

VMWP | SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN

VERSION 2.0a

April 22, 2024 *Earth Day*

ARCHITECTURE | URBAN DESIGN ■ SAN FRANCISCO | DENVER | MINNEAPOLIS

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VMWP | SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN

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Notes of Hope

Cover image:

Vitalia Apartments at 3100 S. Bascom, San Jose, California:

Green Point Rated Platinum, all-electric building, extensive use of photovoltaic panels, and design eliminated 32,220 lbs of carbon

VMWP's Commitment

Van Meter Williams Pollack (VMWP) is an award-winning architecture and urban design firm based in San Francisco with offices in Denver and Minneapolis. Since 1989, we have provided a full range of comprehensive design and planning services for a variety of project types, scales and clients.

VMWP's comprehensive and innovative design approach takes into account environmental, social, economic, equity, and client needs to create buildings and communities that resonate with people. From small towns grappling with pressures of growth, to major urban centers requiring infill and redevelopment, one of our strengths is the ability to work in the variety of communities that make up diverse, growing regions to create innovative designs.

As leaders in sustainable design, with LEED Accredited professionals in all of our offices, we understand that our office should be a microcosm of the collaboration needed across the industry to meet the 2030 Challenge. Sustainability is an integral part of quality design and a challenge to build communities responsibly. To us, sustainable design means satisfying the needs of the present generation without jeopardizing the needs of future ones.

VMWP affirms signing on to the AIA 2030 Commitment program and its goal of carbon-neutral buildings by the year 2030. We believe we do good work that strives to address the issues of the day and shape a better future. However, we understand that we must reach beyond our standard practices to address the accelerating crisis. We also know that we need to do that work as a committed profession reaching with our peers to do more and support each other in doing more. We signed the Commitment to improve our current integrated design approach, push our realization of significant reductions in the use of natural resources, non-renewable energy sources and waste production, and promote the regeneration of natural resources.



Our project in Marin County, a low income and formerly homeless senior housing development that was hard fought over for almost a decade, continued construction through the beginning of the pandemic, maintaining safety of the workers. Successfully completed, it welcomed its first residents in July of 2020 and served as a vaccination site for all the residents in the spring of 2021.

Introduction

On Earth Day we, as architects and practitioners of making homes and places for people, are with hope setting forth this 2030 Challenge Commitment and Sustainability Action Plan for our work. We are filled with the sense of urgency and transformation that has been a long time coming

As signatories of the AIA 2030 Challenge, VMWP has committed to make all new buildings and renovations carbon-neutral by the year 2030 to mitigate the catastrophic effects of climate change caused by the building sector. Our use of technology, creativity and strategic planning help us to conserve resources, build communities, and express the interconnectedness of people and their physical surroundings.

We take this with us for our breath.



1101 Connecticut, San Francisco, CA: LEED Platinum - rooftop PV, solar thermal, 22k gal stormwater cistern, and 100% of stormwater treatment onsite.

VMWP Employee Certifications:

- LEED AP
- Passive House
- GreenPoint Rater
- CGBC

VMWP Commitments

- Signatory of the AIA 2030 Challenge
- International Living Future Institute Pilot Program
- Epic Building Challenge
- Kelsey Standards

VMWP Certified Projects:

- LEED Platinum: 6 projects
- LEED Gold: 6 projects
- LEED Rated: 3 project
- Net Zero Energy: 3 project
- Green Point Rated: 16 projects
- All electric buildings: 16 projects
- Enterprise Green Communities: 7 projects
- Zero Energy Ready homes: 4 projects
- National Green Building Standards Gold certification: 1 projects

Bay Friendly Landscaping (BFL)

- Cottonwood Place; Fremont, CA - Certified

Affordable Supportive Housing

- Formerly Unhoused: 11 projects
- Veteran: 3 projects
- Senior: 21 projects
- Family: 31 projects
- Assisted living for people with disabilities: 3

