



2023 SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN  
FFA Architecture and Interiors, Inc.

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# Introduction

The FFA Sustainability Action Plan defines our approach and commitment to the concept of “sustainability,” accounting for best practices in our design process and project implementation, as well as in-house operations.

For our design process, this Action Plan provides a framework for integrating principles of sustainability into projects and tracking goals throughout. It outlines our approach and design strategies around site ecosystems, water, energy, materials, occupant health & comfort, economy, justice, and equity that are incorporated into project documents and specifications.

For our firm operations, this Action Plan establishes goals for office-wide energy and water use, waste reduction, responsible procurement, and promoting employee education and wellness. For additional detail on our commitment to a just and equitable workplace, please refer to our *Equity Action Plan*.

The first edition of the Sustainability Action Plan was developed in 2015 by the Sustainability Committee in support of our firm's commitment to the AIA 2030 Challenge. It is reviewed and updated annually to track actions and establish new goals.



**FFA is committed to the thoughtful design and consideration of our built environments to maximize the positive outcomes of our work, minimize inherent negative impacts, and create just and lasting value out of the resources our work expends.**

## Sustainability Committee Members



Andrew Loia  
Committee Co-Chair



Lara Jackman  
Committee Co-Chair



Edward Running  
Leadership Liaison



Brianna Starr



Carolyn Nguyen



Davis Carlisle



**Acknowledgments**  
Juliette Grummon-Beale  
Abigail Bokman  
Ethan Bloom

# FFA Sustainability Timeline

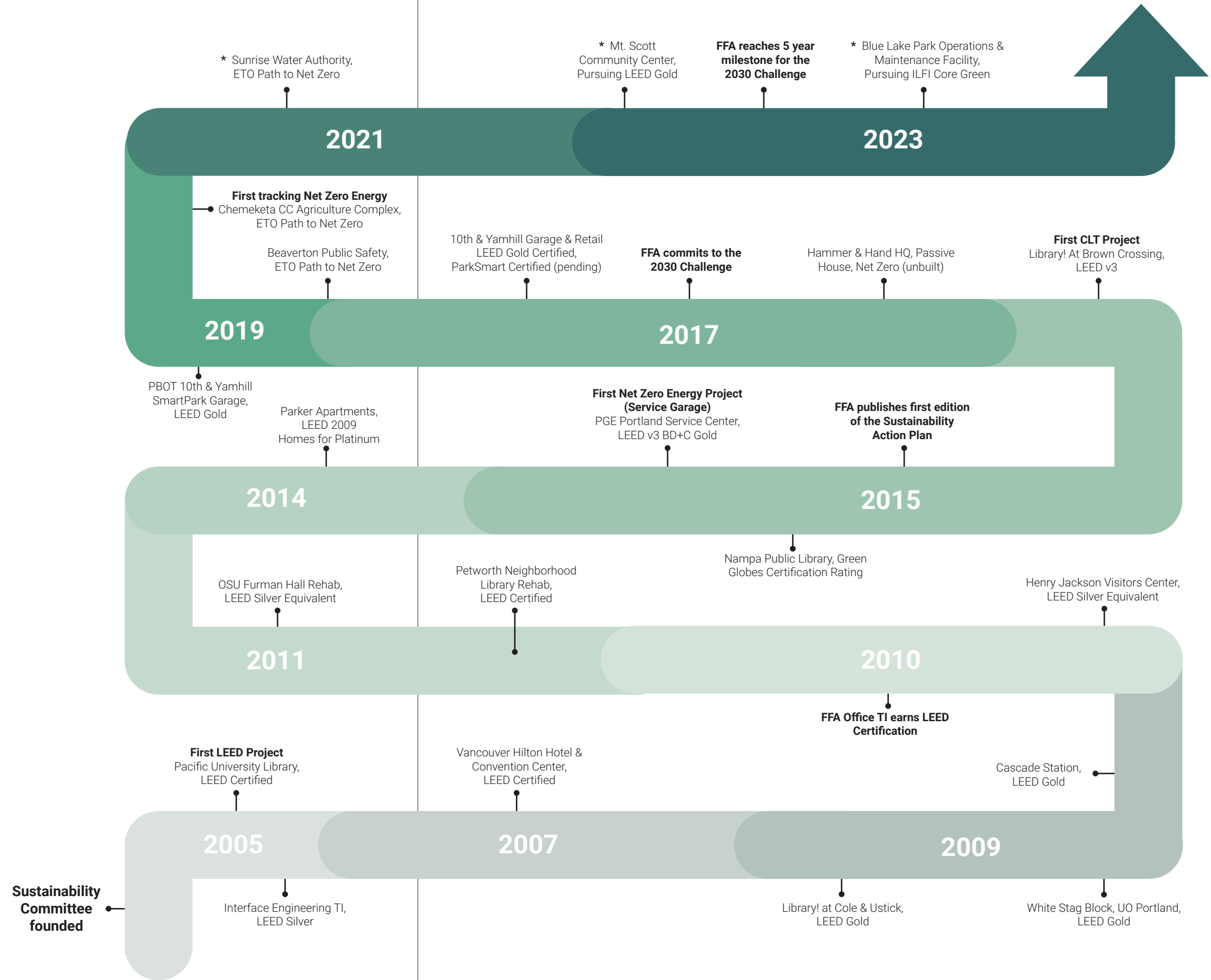
As a design practice FFA acknowledges the tension between our role in shaping and expanding the built environment and our desire to be thoughtful stewards of the finite natural resources of our world. Through both our design projects and our office operations, we aim to lead by example to minimize unavoidable negative impacts and maximize the benefits of our work for years to come.

