



Setting sustainability goals is the key to success

February 24, 2015 - Green Buildings

Sustainable design works best when it is integrated with all other project goals from the start.

Whether you are looking for a development site, planning a new building, or renovating an existing one, it is important to utilize your design professionals as advocates in pursuit of sustainability goals. Sometimes it is hard to know when to have the conversation around the table. As architects, we want to be our client's trusted advisor, but at the onset of a project, it can be hard to bring up topics that may not be on the table. With large programs, small budgets and tight timelines, the sustainability discussion often gets put on the back burner.

In order to have a successful project, we must challenge each other to implement the highest standards possible in all aspects of design, including sustainability.

In recent years, the most impactful advances in the area of sustainability have been the stringent codes and reporting requirements that many cities and states have adopted.

Sustainable design programs such as LEED, Green Globes and Energy Star are great ways to meet sustainability goals as well as required codes, but they shouldn't limit teams that want to push the envelope further. The Living Building Challenge is one example of a more aggressive certification system that promotes net-zero and net-positive buildings.

One technique that facilitates critical decision-making is the Integrated Design Process. This concept of having intense workshops with all key stakeholders is not new, but in many cases the design and construction industry has been slow to maximize its potential.

As architects, we need to advise our clients to adopt this collaborative approach to design. We should expect that building owners and developers will challenge their design teams to push the boundaries and integrate sustainable design to the highest extent possible within the constraints of the project.

It is also important in the beginning of any project for the design team to outline the "non-negotiables" so that all members can quickly establish a baseline criterion to build upon.

Working as a truly integrated team opens up the lines of communication so that all stakeholders can ask the tough questions, creatively solve the challenges and successfully meet the triple bottom line of developing buildings with care for people, profit, and the planet.

Denise Thompson, AIA, LEED BD+C, is an associate at Francis Cauffman, New York, N.Y.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540