2020 Town Hall Series: Mid Atlantic & New England
New York, New England, New Jersey, & Pennsylvania
During this Town Hall Event members of the Mid-Atlantic & New England regions joined together over 4 days to discuss the exceptional progress being made in the regions and share how to move these strategies forward at a time when the world needs it the most.

Gautam Tarafdar highlighted local leaders and their achievements which are helping to drive growth in the community. Dave Witek shared his plan for making performance measurement accessible for all. Mahesh Ramanujam spoke of his reimagined vision for the next generation of USGBC and the future of LEED.

Regional Highlights

**New York**
New York has always been a leader when it comes to green building. In 2019, New York was ranked #3 on the Top 10 States for LEED list, up one spot from 2018. 193 projects were certified over the year, equal to 72.78 million square feet of green space added throughout the state.

Colgate University in Hamilton is creating a more sustainable campus, one building at a time. The Upstate New York USGBC Chapter named the university's LEED Platinum Benton Hall the *Green Building of the Year* in 2019. As the first LEED Platinum building on campus, it was constructed with long-term energy and water savings in mind. The envelope design in conjunction with high performance utility systems resulted in 50% less energy consumption than a traditional building. High performance windows, occupancy sensors, and daylight responsive dimming keep energy usage low while efficient plumbing fixtures and responsible stormwater management drastically reduce water expenditure. Colgate has pledged to ensure sustainability standards remain high at the university by committing that all new construction and major renovation projects on campus will, at minimum, meet LEED Silver qualifications.

Hudson Yards’ Eastern Yard is Manhattan’s first LEED Gold Neighborhood. The first phase in the 28-acre, mixed-use urban development project, the Eastern yard is home to residential and commercial skyscrapers, a shopping mall, public gardens, and cultural center. The Public Square and Gardens is the smartest park in New York City featuring a sophisticated method of root growth, nutrient delivery, temperature regulation, and irrigation that allows the growth of 200 mature trees over an active rail yard. The park will also serve as a new home for over 225 types of butterflies, bees, and other pollinators currently threatened by habitat loss and climate change. Once fully developed this project will not only provide a healthy neighborhood to millions of people but will create tens of thousands of jobs, more than 1,000 units of affordable housing, 14 acres of public parks and open space and considerably increase tourism on Manhattan’s West Side.
New England

Despite being made up of 6 of the smallest states in the country – Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont – the New England region is making big impacts.

Massachusetts has made the Top 10 States for LEED list every year since its existence. Cities within the state are demanding higher quality buildings and communities by incorporating LEED standards in their building requirements. The city of Somerville passed new zoning code in December that requires all new construction or modification of principal buildings larger than 50,000 square feet to meet LEED Platinum requirements.

The Holt Residence in Providence, Rhode Island is a 100-year-old home that achieved LEED Platinum certification, making a strong statement that no matter the condition, location, or age of a home, it can be healthy, sustainable and high performing. From the carefully selected building materials without harmful volatile organic compounds to the 1,000-gallon cistern rainwater capture system used for landscape irrigation, the elements behind this project present a captivating story of the power sustainable spaces hold.

In Connecticut, Grace Farms is passionate about connecting people to nature. Their ongoing operations prioritize environmental and ethical consciousness within the buildings and their surrounding area. Designed with the goal of becoming part of the landscape without drawing attention to itself, the LEED BD+C certified River building was created to enable visitors to experience nature, encounter the arts, and foster community. The farm’s “full-circle” food waste program ensures that no morsel of food goes to waste by repurposing scraps into compost that is reused in the gardens and meadows. Over 87% of the land is preserved in perpetuity as open meadows, fields, woods, wetlands, and ponds.

With more than 10,318 LEED professionals, including 6 LEED Fellows – Mark Loeffler, Carrie Havey, Chris Schaffner, Andrea Love, Nathan Gauthier, Gunnar Hubbard and Kenneth Filarski – New England is prioritizing policies that support better buildings for the more than 14.8 million residents who call the region home.

New Jersey

The garden state is doing its part to enhance the quality of buildings and their surrounding communities.

In Downtown Newark, the LEED Silver Teacher’s Village is the first ground-up residential building to be constructed in the city in 50 years. It is the first phase of RBH Group’s 400 square foot multi block SoMa master
plan consisting of 3 schools, a day care center, 204 rental apartments that have been pre-leased to teachers, and 65,000 square feet of community-based retail stores. This redevelopment creates a national model for providing workforce housing that is affordable for educators and lifelong learners.

Johnson & Johnson, a USGBC member since 2003, truly realizes the value of healthy environments for people. Their 448,977 square foot world headquarters in New Brunswick, New Jersey was the first existing building to be awarded LEED Gold in the state. In reaching this achievement several sustainable practices were incorporated to the company's building methods and operations and maintenance routines. Most recently, Johnson & Johnson has shown their dedication and compassion by stepping up to help people around the world in the face of the global pandemic, COVID-19. From their rapid effort to create a COVID-19 vaccine, to cash donations, employee actions, and product donations Johnson & Johnson has demonstrated phenomenal leadership. In March, its family of companies and its foundation committed $50 million to support frontline health workers—from meals to protective equipment, extra training to mental health – adding to the $250 million multi-year commitment they made earlier this year.