Our design culture is strongly rooted in place and history, while committed to a sustainable future. Founded in 1956, the early practice was influential in establishing Northwest Regionalism as a style of architecture. In this tradition, the firm continues to design projects that are sensitive to context, beneficially interact with their environments, and celebrate regional materials.

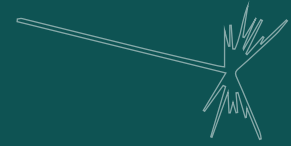
For decades our practice has worked within National Parks, some of the most treasured and fragile natural areas in the nation. This work continually reinforces our commitment to and understanding of natural systems and ecology. We strive to thoughtfully work within these elements and contexts to create excellent, enduring projects.

FFA has a lengthy portfolio of renovating existing and historic structures, some of the “greenest buildings” with respect to the embodied energy present within their existing materials, and we work to creatively adapt these structures to the changing needs of contemporary society.

Understanding the resources required for new construction, FFA brings that same respect for resources to finding efficient, flexible, durable solutions to ensure the highest performance and longest lifespan for our new projects.



\* notes projects in design or construction at time of publication  
**bold notes firm achievement**



Design Approach &  
Project Implementation

# Tailored Approach



FFA brings a tailored, practical, holistic approach to sustainable design, and advocates for the value of sustainable design principles throughout the design process. As a practice we recognize that sustainability is a comprehensive undertaking, and is not isolated to any one aspect of a project. We take a "One Team" approach with our consultants, clients, and stakeholders to leverage the expertise of various team members to identify sustainable design opportunities and find the best possible solutions to serve a project's unique location, needs, and performance goals.

From the very beginning of any project, we tailor our approach to the specific goals of each client and the specific context of each site. Whether meeting internal guidelines, shadowing a specific sustainable building standard, or pursuing full third-party certification, client goals are brought front and center to establish guiding principles and priorities for the project. Understanding regional and climate-responsive design strategies,

we work together to identify practical solutions that are cohesive and complimentary to one other. We leverage our expertise and experience with a breadth of certification systems to identify priorities, metrics, and performance goals that are project-appropriate and meet any specific client objectives or targets.