2030 COMMITTEE

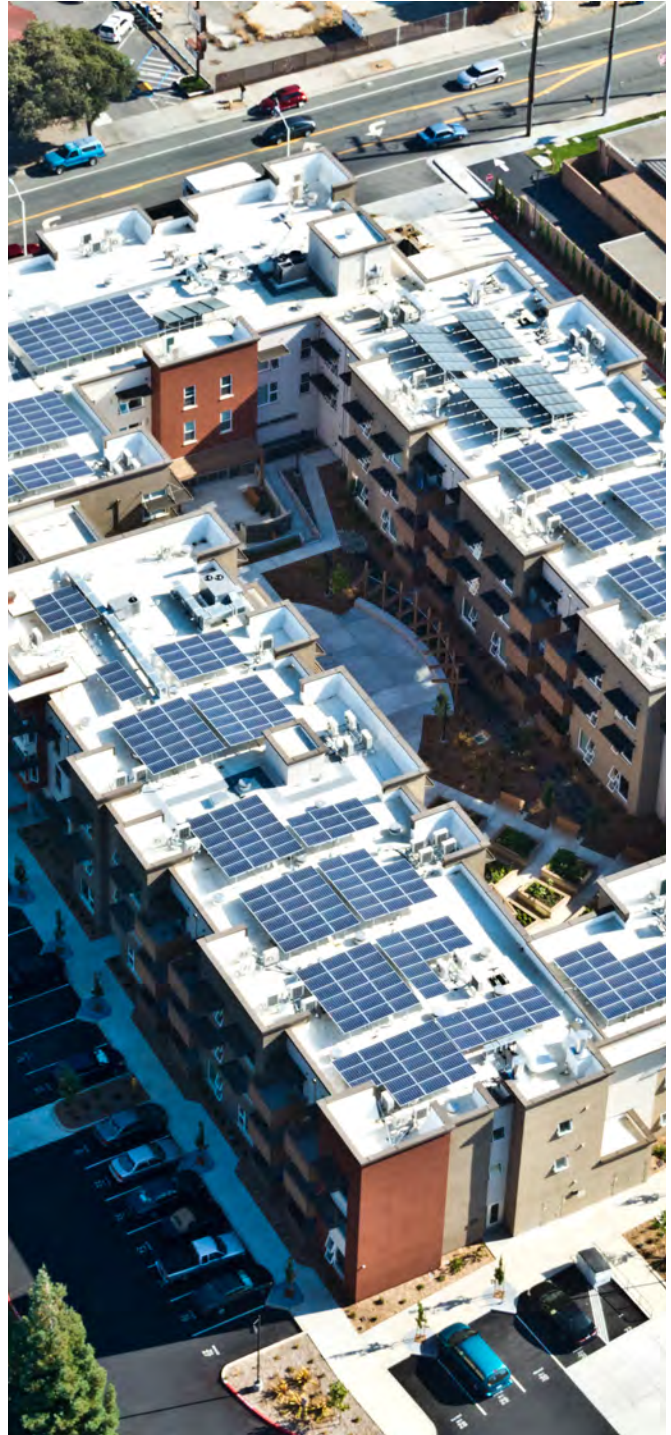
In 2020 VMWP established a sustainability committee that discussed where we are, where we want to go, and how we are going to get there. We presented to the worldwide office and received feedback that has been integrated into the plan. It has been a truly collaborative process with over half the office participating in the plan.

In 2021 VMWP released our firmwide Sustainability Action Plan (SAP) 1.0. Our SAP document is divided into six sections: Business Culture, Design Approach, Evaluation and Reporting, Sustainability Advocacy Outreach, Education and Training, and Operations and Outlook. We intended to make immediate progress, so we include incremental goals for 2021 and for 2030. We knew that small steps will continue the momentum and help us reach our goal.

In 2022 VMWP reported to DDx an increase of 5% of Predicted Energy Use Intensity (EUI) Reduction: VMWP has reduced their projects' average pEUI by 9% and increased the amount of energy modeled projects by 12%. The DDx reporting showed that seven of VMWP's projects reduced their pEUI by over 80% and four of them surpassed 100% reduction from their baseline EUI.

In 2023 VMWP is one of the 33% of the signatory firms who reported in 2022. 19% of VMWP's projects met the 80% pEUI reduction target, while 4% of all reported projects met the 80% target.

In 2024 VMWP have reduced our projects' average pEUI by an extra 13% and have increased the amount of energy-modeled projects by 24%. VMWP's projects have reached 66% reduction with the goal of being fully carbon neutral by 2030!



Cottonwood Place Senior Apartments, Fremont, CA: LEED for Homes Platinum, GPR rating of 200 points, Energy Star certification, Bay-Friendly Rated 128 points - extensive storm water management system, solar hot water panels & photovoltaics.

