



Cities, Counties, Ports, Tribes

# LIFE CYCLE COMMUNITIES

## WHERE BUSINESS DRIVES ENVIRONMENTALISM

*“For years we have seen environmentalism try to drive business. We believe it is the exact opposite; business needs to help drive environmentalism, because of the economic benefit.”*

Dr. Rita Schenck,  
Executive Director  
IERE

The Life Cycle Communities platform is anchored in the practice known as Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), a 40 year-old science that has re-emerged as an increasingly important business concept during the past several years. Very simply, Life Cycle Assessment is the science of measuring the environmental performance of products and services from cradle to grave.

A complete LCA evaluates all the use phases of a product's life cycle, measuring their environmental impacts and looking for opportunities to improve.

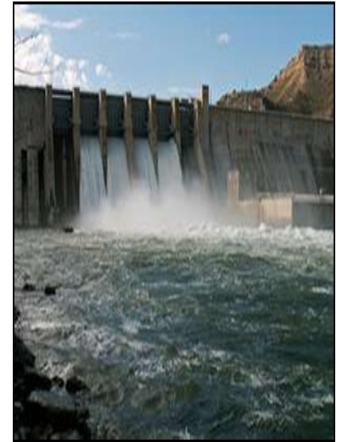
### What is a Life Cycle Community?

It is a city, county, port or tribe that commits to the criteria of the platform which includes applying life cycle thinking to decision making, planning, purchasing and operations.

At the municipal level, a city will publish the life cycle inventory results for the utilities it controls, educate its employees on life cycle thinking and use that education to achieve more sustainable outcomes.

Another required commitment is to work with local educational institutions, both higher education and community and technical colleges to develop life cycle assessment educational opportunities.

For economic development, business and government work together to support local industries to develop



Environmental Product Declarations (EPD) a TYPE III ecolabel for the products they produce and sell.

And finally, the community commits to these actions through public resolution, or other formal mechanism.

## ADVANTAGES OF PARTICIPATING

Communities that participate in the program give their government and local businesses the opportunity to use their environmental performance to drive economic benefit.

During the life cycle assessment process many impacts are revealed, with utilities being one of the largest categories. Because the Pacific

Northwest enjoys the benefits of renewable power resources, mainly hydroelectric, the impact numbers compared to the national average are very favorable. This proves to be a marketing advantage for companies manufacturing in the region.

For years Washington and the Pacific Northwest have

been viewed as an environmental leader. The Life Cycle Communities Platform validates the impacts of how we live and work and uses science, to prove how clean those impacts are.

Using LCA as your standard practice sets you apart from other sustainability approaches because it is real science.



*The City of Tacoma wanted to showcase the clean processes of their utilities and wastewater treatment. They chose the Life Cycle Communities platform to demonstrate its commitment to a sustainable, livable city.*

## TACOMA - THE FIRST LIFE CYCLE CITY

On January 25, 2011 Mayor Strickland and the Tacoma City Council passed Resolution #38188 committing to the criteria to become America's first *Life Cycle City*. This resolution mandates city government to integrate life-cycle thinking into its daily operations and purchasing, publish life-cycle inventory data for its local utilities, and provide support and resources to educating its employees and the public about life-cycle thinking and LCA.

Born out of a desire to be true leaders in the development of clean industries, the City of Tacoma has made a commitment to be proactive and show its citizens that they are willing to do their part in creating a more sustainable platform for city operations. Being a Life Cycle City and using LCA science to make decisions not only benefits government but spurs environmental economic develop-

ment and let's the businesses community know they have resources to make decisions based in science. New industries are finding Tacoma because of their new LCA platform.

As a newly designated Innovation Partnership Zone (IPZ) for Washington, Tacoma and IERE will use the Life Cycle Communities activities to integrate with the Clean Water Zone initiatives in the coming year.



## ENVIRONMENTAL PRODUCT DECLARATIONS

Environmental Product Declarations (EPD's) are ecolabels that disclose the environmental performance of products based on a life cycle assessment (LCA). Unlike most environmental labels that signify "green" performance,



EPD's merely disclose environmental impacts in much the same way a nutrition label

discloses nutritional values.

Because of its holistic approach, LCA permits a whole-system optimization. The life cycle approach provides a high-level look at all direct and indirect environmental issues at once, and is especially powerful when evaluating alternatives. Type III EPD's provide the consumer with a way to evaluate their everyday choices.

Within the context of Life Cycle Communities, the label process affords the opportunity for government and economic development bodies to support local companies in obtaining their Earthsure product label.

In turn, local products with these LCA based EPD labels can be showcased and used in recruitment efforts to attract cleaner, greener businesses to the community.

## INTERFACING WITH GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES & PROGRAMS

The Life Cycle Communities program is meant to interface with existing efforts in the areas of sustainability and economic development.

IERE works with local leadership to identify opportunities for partnering and to further the goals and objectives set in place by the local or tribal government.

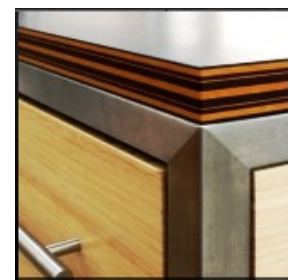
The program criteria is designed as the next logical step in achieving a real, science based approach to a cleaner way of living and conducting business.

Providing life cycle education and training for government employees is a very important piece of the over-all platform. This will ensure that operations and decision

making will be based in life cycle thinking. Our LCA 101 and WEBS workplace behavioral training programs help demonstrate the long term benefits for the environment, and show how changing a workplace environment can reduce impacts and consumption, which in turn improves your bottom line.

*"I was gratified to see that the City of Tacoma has partnered with the Institute for Environmental Research and Education and local businesses to become a `Life Cycle City" . . .*

The Honorable Norman D. Dicks in the House of Representatives July 11, 2011



*Washington company, Richlite, makes countertops from 100% recycled wood waste. They obtained their TYPE III EPD through Earthsure, in December of 2011.*