

A. All products manufactured by Litecontrol have received the C2C Certification. We have worked to ensure that all of the materials, processes and practices throughout our company reflect our commitment to sustainability. Our certification includes all the products shown on our website and in our catalog with the exception of the Litewave products and any products in our LC Euro family.

Q. Are there different levels of C2C Certification?

A. Yes. MBDC has defined four levels of C2C Certification: Basic, Silver, Gold and Platinum. Litecontrol products have been certified at the Silver level.

Q. Does the C2C Certification include all the components of Litecontrol fixtures?

A. All components of Litecontrol products are covered under the certification except the ballasts and power cords. While the assessment of the environmental and human health implications of the materials in our products, and the design for material reutilization, includes all components, the individual components are not C2C Certified. The C2C Certification of Litecontrol products does not extend to our vendor companies.

Q. What are the next steps for Litecontrol in this process?

A. C2C Certification is structured to ensure a process of continuous improvement for certified products. Throughout 2008, Litecontrol will seek to continually evaluate and improve the materials and processes of our fixtures. Our ability to maintain our C2C Certification depends on successfully demonstrating our ongoing commitment to sustainable product design and manufacturing practices. Over the long term, Litecontrol seeks to develop products that fully embody the spirit of the Cradle to Cradle design and manufacturing.

Q. How does the C2C concept differ from traditional manufacturing?

A. Traditional manufacturing operates with processes that are sometimes called “take-make-waste” or “Cradle to Grave.” The cradle represents the source of materials for the manufacturing processes, and historically these have been materials that we must “take” from the earth’s resources. Then, after the product is made and used, it is simply thrown out as waste, usually buried in the “grave” of a landfill. Of course, the process of making the product also generates waste, and also entails using earth’s resources (water and energy).

The Cradle to Cradle philosophy seeks to minimize waste throughout the process, and is modeled after natural processes where waste becomes a nutrient for other processes. C2C seeks to define all the materials in a product by their value as either a potential biological nutrient or technical nutrient. Biological nutrients are those that add back to a biological cycle after disposal, and technical nutrients are those that can be used as input into another manufacturing process. For example, the steel and aluminum used in Litecontrol’s fixtures can serve as a technical nutrient, since the materials we use are fully recyclable and can be used in the production of other products after they are removed from a building.

In addition to assessing the biological and technical nutrient value of the materials in a product, C2C also evaluates the materials from a standpoint of potentially negative human and environmental health impacts. A C2C mentality encourages manufacturers to eliminate negative impacts from waste and utilize materials that have value as nutrients into future processes. This mentality applies not only to the materials used in the products but also to the manufacturing processes themselves. In these processes, the quantity and the quality (renewable vs. non-renewable) of the energy used to produce the products and the water stewardship practices of the manufacturer are important.

In its essence, C2C has a future view that eliminates waste by ensuring that everything that we use has an identified pathway for returning to the cradle so it can serve as input into another biological or technical process.

Q. How can I learn more about C2C Certification?

A. For more information on Litecontrol’s C2C Certification, visit litecontrol.com/c2c. Cradle to Cradle Certified^{CM} is a certification mark of MBDC; for general information about C2C and MBDC visit www.mbdc.com.