I. Business Culture

WHY?

It is who we are; we are a mission-driven firm. VMWP has committed to the triple bottom line: Planet, People, and Profit - in that order. This mission is driven by a passionate need to design sustainably with the least impact on our planet, to respond to the needs of the underserved, to hire and support creative excellence in our employees, to be a resource to our design community, and to work and realize the aspirational goals of our client. This is sustainable design. This is good design. This is good business. This is VMWP.



VMWP 30th anniversary convening focused on sustainability, innovative design, and resilience

I. Business Culture - Continued

GOALS

2024 GOALS

- Include a slide or a sheet on architectural sustainability or sustainable urbanism in every VMWP presentation.
- Market our transit-oriented development (TOD) and sustainable communities expertise as a service to help clients with site selection and non-traditional phases, such as pre-construction, long-term planning, and post-occupancy.
 - Minneapolis office is a technical assistance provider for a TOD predevelopment grant program for emerging developers 2022-current.
- Management's commitment to expose young designers to business operations and management opportunities.
 - Outreach for all, including opportunities to speak, present, organize deliverables, etc.
 - Marketing opportunities to represent the company
 - Central calendar for all outreach, learning, mentoring events and opportunities
- Draw on our knowledge of Passivhaus design or resilient urbanism to cultivate new client relationships.
 - The San Francisco office gave a Passive House presentation to MidPen in 2022 and the Minneapolis office gave a Passive House presentation to Beacon & Redesign (both affordable housing non-profits) in 2023.
 - Cultivate new presentation topics and hot topics of the day with other industry professionals