As a team, we acknowledge and challenge the perception that "sustainability equals expensive." While certain techniques require more up-front investment than others, there are many straightforward strategies or baseline design decisions for projects that can, when thoughtfully considered, boost performance at no additional cost. We make sure to get these decisions on track early in the project to establish a strong foundation, and then supplement with additional strategies that compliment each project's unique sustainability story along the way.

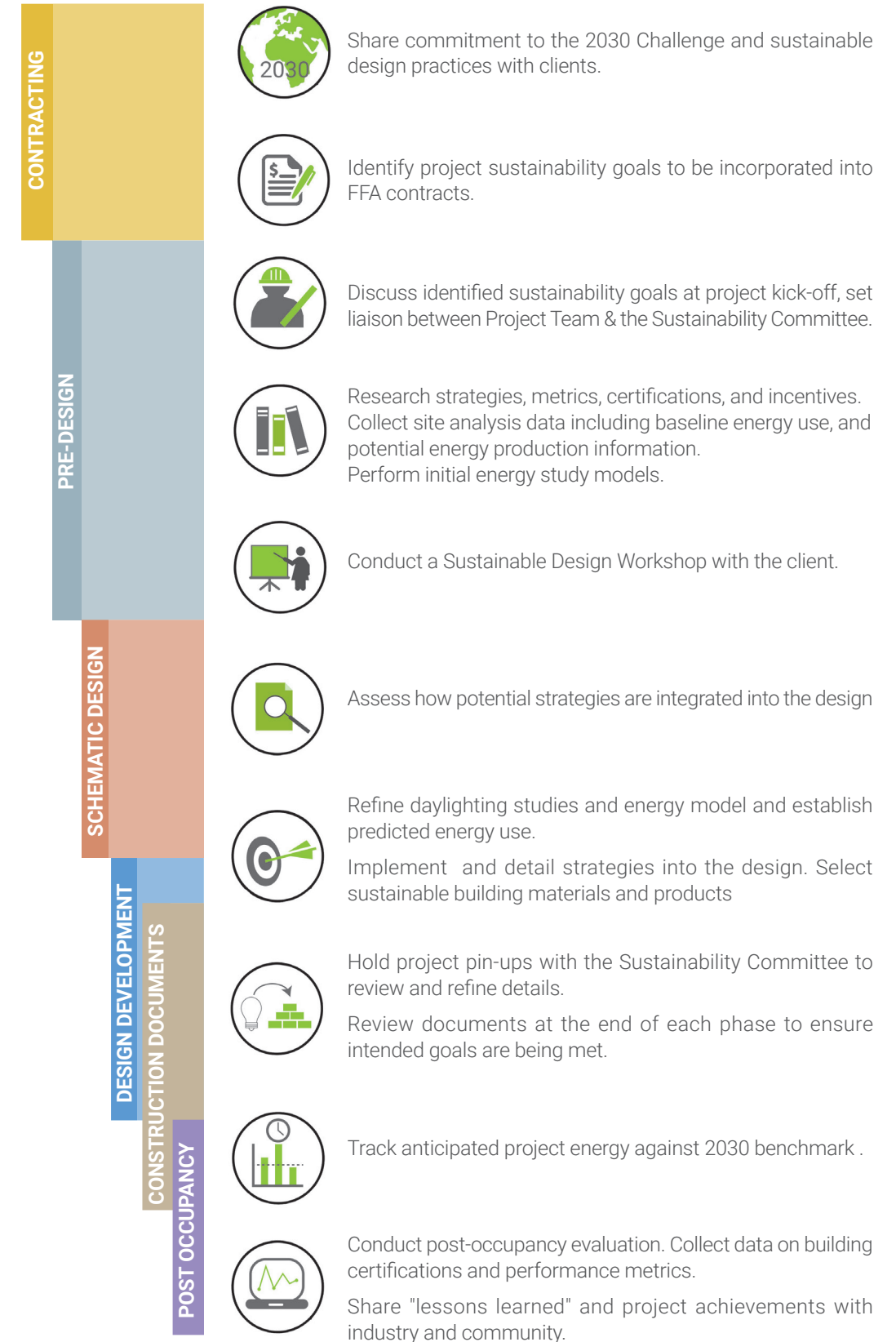
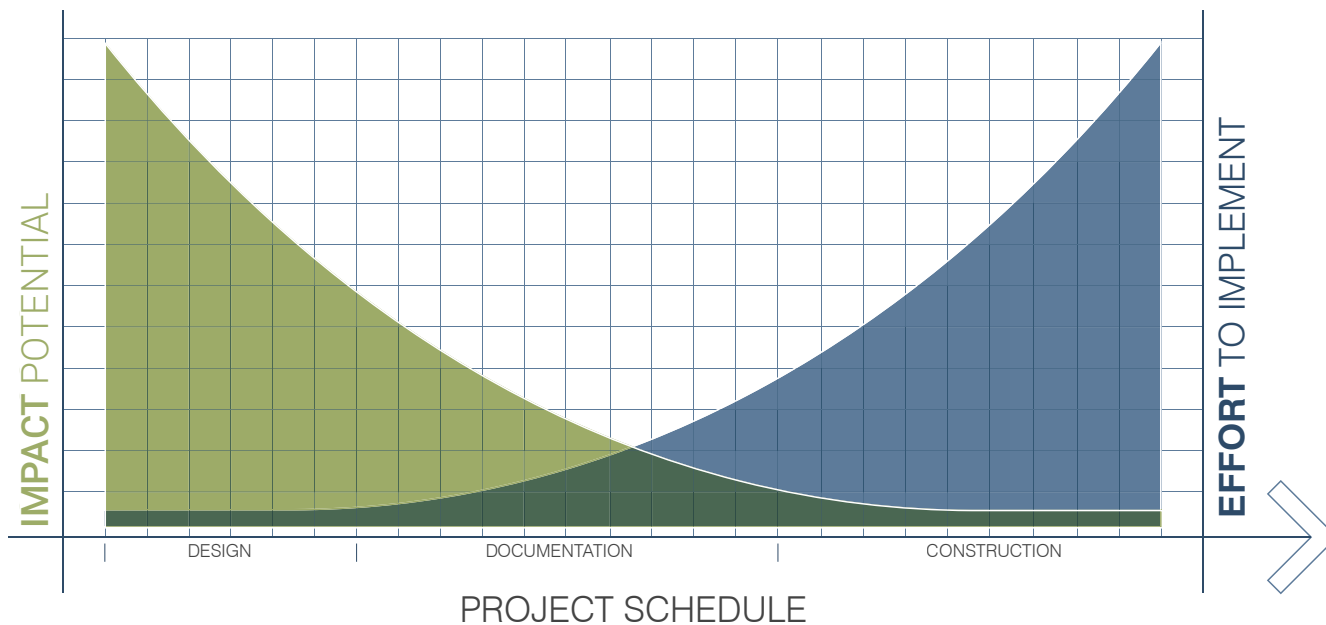


