

Introduction to Sustainability

Integrating Sustainability as a Daily Practice

By Meghann Gregory and Rebecca Wasson

This month's issue focuses on the foundations of sustainability. What is it, how do we practice it, and what impact does it have? When it comes to the word 'sustainability', what definition comes to mind? Various people from K2M were asked this question, and came up with the following thoughts:

- When something is made to be utilized and last for long periods of time. Usually referencing ecofriendly materials or processes as to not affect the future.
- When I think of sustainability I think of preserving and re-using to enhance the health for the people, environments we live in and the world.
- Net-zero
- Green. Open space, outdoors mostly.
- I would say sustainability to me is efficiently using materials that will have a better impact in the long run, even if it is more difficult. Making things that will last the test of time and not have a large negative impact in the future.
- Sustainability always makes me think longevity. If something is sustainable it should be able to operate /perform for a long period of time.
- Bettering the world today for future generations. Utilizing renewable energy to protect natural resources and limit waste/pollution.
- It's a holistic, functional approach that supports both environmental responsibility and occupant health. It encourages more conscious choices, such as investing in quality pieces, repurposing existing items, or incorporating second-hand furniture, proving that good design can be both beautiful and responsible.

To summarize what K2Mrs believe:

Sustainability is a holistic approach focused on longevity, responsible material use, and environmental stewardship. Designing and building in ways that protect natural resources, support human health, and benefit future generations.

So, we have a commonality in place – where do we go from here?

When you are selecting your design products, are you searching for product information that meets these criteria, or are you going with the trusted product you've continually selected for years?

From energy-efficient equipment with the EnergyStar label to the Declare Label, which shares information on where the product comes from, what it's made of, and where it goes at end-of-life, there are many advantages to selecting products with specific labels – including meeting the sustainability goal we should all strive to achieve.

Our next issues will highlight industry specific sustainability practices.

Sustainability Tool Spotlight

Declare

Declare is a volunteer disclosure program providing manufacturer product information in easy to read comprehensive labels. Labels include information about product ingredients, chemicals of concern, assembly locations, life expectancy, end-of-life options, and overall compliance with relevant requirements of the Living Building Challenge (LBC).

Declare labels are provided at no cost to the public through a searchable database. This program offers consumer trust, allows manufacturers a competitive advantage, and ensures a shared language for sustainable building materials.

Potential set backs:
Declare labels are costly from the manufacturer standpoint. This high cost may prevent smaller companies from participating creating a gap in material information.

Join an online course on Declare's website to learn more about how to use Declare in your daily work!



Declare.

Product Name
Manufacturer

Final Assembly: First City, State, Country;
Second City, State, Country; Third City, State, Country
Life Expectancy: 50 Years
Embodied Carbon: # kg CO₂-eq =
Declared Unit: # m²
End of Life Options: Recyclable (95%), Landfill (5%),
Take Back Program (Program Name/Location)

Ingredients:

Your First Component: Sustainably Sourced Ingredient;
LBC Red List Ingredient: Your Second Component;
LBC Watch List Priority for Inclusion: Non-Toxic Ingredient;
Undisclosed (<0.1%)²

¹LBC Temp Exception RL-009 Formaldehyde
²LBC Temp Exception RL-004var.a Proprietary Ingredients

Living Building Challenge Criteria: Compliant

I-13 Red List:

LBC Red List Free **% Disclosed:** 99.9% at 100ppm
 LBC Red List Approved **VOC Content:** # g/L
 Declared

I-10 Interior Performance: CDPH Standard Method v1.2-2017
I-14 Responsible Sourcing: Product Available with FSC Chain of Custody

XXX-XXXX
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Third Party Verified

MANUFACTURER CLAIMS VERIFIED BY THIRD PARTY VERIFIED ASSESSOR
INTERNATIONAL LIVING FUTURE INSTITUTE™ living-future.org/declare

<https://living-future.org/declare/>



Put it in Practice!

Challenge yourself to carry a tote bag for a day, any item you need to throw away should be "thrown away" into that tote bag. See how much trash you create on a daily basis and consider what items in that tote have sustainable swaps! Take note of what items are recyclable or biodegradable and if they would actually go through those processes.

Other personal sustainable practices:

- Use a reusable water bottle instead of single use plastic ones
- Using reusable grocery bags
- look for material swaps in your daily routine such as glass or paper instead of plastic wrapping for lunch items
- turn your thin client and monitors off over the weekend and during PTO time
- Limiting electricity and AI usage.