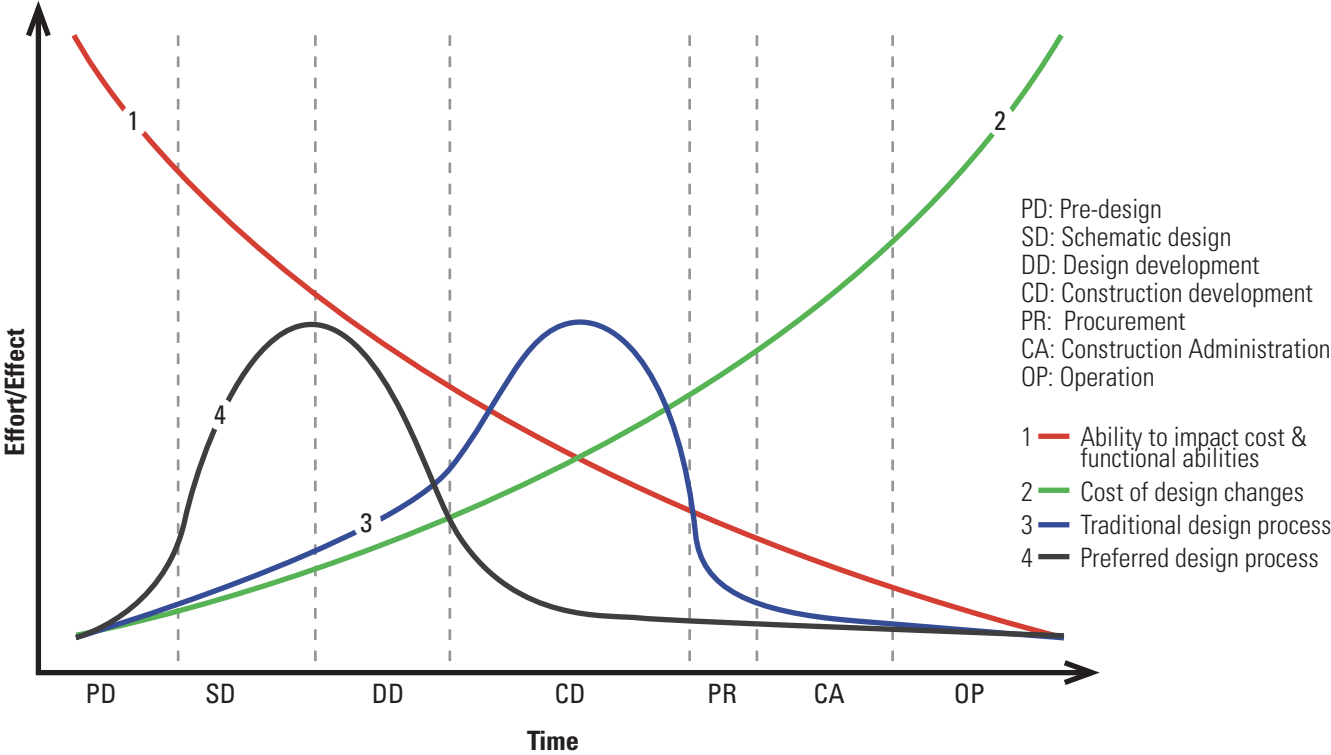


VMWP Denver, 2018 Best of Colorado Honoree - "in recognition meeting rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency"

2. Design Approach

WHY?

We work on housing and urban design that is dense, affordable, and connected to the urban fabric. We challenge ourselves to take what we do well as a baseline, but continue to learn, grow, innovate and improve our work in an effort to address the climate challenge that we collectively face. We reach for the newest innovative design, with hope and excitement, to find the most efficient design to outperform the last. We will always strive for better, and a more sustainable design. In doing so, we deepen our design strengths, question our assumptions, and become better designers.



The now familiar Macleamy Curve illustrates the minimal cost and increased impact of early design decisions in an integrative design process.

2. Design Approach - Continued

GOALS

2024 GOALS

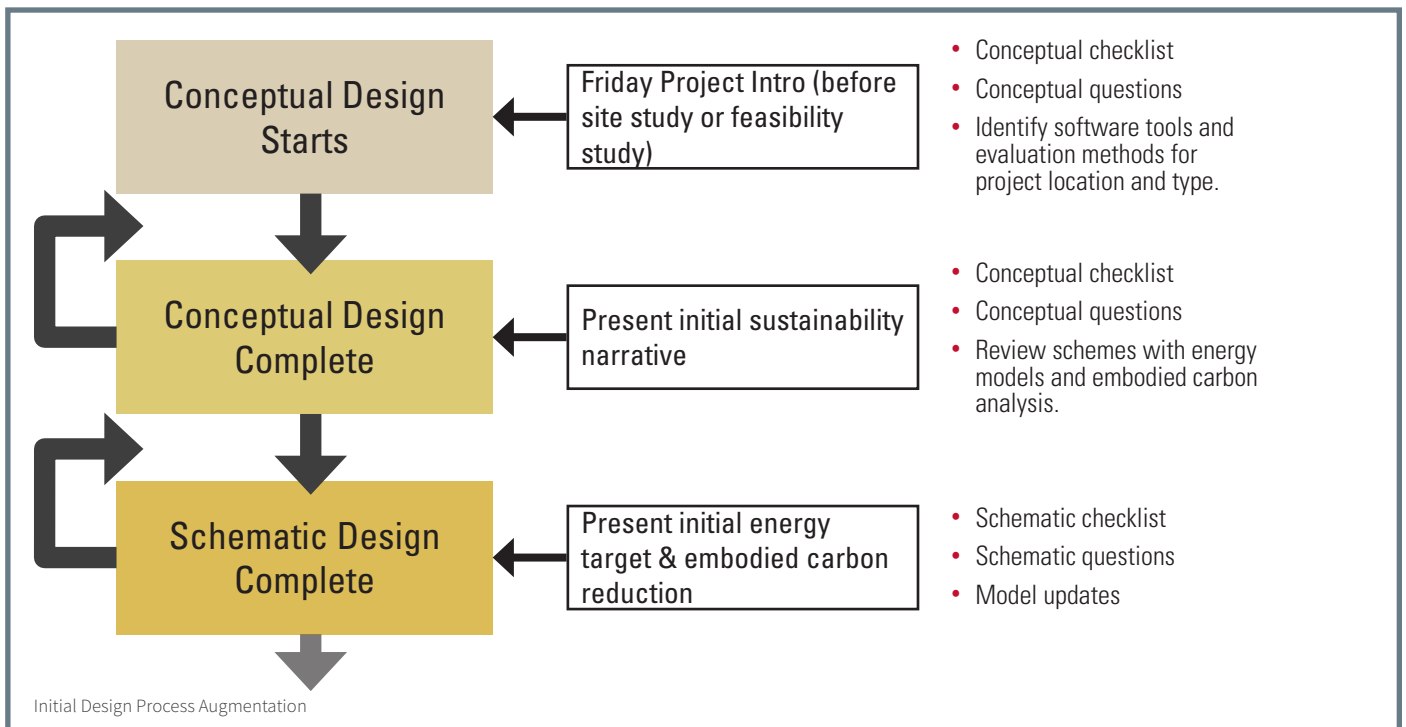
- **Early design decisions implemented using an 'integrated design process'.**
 - Implement a 6-step iterative design process to integrate social, economic and environmental principles into our projects by incorporating the AIA 'Framework for Design for Excellence' Principles as part of the VMWP 'integrated design process'.
See images on following pages outlining the intended design process steps.
- **Designate a 'Design Approach' team, to champion this process and disseminate information to the office.**