# FFA Sustainability Workflow

FFA's approach to sustainable design is first introduced to clients during project pursuits, and during contract negotiations the team presents specific services available that can support these efforts. Sustainability goals are identified at project kick-off, followed by an interactive workshop to explore appropriate systems and strategies in more detail. The design team works collaboratively with consultants, clients, and stakeholders through the full project cycle, utilizing an integrated design process to ensure goals are well-coordinated and effectively met.

Early engagement of the full project team around sustainable design strategies is critical to ensure their successful integration on projects. It is much easier, cost-effective, and ultimately impactful to start a project with sustainable strategies built-in as part of the foundation, as opposed to trying to retroactively squeeze strategies in during later project phases, when larger design decisions have already been defined.

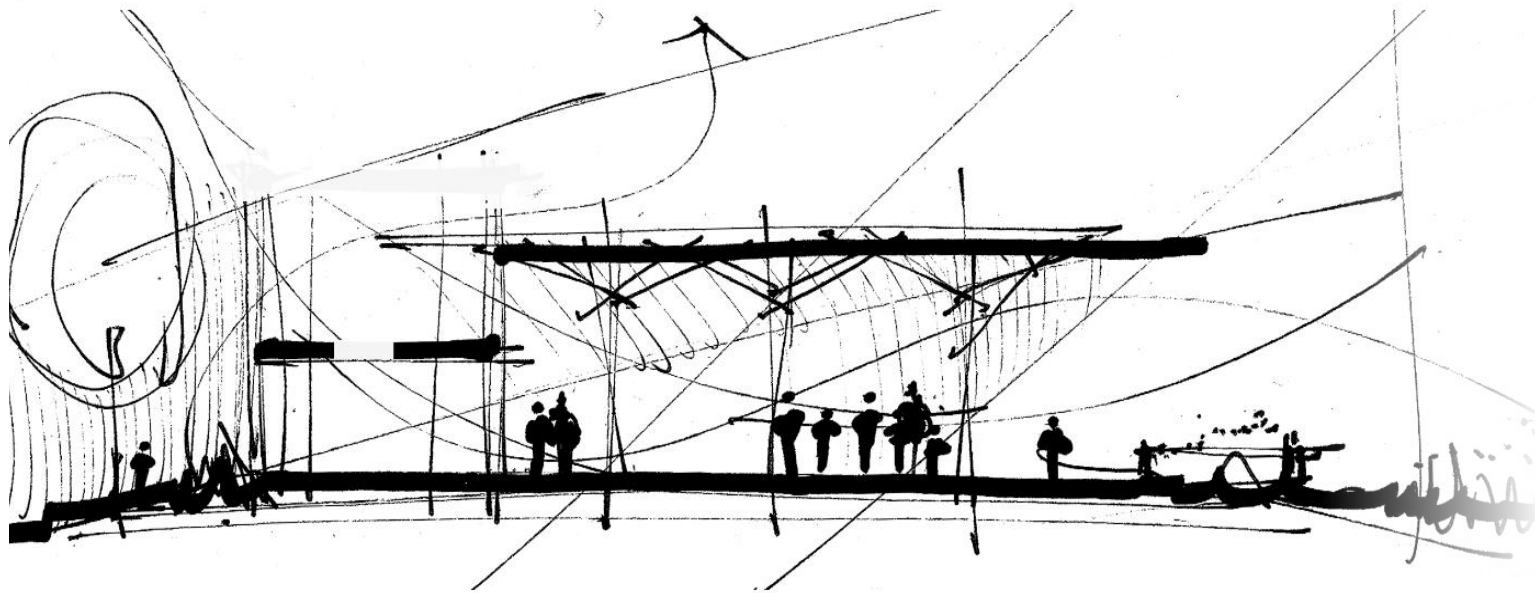
The following pages outline our approach to each project, the goals we track together as a team, and the variety of tools and resources we contribute along the way.



See Appendix I- FFA Sustainability Work-Plan for more detailed information

# Project Implementation

FFA applies the following strategies to set, track, and achieve sustainability goals. These tools and resources are utilized by every project team throughout the full process.



## Business Development:

FFA's Sustainability Mission Statement and commitment to the 2030 Challenge is included within all proposals and discussed with prospective clients during the very first stages of project pursuits. A goals alignment checklist reinforces consistency with our values and helps to evaluate potential pursuits during go/no-go meetings.

## Tools & Resources:

- Goals Alignment Checklist (*in development*)

## Contracting:

The Sustainability Committee meets with each Project Manager during contract development to review program type, site, and regional context. Together, opportunities are identified to enhance the sustainability of the project, and ensure that the contract includes scope for FFA and consultants to assess and develop sustainable design opportunities.

## Tools & Resources:

- Project Sustainability Survey



## Pre-Design:

During the Project Kick-off Meeting, the team identifies project goals and reviews key milestones with the client. The Sustainability Committee assists with site analysis, development of the sustainable vision statement, and early sustainability workshops.