Pennsylvania

With almost 300 million square feet of green space statewide, Pennsylvania is committed to prioritizing sustainable development.

The Center for Sustainable Landscapes (CSL) at the Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens in Pittsburgh is one of the greenest buildings in the world. It is the first and only facility to achieve certification from five top rating systems: LEED, SITES, WELL, Living Building Challenge, and BREEAM. Serving as the education, research, and administration facility for Phipps, the center is visited by over 400,000 people every year. The site for the 24,350 square foot building was a brownfield that has since been transformed into 2.9 acres of public garden space, providing food and habitat to native wildlife. The CSL generates 100% of the energy it consumes, and all water is captured, treated, and reused on site. Beyond the building and grounds, the center is focused on introducing sustainable practices to a broader audience. Partnerships with local universities aim to expand knowledge of topics like brownfield restoration and the psychological benefits of human contact with nature. This center not only provides a beautifully restored landscape but also a living laboratory to influence the design of other sites through published research and exemplary performance.

In Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania's LEED Platinum Horticulture Center is working to build a more resilient future by conserving natural resources. Serving as workspace for the Arboretum's horticulture, public programs, and facility staff, the 20,840 square foot building provides the needed infrastructure to meet the Arboretum's incredible growth and possibilities for expansion in the future. Geothermal wells help the center save about 75% of the energy a typical boiler and air conditioner system would use, while photovoltaic solar panels generate on site renewable energy. The Horticulture Center not only demonstrates the university's devotion to preserving our planet for the future but also provides the opportunity to serve an even greater purpose of educating the public about the importance of protecting natural resources.
Small Company, Big Impact

A small technology manufacturer by the name of Princetel is proving that you don’t need to have a big budget to create a big impact. Princetel relocated to Hamilton, New Jersey in 2011 and undertook a three-year project to renovate and repurpose a 41,500 square foot warehouse into a workspace with room to grow that could stand as a pinnacle of sustainable design. Princetel managed to repurpose more than 90 percent of an existing building located on a brownfield site and became the first manufacturing plant to earn LEED Platinum certification along the way. What resulted of the brownfield site after three years of development is truly remarkable.

The project features a 10,000-gallon rainwater harvesting system, solar electricity production system and energy wheels capturing energy from outgoing air. These features result in a 66% reduction of potable water use and a 54% reduction in energy use. In addition, 100% of the project’s paints, coatings, adhesives, and sealants contain minimal amounts of VOCs. About 98% of work areas in the project have access to outside views and natural light, while also circulating fresh air to 100% of all work areas. Finally, around a third of the construction materials used in development where recycled, and a whopping 97% of all construction waste was recycled upon completion.

Princetel’s manufacturing facility is a great example of how every company, no matter the size or budget, can prioritize sustainability and inspire others to do the same.

Building for Learning

Prototypes and structures designed for research and education help bring new building strategies to fruition. At the Rochester Institute for Technology (RIT) in New York, the LEED Platinum Golisano Institute for Sustainability (GIS) is a living laboratory that showcases the university’s enthusiasm for environmental excellence. With high performance systems and an energy conscious approach, the building has only used one third of the electricity it has generated, feeding the remaining energy into the campus grid for use in other facilities, and more than half of the building’s water requirements have been met using captured rainwater. The extensive data sensors within the building will provide RIT with operations statistics that will be examined to optimize future performance. In addition to serving as an exceptional example of efficiency, the college faculty is utilizing the GIS as a teaching tool and center for ongoing opportunities in education and research on sustainability.
Unity House, a 1,930 square foot home at Unity College in Maine, was the first home of a U.S. college president to earn LEED Platinum certification after its construction in 2008. Built as part of the OPEN Prototype Initiative, a joint venture among Bensonwood, MIT and other construction industry members, the home served as a single-family residence and includes a classroom and space for on-campus meetings and events. The passive solar home runs entirely on electrical energy and features a 5.4 KW photovoltaic solar array and solar domestic hot water system. Showcasing state of the art building technology, the Unity House is a living and learning laboratory supporting the education of students and staff on sustainable building methods.

The LEED Platinum Hillman House designed by Trillium Architects serves as a high-performance residence and learning lab for students at The Taft School in Watertown, Connecticut. The building's energy efficiency has also earned Zero-Energy Challenge and Passive Home Certification. Taft School's Director of Environmental Stewardship, Carly Borken, uses the energy data from the house as a teaching tool for her high school students. With access to the home monitoring system, students virtually monitor, track and learn about the impact of the resident's consumption.

These projects showcase some incredible sustainability achievements in the residential sector while also helping to prepare the next generation of green building professionals.

**The Next Level for Medical Facilities**

Medical facilities around the world are regarded as some of the most crucial parts of infrastructure and development because their job is to save lives. Medical institutions play a massive role in the wellbeing of the population surrounding them by providing emergency services and a place to go to when people need help.