2027 GOALS

- Review 2024 Goals to see: if it was possible to implement the Design Framework, and if so, what the results, findings and learnings are.
- Identify where we make the gains, the big steps in addressing the climate crisis in our process, and how that relates to our overall goals as a firm.
- Identify what didn't work & why - revise design process accordingly.
- Embodied carbon reduction is fully integrated as a priority.

2030 GOALS

- Meet the 2030 Challenge with carbon neutral and embodied carbon emissions - 65% below standard for global warming potential.
- **Projects we are starting now in 2024 might be completed in 2030. This means we are working towards our 2030 goals now.**



3. Evaluation and Reporting

WHY?

While code minimums and required documentation vary from region to region, VMWP is committed to exceed these baseline requirements. VMWP aims to document data, before and after construction, and to evaluate our design intent compared to the project's outcomes.

We strive to incorporate energy consultants and/or provide in-house energy modeling early in the schematic design phase, setting realistic goals that lead to better design and efficiencies. Early energy modeling information is also critical to establish building orientation, materials, assemblies, and mechanical systems.

2024 GOALS:

- Assemble the Environmental Design Lab (EDL) so that all projects have the opportunity to focus on sustainability aspects.
 - This collectively raises the bar in the office.
 - We learn from each other.
- Add sustainability sheets to be presented or included in internal design talks.
- Include Post Occupancy Evaluations (POE) in all proposals and request POE's on all recently built buildings.
 - Create a summary outlining the value of POE's and integrate into our proposals.
 - The POE confirms that the client's goals were met or what changes would be needed to meet them (now or in the future).
 - Continue to formalize our POE process by working with our clients to develop project specific surveys and communication methods with residents and staff.
 - Work with marketing to create a package of survey samples.
- Compare actual energy usage to the predicted energy by requesting energy bills and/or total energy used and produced on completed projects.



Balboa Reservoir, San Francisco, CA: Applied for the SF Planning - Sustainable Neighborhood Program.

3. Evaluation and Reporting - Continued

ARCHITECTURAL GOALS

- Utilize compartmentalization testing to create healthier units:
 - Provide a summary of why air sealing is important that can be used to educate clients; i.e. air sealing has many advantages for the residents: better IAQ, acoustics, fire protection, and energy performance which all leads to more comfortable homes and lower utility bills.
 - Make sure air sealing details are in all drawings. We have already integrated air sealing techniques into our detail warehouse, but this will need to be reviewed and updated over time to make sure they remain in all details.
 - Include compartmentalization testing in specifications with protocol for how many units and failure process.
 -
- Integrate energy modeling software into the beginning of each project:
 - Evaluate the current tools and decide whether we can invest in the tool and the time to get up to speed.
 - Confirm the tool will provide accurate data that can be used and learned from.
 - Create graphics with the tools and a way to present the information to our clients.
 - Create in house protocols if software is used so all models in the office are the same and can be evaluated with each other.
- Integrate the water demand calculator into each project: (reducing pipe length = less wasted water in pipes)
 - Research to confirm the advantages and disadvantages and provide graphic descriptions of the advantages for clients.
 - Ask all plumbing engineers to use the water demand calculator.
- Prioritize material efficiency: Reducing materials reduces embodied carbon & cost of construction.
 - Push for 2 hour walls only at load bearing walls in type IIIA exterior walls.
- The next 10 years are critical for climate change reduction and that the embodied carbon in our buildings can, and must, make an impact.
 - Learn how to use Tally software to evaluate the embodied carbon in VMWP's buildings.
 - Compare different systems and materials to make informed decisions
 - Find an advocate that knows Revit well and is willing to spend some time learning.