## Tools & Resources:

- Site Analysis Toolkit
- COTE Top 10 Outline Board
- Sustainability Workshop Templates

## Schematic Design (SD):

Shoebox energy model is initiated, preliminary embodied and operational carbon estimates are compiled, and the design team begins researching sustainable systems and materials. At the conclusion of this phase, the SD package receives a comprehensive sustainability review.

## Tools & Resources:

- Energy Modeling Workflow
- Early Embodied Carbon Estimates
- Product and Systems Research
- Sustainability Review Checklist



# Project Implementation



**Design Development (DD):**

The energy model is refined and systems and materials are confirmed. Material information and environmental product declarations (EPD) are collected. The DD package receives a comprehensive sustainability review.

**Construction Documents (CD):**

Sustainable systems are further refined through more detailed drawings. The energy model is also further refined and checked against the 2030 benchmark. The CD package receives another thorough sustainability review, including the specification documents.

**Tools & Resources:**

- Energy Modeling Workflow
- Product and Systems Research
- Sustainability Review Checklist
- Daylighting and Views Analysis

**Tools & Resources:**

- Energy Modeling Workflow
- Sustainability Review Checklist
- Sustainable Specifications



**Construction Administration (CA):**

The project team works to confirm that sustainability goals and design intent is carried through submittal review, and a Sustainability Committee point person is available as resource.

The Project Architect meets with the construction team leadership during pre-construction to inform the team of the guiding principles and goals set for sustainability.

**Tools & Resources:**

- Sustainable Specifications

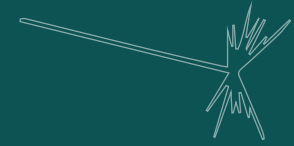


**Post-Occupancy:**

The project team with assistance from the Sustainability Committee collects data on building certifications, target and actual energy use, and effectiveness of sustainable design strategies. The Sustainability Committee assists in collecting post-occupancy surveys, and can also assist in the design award submission process.

**Tools & Resources:**

- Written and Graphic Documentation
- Sustainable Awards Submittal
- Post-Occupancy Survey and Data Collection



Office Operations

# Leading By Example

## Energy and Water

FFA supports reducing energy use through improved energy efficiency alternatives. General office lighting was replaced LED during our most recent renovation. Lighting control systems turn lighting off when it senses the natural light saturation is sufficient, when the space is unused, and on weekends. LED task lamps are used at all workstations.

All equipment, including copiers, printers, and monitors are Energy Star certified. In 2019, personal computer terminals were phased out for high efficiency laptops. Staff follow a company policy to turn off all equipment at the end of the day.

Aerators are installed on all faucets to reduce water flow rates. Restroom aerators are 0.5gpm minimum and kitchen aerator is 1.5 gmp minimum.

## ONGOING GOALS

- Conduct office-wide thermal comfort study
- Purchase carbon offsets for energy use



## Waste Reduction

FFA reduces the amount of waste sent to landfills through recycling, utilizing alternative waste streams, composting, donating supplies for reuse, and finding ways to decrease consumption. Staff have shifted their printing habits to print 70% less than in 2019. Our Controller submits billings and distributes pay-stubs electronically. Within the Our kitchen and for office social events, durable dishware, mugs, and silverware are used instead of single-use disposable products. Interior finish samples and construction submittal materials are recycled or donated to local organizations for re-purposing whenever possible.

We and encourage recycling of glass, cardboard, paper, and plastics. The firm has bins to collect all recycling matter as well as annual e-waste drives to recycle office equipment, light bulbs, batteries, and other e-waste. Recycling containers are located at each desk pod and in common areas.

Beyond recycling and composting, FFA encourages using software for document sharing and meeting notes to produce less waste.