Ultimately, the primary goal of medical centers is to care for patients while making them feel comfortable and healthy. By prioritizing sustainability, especially occupant health and comfort, healthcare facilities are highlighting the value of LEED.
With nearly 8.4 million residents, New York City healthcare facilities like the LEED Gold New York Presbyterian David H. Koch Center provide a critical service to the community. The Koch Center was the first in the City to certify under the LEED Healthcare rating system and is designed to minimize stress while focusing on providing comfort and improving the patient experience. Features include a green roof that covers 30% of its surface and can retain up to six inches of storm water to help cool the building and a highly efficient mechanical system that decreases energy use by 18.7% and water usage by 30%. The resilient design of the building also enables it to continue operating during an extreme weather event or disruption of city power, allowing the medical center to continue performing its crucial functions during times of emergency.

NYU Langone Health, an academic medical center associated with New York University, is the world's first double platinum LEED and PEER certified building. After witnessing the effects of superstorm Sandy in 2012, NYU Langone embarked on a journey to overhaul its power systems with an increased emphasis on resilience and energy efficiency. In addition to the many features and strategies the team incorporated to achieve the double certification, NYU Langone is a committed to a 50% carbon reduction goal by 2025 as part of the NYC Carbon Challenge for Hospitals which was just one of the reasons they were recognized for a 2019 USGBC Leadership award.

Medical centers like NYU Langone and New York Presbyterian are leading the way for the healthcare industry by providing outstanding, sustainable, equitable and resilient care for their current and future patients.

Elevating Hospitality

Tourism is a significant driver of economic prosperity for many cities. Visitors spend tens billions of dollars on hotels, restaurants, shops, and cultural experiences every year. Revenue from this sector is critical in supporting municipal employment and essential services like first responders, education, and transit. More than ever before travelers are conscious of their ecological impact and willing to pay more for sustainable and eco-friendly accommodations.

Syracuse's Hotel Skylar was the third hotel in the United States to earn LEED Platinum certification in 2011. Originally constructed in 1921 as Temple Adath Yeshurun, the 58-room hotel was thoughtfully redesigned to preserve its historic integrity while optimizing energy efficiency and eco-friendly operations. Emphasis was put on incorporating as many reclaimed and locally produced materials as possible in the hotel's design – the lobby features a stained-glass window rescued from St. John's Church in Oswego and casework from a deconstructed warehouse in Syracuse. The geothermal heating and cooling system coupled with a keycard-based energy management method ensures that energy is not wasted when guests are not in their rooms.
At the LEED Gold Crosby Hotel in SoHo, the rooftop kitchen garden attracts plenty of attention. Not only does it produce an array of fruit, vegetables, herbs, and flowers that are used in the Crosby Bar restaurant’s menu and is home to 4 chickens that lay eggs for the restaurant, but it also is a true green roof. The garden provides insulation to help lower the heating and cooling costs of the building, reduces storm water runoff – which can be a major contaminant, protects the structure of the roof itself – fundamentally doubling its lifetime, and allows for plant growth with less soil and less potable water by managing water more resourcefully.

In lower Manhattan, The Conrad Hotel is one of the few hotels in the city to meet the standards of LEED certification. The LEED Gold for New Construction project was built using locally sourced materials with wood from responsibly managed forests certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Low-VOC materials promote indoor air quality and low-flow plumbing reduces the building’s water usage by over 30%. The green roof has solar-reflective paint and paving to keep the building cool and offset unnecessary air conditioning costs and energy use, while the rooftop garden supports the hotel’s restaurants, Atrio and North End Grill, by supplying it with fresh, local vegetables.

Incentivizing Sustainable Building

Green building legislation at the municipal, state and federal level helps communities progress towards a more sustainable model that benefits businesses and residents alike. Green building policies often incentivize developers to build sustainably with faster permitting times, tax credits or other benefits making it beneficial for all project stakeholders.

New Jersey has been active in terms of green building legislation in 2020, with numerous bills being introduced throughout the legislative session. Governor Phil Murphy’s Executive Order 100, for example, established a statewide GHG monitoring program along with the New Jersey Energy Master Plan, which outlines strategies to meet 100% clean energy statewide by 2050. In addition, there have been seven bills encouraging green construction and incentivizing LEED certification.

Another great example of recent green building legislation happened in Philadelphia last year. In November of 2019, the Philadelphia City Council unanimously passed a Building Energy Performance Policy to help meet Mayor Kenney’s commitment to cut carbon pollution 25% by 2025. This new law requires the owners of all non-residential buildings greater than 50,000 square feet to meet a high energy performance standard or tune-up existing building energy systems. The City of Philadelphia claims that the passing of this policy will cut carbon pollution in the city by nearly 200,000 metric tons. This would be the equivalent of taking 40,000 automobiles off the road.

Passing legislation can be a lengthy and challenging process at any level of government so it is important to recognize the hard work being done by policymakers and advocates across the country. Green building policies, once enacted, help to protect the health, well-being, and prosperity of our communities.
Speakers

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