2030 GOALS

- VMWP will have a solid evaluation protocol that allows for efficient and substantive review of each project. It is understood that every project brings new challenges and opportunities to use less embodied carbon and be more energy efficient. It is our company policy to strive for these goals.

2027 GOALS

- Incorporate commissioning (Cx) to reduce energy use and allow the systems to last longer:
 - Provide a summary of the advantages of commissioning. Review with the owner which systems make the most sense and integrate into the design process.
 - Provide research on costs and outcomes to present to owners.
 - Create a commissioning agent specification for different systems.
 - Include commissioning discussion earlier in the design process potentially having them involved in the design process

3. Evaluation and Reporting - Continued

URBAN DESIGN GOALS

2024 GOALS

- Conduct in-house evaluations of large urban design projects through multiple lenses, such as urban fabric, site ecology, and infrastructure, making sustainability an integral factor in all projects.
- Cater to every project scale ranging from zoning amendments to specific area plans, and development design guidelines to large-scale master plans.
- Improve quality of life by promoting affordable housing and improving social infrastructure and economic growth.

2030 GOALS

- All VMWP urban design projects must be evaluated for their distinctive physical and jurisdictional assets, while demonstrating a clear integration of sustainable design.
- This framework commits to:
 - Designing infrastructure improvements and neighborhood connections that promote walkability and alternative transportation to reduce dependence on cars
 - Maintaining healthy air (zero emissions and non-toxic)
 - Promoting water efficiency through stormwater management techniques and efficient irrigation systems
 - Supporting and nurturing existing ecosystems (healthy and diverse ecology)
 - Encouraging renewable energy alternatives (carbon-free and efficient), and aiming for a responsible cradle-to-cradle zero-waste approach

4. Sustainability Advocacy Outreach

WHY?

SF BAY AREA SPECIFIC INITIATIVES:

VMWP believes in the value of exchanging knowledge within the design community to help build relationships around common goals and solutions for social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Our knowledge and influence is limited if it remains in a silo.

As part of our pledge to the 2030 commitment, VMWP will continue to share our knowledge with the design community internally and externally and to advocate around common and measurable goals.



The VMWP team at a SPUR event

GOALS

2024 GOALS

- Sharing internal information with the external design community through presentations, web posts, social media, SAP features, etc.
- Identify and pursue local project awards centered around environmental and social sustainability goals.
- Circulation of state/county/city policy or legislative campaigns to encourage affordable, infill, transit oriented housing that helps meet state climate objectives.
- Cultivate relationships with industry thought leaders by collaborating on projects and developing joint presentations for conferences and events
 - Identify consultants who are effective industry thought leaders, name and share at least two in each category (e.g. structural, MEP, energy etc.) that we would like to regularly collaborate with on projects.
 - Identify effective industry thought vendors/organizations, name and share internally.
 - Give at least twelve joint presentations within the year with thought leaders, log them on the VMWP events calendar with who presented & link to the slides.

4. Sustainability Advocacy Outreach - Continued

2027 GOALS

- Involve all staff in the sharing of information/posts from each employee by 2027, even if it is anonymous.
 - Clear and universal instructions/expectations
 - Encourage and support the effort by finding out what they care about.
 - Judgment-free feedback
- Strengthen and define relationships with industry leaders
 - Define current and future expectations in this relationship - how they will help us and how we will help them - write it down.
 - Designate employees to repeatedly team up with the same industry leaders to initiate lasting partnerships.
 - Share a list of the top four presentations with the design community at the end of the year.
- Specific to the Denver Office:
 - Annual application commitment to present at Housing Colorado as an opportunity to showcase our green initiatives.
 - Annual commitment to volunteer at Housing Colorado's Design Charrettes as an opportunity to teach students about sustainable practices.

2030 GOALS

- To have all of the above actually happen!
 - A 100% engaged staff.
 - Strong beneficial partnership with sustainable industry leaders .
 - Each employee has a relationship with an industry leader.
 - To be known in our industry as a leader and resource in sustainable design.
- Create and deliver presentations to external groups or offer continuing education external presentations / continuing education forums in support of visibility as a trusted expert in the industry.