## ONGOING GOALS

- Re-purpose single-sided white paper prints into notepads
- Recycle used office supplies
- Purchase products minimizing environmental impacts, toxins, pollution, and hazards to worker and community safety to the greatest extent
- Enhance a sustainable purchasing policy that favors products that include recycled content, are durable and long-lasting, conserve energy and water, and are easily compostable
- Whenever possible, seek out locally-sourced goods and support women, minority owned businesses

## Travel

FFA has a hybrid work policy where employees can work from home two days during the week. This allows for exponential savings of greenhouse gas emissions from commuting by car, those who are under-served by transit, or who would otherwise need to transport children or elders for care.

When commuting to the office or traveling for work, FFA supports sustainable travel options that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Employees receive a monthly transportation subsidy that they can use for multi-modal transportation. The firm is located at the heart of Portland's transit hub and served well by transit. Additionally, the firm has centrally located bike storage along with showers and changing rooms. FFA owns a hybrid company car to use when needed for travel to project sites.

## ONGOING GOALS

- When the time comes, replace the company hybrid car with an EV
- Purchase carbon offsets for company travel
- Participate in The Street Trust's "Bike More Challenge"



## Outreach & Volunteering

FFA supports the Portland community through service and provides 16 hours of paid volunteer hours per year. The firm's Community Outreach team organizes community events where staff can volunteer together. In the past, the team has cleaned wetlands from invasive species with SOLVE, built houses for Habitat for Humanity, planted trees with Friends of Trees, and supported our local schools with the Architecture Foundation of Oregon's Architects in Schools program. Additionally, staff individually volunteer time at local universities and professional organizations. This is a culture of service that the firm supports.

## ONGOING GOALS

- Floating holidays a year to support inclusion, giving employees the opportunity to take time off or celebrate cultural or religious holidays without using paid time off
- Juneteenth and MLK day are recognized as days of service and learning



### Health & Wellness

FFA supports the health and well-being of staff in a variety of ways. Benefits include 100% employer-paid healthcare for employees, optional vision and dental insurance, short and long-term disability insurance, and six weeks of paid family leave. The office environment includes sit-stand desks for all, plenty of natural daylighting and views, and a wellness room. The building offers a roof patio for quiet outdoor reflection, social time, or fresh air, and a gym free to all building users. FFA's purchasing policy has provisions for procuring environmentally-friendly, non-toxic cleaning products.

### ONGOING GOALS

- More plants in the office
- A wellness benefit for employees to use for any kind of healthy activity
- Mindfulness and stress reduction services.
- Financial literacy education and retirement planning
- All gender restrooms
- Use materials that are made from unbleached or chlorine-free manufacturing processes, are lead-free, mercury-free, and/or are derived from wood from sustainably harvested forests.



### Business Operations

FFA operates to maintain economic stability of the business as well as support sustainable environmental and cultural practices through procurement and business strategies. FFA offers a sustainable purchasing policy that accounts for both short-term and long-term purchasing objectives. The firm also offers impact investment options in the 401k to invest in sustainable, planet-wide, health-forward businesses and funds. FFA management carefully considers the economic stability of the firm and is transparent in its communications with employees about billings. FFA's office is LEED Certified for Commercial Interiors.

The firm communicates its sustainability practices and the accomplishments to the clients, potential clients, and the general public. When required to print, all materials are printed on post-consumer recycled content paper and all marketing materials have a "please recycle located at the bottom of the page".

### B Corp Certification

The firm is currently pursuing B Corp certification to lock in equity and sustainability actions to for the practice. This is to ensure that we are operating from a framework of equity and sustainability both within the office operations and on our projects and to guarantee that the firm values are secure for future employees and generations of leaders of the firm.

### ONGOING GOALS

- Enhance specification documents to specify products that minimize environmental impact, toxins, pollutants, and hazards.
- Become a B-Corp certified firm
- Seek out local BIPOC, Woman-Owned, B-Corp businesses for office supplies, food, etc.

### Staff Education

FFA supports staff sustainability education and awareness. Employees are supported in their pursuit of LEED certification through reimbursement for exams upon successful completion.