University of Louisiana NOMAS student chapter visits VMWP to discuss affordable housing, designing for community, master planning, mission-driven architecture, and climate-resilience.

5. Education and Training

WHY?

The best way to make sure we achieve our sustainability goals is to grow our collective knowledge from within the firm. Sustainable design is constantly evolving with new innovative solutions to address issues more comprehensively. Building up professional skills and usable resources ensures that we stay proactive in our climate response and continue to design environmentally intelligent buildings.

VMWP aims to foster a healthy learning environment for the continued sustainability training and education of our staff members. At the organization level, the Environmental Design Lab (EDL) is an action group within the firm that engages employees and helps to frame and bring the company's sustainability goals to fruition.

GOALS

2024 GOALS

- Continue to build up the sustainability skills of current staff members.
- Set up a standard system to pool + popularize known resources.
- Create simple tools to communicate to clients base, medium, stretch goals.
- 8.5 x 11 graphic with value and \$\$
- Establish calendar for available and/or recommended educational events, i.e. PGE, PEC, etc.
- List of organizations with which to connect or collaborate. See Sustainability Advocacy Outreach chapter
- Continue to communicate sustainability goals in the hiring process.



VMWP tours Veteran's Village, a project that offers affordable housing and health services to formerly homeless veterans.

2030 GOALS

- Make it regular practice to use Working L&L // Charrette // small groups to work through a problem then review together
- 100% Staff participation in the larger sustainability conversation within the profession
- Realize a creative process of looking at all that we do through a sustainability lens - from buildings and sites, to beyond.

5. Education and Training - Continued

HOW?

ORGANIZATIONAL

- EDL as an initiative in itself
- Intra-office training sessions with JEDI (justice, equity, diversity, inclusion) principles to cultivate internal communication, awareness, and connection, in support of both firm culture and climate justice.

RECOGNITION

- Showcase staff achievements and sustainable design contributions.
- Feature on website/social media/ virtual bulletin board.

RESOURCES + CREDENTIALS

- Roadmap to resource: Spreadsheet to direct traffic to the office resource (ie. pervvson)
- Consolidation of resource material and dissemination
- Database of project data for architecture and urban design (Project Information Knowledge Share)
- Support, encourage and incentivize sustainability training
- Optional training/in-house workshops
- Advertise available local resources (such as PG&E Energy Center, Passive House, AIA Committee for the Environment)
- Virtual bulletin board
- Accessible to all three VMWP offices
- Tie into existing systems like wiki/website/social media where needed
- “What’s new on the board?”- monthly collective check-ins tied into staff meetings/presentation/ discussion sessions



Weekly Friday design discussions

6. Operations and Outlook - Office Culture

WHY?

In addition to advocating for larger system changes, we must practice what we preach on the individual level. We believe that sustainable action begins with individuals in offices and in homes and we must always strive to become more innovative and more efficient in our own practice and within our own four walls.

GOALS

2024 GOALS:

- Make it official. We hire, train, and recruit like-minded individuals who believe deeply in the stewardship of the Earth and their responsibility as designers to save water, materials, and energy, always. (See Section 5 - Education and Training)
- Support and encourage employee volunteering and community engagement; to encourage employees to be advocates for sustainability and equity in our communities.
- Designate an Environmental Justice advocate in each office (See Section 5 - Education and Training)
- Support the culture of employee volunteering and community engagement, by featuring individuals and the programs they support on social media and the firm's website, regardless if they are relevant to the field of architecture or urban design.
- Provide incentives for participating in volunteering and community engagement activities. (See Section 4 - Sustainability Advocacy Outreach)
- Have sustainability engrained to our day-to-day lives
- What can we do in our individual life - outside of architecture
- Create shared sustainability goals idea cloud (See

2030 GOALS:

- To ensure every employee is passionate and dedicated to their role in their community and to VMWP's 2030 plan.
- Provide open employee feedback form on SAP goals and objectives.
- Review employee suggestions during SAP milestones.



VMWP joins residents to plant trees at Veteran's Village, a project that offers affordable housing and health services to formerly homeless veterans

6. Operations and Outlook - Energy and Supplies

WHY?

To practice what we preach in our design and work, we will make efforts to reduce the direct energy and resource usage of VMWP employees and offices.

GOALS

2024 GOALS:

- Reduce office technology energy/power usage (See Section 4 - Sustainability Advocacy Outreach)
- Cloud based server to reduce energy consumption from an on-site physical server
- Revive computer shutdown program which requires all staff to turn off their computers at the end of day to preserve energy and increases the life of hardware
- Create incentive for employee energy use reduction
- Plotters and printers to go into green mode between 10PM-7AM
- Set quarterly office goals to achieve this reduction.
- Reduction of waste in food supplies and snacks
- Eliminate single-use plastic use by using ceramic plates and silverware purchased
- Need a way to track the reduction in single-use plastic use
- All in-house catering offers vegan options
- In all three VMWP offices, we provide:

- Earth-friendly/post consumer products
- Low-impact dining options/lunch practices (Denver has limited space)
- Low-waste options, recycling and composting (Denver to research reliable compost options - <https://www.compost-colorado.com/dropoff>)
- Filtered water/no bottled water
- Rechargeable batteries
- E-waste all electronics that are not re-homed
- Reduce paper use
- Use cloud-based software such as BIM360 and Bluebeam Studio to reduce load on our office server and printing
- Foster habits toward resource conservation, i.e. when hiring, provide commuter cards and consultation on how to get to work via public transportation, public transportation incentives, green practices at home, etc. (See Section 4 - Sustainability Advocacy Outreach and Section 5 - Education and Training)

2027 GOALS:

- Reduction of waste in food supplies and snacks in all 3 offices
- Remove single use bottled beverages
- Provide Enterprise Soda-Stream with on demand carbonated water and bulk flavorings to reduce single use plastic and aluminum.

- When ordering food, request no utensils/order from places that only have compostable food containers.
- Order office snacks in bulk containers or use compostable wrapping.
- Use ceramic (washable/reusable) or compostable plates
- Reduction of paper use
- Providing touch screen tablets to principals in order to mark-up without printing sets, then roll out to project managers and therefore reducing our printing footprint.
- Use printing tracking software to help reduce unnecessary printing
- Set quarterly office goals to achieve this reduction.
- Research sustainable/renewable gifts/swag that we can bring to conferences/events (See Section 1 - Business Culture, Section 4 - Sustainability Advocacy Outreach, and Section 5 - Education and Training)

2030 GOALS:

- Reduce office technology energy/power usage
- Add inductive electrical metering to office subpanels where VMWP office spaces are not separately metered. Consider upgrading fluorescent fixtures to LED tubes.
- Work with management at our office locations to provide energy from renewable sources (See Section 4 - Sustainability Advocacy Outreach)

6. Operations and Outlook - Healthy Workplace

WHY?

To provide physical, social, and mental support to VMWP employees to ensure that they have the tools needed to thrive at VMWP creatively and freely in a healthy environment.

GOALS

2024 GOALS:

- We meet the needs of our employees by remaining flexible and adaptable to changing needs and demands of our office.
- Periodic review of employee needs and adaptive adjustments as needed
- Anonymous suggestion box to provide feedback on current policies
- Meet employee physical comfort needs
- Manage office air quality levels by:
 - Using air purifiers with high grade filters that monitor/report Air Quality Levels
 - Measure and track office Air Quality Levels
 - Make Air Quality Level reporting information available to all employees

- Room acoustics improved to reduce noise disturbances.
- Office plants added as necessary to boost workplace attentiveness and prevent fatigue.
- Secure bicycle parking provided in all three offices to encourage daily exercise and alternative modes of transportation.
- Meet employee social support needs
- Social events such as happy hours, design conversations, lunch and learns, and tours foster internal connection, reduce stress, and promote a positive work environment.
- Meet employee mental support needs
- We aim for a culture of inclusion at VMWP to promote workplace diversity and belonging (see Section 1. Business Strategy).
- Professional growth opportunities to encourage and support learning outside of the office (see Section 5. Education and Training)
- VMWP actively and collectively practices gratitude. After staff meetings, we practice a “moment of gratitude” where we can share positive experiences in and out of the office.

2027 & 2030 GOALS:

- Don't stop! Continue 2024 Goals and innovate into the future.



Screenshot from the virtual 2020 VMWP Holiday party

Notes of Hope

We asked the VMWP family how it feels to be making this commitment:





THANK YOU | VMWP

LEED Platinum Mixed-Use Housing - 2175 Market St., San Francisco, California