FFA communicates sustainability objectives office-wide to new employees and potential hires. Information on the sustainability policy is available in the employee handbook, sustainability committee meetings (where all are welcome), and discussed at weekly office-wide coffee-breaks and share-outs. The Sustainability Committee is working toward improving office sustainability measures by increasing awareness and actively working to advance our firm's 2030 goals and reporting. The committee also organizes lunch-and-learns and other educational events for staff.

### ONGOING GOALS

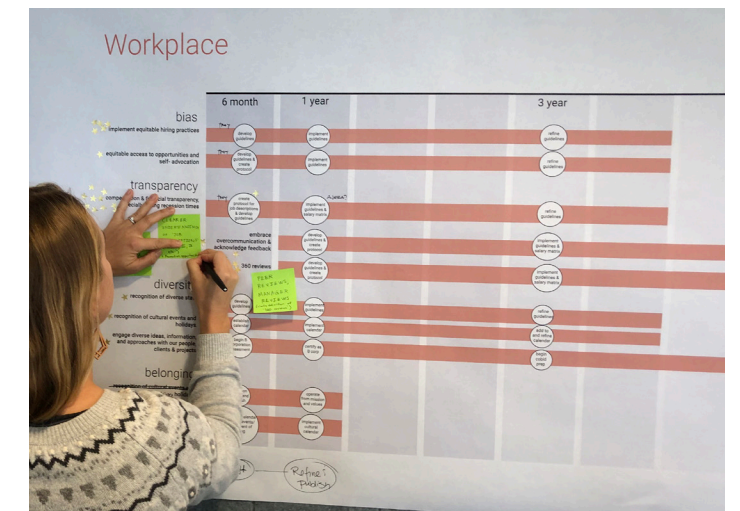
- Expand on existing financial support toward continuing education, conferences, and trainings centered on sustainability to further reduce our carbon footprint
- Offer more lunch-and-learns and coffee breaks on sustainable design to support education credits.



### Practice

FFA is a signatory of the AIA 2030 Challenge, recently achieving five years of submitting data and marking improvements in our projects. We are actively working towards our goal with Net Zero and Living Building projects.

FFA also is active in submitting projects for sustainability design competitions such as the COTE Top Ten awards, AIA awards, and WoodWorks awards for mass timber.





Outreach

# Spreading the Word



The form of outreach, advocacy, and education around principles of sustainable design that has the biggest impact on our work comes from leading Sustainable Design Workshops with clients, stakeholders, and communities as early in the process as possible. Engaging groups in early exploration of potential solutions allows concepts of sustainability to be more easily integrated into project design, identifies synergies that can serve as a foundation for subsequent design development, and limits disruption to decisions already settled upon. This early engagement also aligns strategies with client, community, and/or regional priorities, which can greatly reduce cost and increase the likelihood these strategies stay in the project from concept through construction.

As a team, we share our expertise and engage with the sustainable design community. We're a leader in Mass Timber design and since 2012 have over 300,000 square feet of Mass Timber projects built or in construction, and over 200,000 sf of projects in design intending to utilize these products. This year, with KPFF Engineers, we presented at the 2023 International Mass Timber Conference a research project on [post-occupancy performance of Mass Timber buildings](#).

We continually seek opportunities to engage with local universities, hosting student tours of our completed and in-construction projects, engaging in courses as guest presenters, and reviewing student work. For several years we've supported the University of Oregon student research course "Design the Unseen," led by Prof. Mark Fretz, head of the Institute for Health in the Built Environment and Energy Studies in Buildings Lab, including student analysis of life-cycle energy and carbon impacts on real-world projects, and post-occupancy and occupant comfort studies.

Beyond promoting sustainability efforts centered around the built environment, we encourage and provide environmental stewardship education opportunities to staff. Each year we try to align at least one of our quarterly volunteer events to focus on restoration of the local natural environment. By participating in these local events, we can engage in greater sustainability discussions outside the industry.

2023 SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN

