

SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN



FALL 2019 EDITION

SWBR

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INTRODUCTION

As SWBR turns 50 in 2019, our commitment to sustainable design is as strong as ever with a growing portfolio of sustainable projects and over a million square feet of certified green buildings. This commitment makes a measurable and meaningful impact on our firm that is visible in both our practice and culture. Looking to reduce the energy use and carbon footprint of our designs, SWBR became a signatory of the AIA 2030 Commitment in 2018. As part of this effort, we have also improved and formalized strategies to reduce our office energy use, support transportation alternatives, and address procurement procedures for our office products. This Sustainability Action Plan provides an overview of SWBR's commitment to sustainability.

This Action Plan will serve as a framework for ongoing evaluation and improvement as we seek to further our positive impact.

FIRM OVERVIEW

SWBR is a 100+ person design firm in Upstate New York. Our Rochester and Syracuse offices offer a wide-range of services in a variety of market sectors. SWBR's Education Studio specializes in both K-12 and Higher Education design. Our Housing Studio focuses on affordable, senior, and urban/mixed use housing projects. Our Workplace Studio supports municipal, corporate, and industrial clients. SWBR also offers interior design, structural engineering, graphic design, landscape architecture, and planning services.

OUR MISSION

SWBR. Positively impacting lives through meaningful design.

OUR VISION

SWBR will be a highly respected national design firm consistently providing leadership, expertise, innovation and entrepreneurial thinking.

OUR VALUES

Balance, Client Satisfaction, Quality and Design Excellence, Empowerment and Responsibility, Professional Development, Leadership, Trust and Mutual Support, Communication, Individual Diversity and Respect, Financial Well-Being

OUR CULTURE

We are inclusive and versatile leaders who engage each other and our clients to create innovative solutions in a fun and challenging environment that embraces growth.



OUR COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

Our commitment to sustainable design elevates our practice and brings meaning to our work. We champion efforts to positively impact the social, environmental, and economic sustainability of our projects. This makes a real, measurable, and meaningful difference that can be seen in both our practice and our culture. In 2018, we became a signatory of the AIA 2030 Commitment, seeking to improve our practice, reduce the energy use and carbon footprint of our buildings, and contribute towards making a global impact.



AIA 2030 COMMITMENT

The mission of the AIA 2030 Commitment is to transform the practice of architecture in a way that is holistic, firm-wide, project-based, and data-driven, so that the AIA and the participating firms can prioritize energy performance and carbon reductions in the design toward carbon neutral buildings, developments, and major renovations by 2030.

SWBR was the first firm in Rochester, NY to sign on to the AIA 2030 Initiative and are proud to be a local leader in this effort. Our first step in this commitment was to conduct department- and studio-based sustainability summits to collaborate and establish firm-wide best practices, sustainable design goals and initiatives that support our clients and project teams in creating a better, greener building. Following these sustainability summits, SWBR's Sustainable Design Best Practices were produced. This is a "living document" that provides quick and easy access to numerous sustainable design approaches, techniques, and resources that may be implemented on our projects. We regularly train and educate employees on sustainable design and on our 2030 goals.

As part of our 2030 Commitment, SWBR has developed four Operational Actions related to office energy consumption, alternative transportation opportunities, office food and tableware, and office cleaning initiatives.

This Sustainability Action Plan is part of our Commitment efforts, providing an overview of who we are, how we work, what we do and how we strive to improve.



SUSTAINABILITY IN PRACTICE

We take pride in our long history of quality design and happy building occupants.

HOW WE WORK

Best Practices: After conducting sustainability summits with all studios and departments within the firm, we have developed SWBR's Sustainable Design Best Practices. These are firm-wide goals and standards that integrate with the National AIA Committee on the Environment (COTE) "Top Ten Toolkit." We've taken a close look at in-house practices to more positively impact our environment, clients, and communities we serve. Our "Best Practices" document includes SWBR-specific practices supporting each of the AIA COTE Top Ten Measures, recommendations and resources, including links to connect designers to relevant information and studio-specific strategies for making a greater impact.

► Following the release of SWBR's Best Practices in 2019, we will continue to provide firm-wide training on how to utilize these practices and resources to better serve our clients and improve our projects.

Interiors Library: In 2018, our Interiors Group created a comprehensive labeling system for our materials library, with a specific focus on the environmental qualities of finishes and finish products. This labeling system will allow anyone using the library to make informed selections on which manufacturers are transparent about their material ingredients and/or have positive or negative environmental and health impacts quickly. These include, but are not limited to, Health Product Declarations (HPDs), Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs), Cradle2Cradle certifications, Declare labels, Mindful Materials content, and recycled content data.

► Having implemented this labeling system, we intend to begin the process of filtering out products that contain chemicals of concern from the product library through review of the collected product disclosure data.



Post-Occupancy Evaluations: Post-occupancy evaluations and surveys allow occupants and design teams to gain insight regarding a building's metrics and evaluate a project's success.

- ▶ **SWBR is currently developing a more comprehensive "Post Occupancy Evaluation" to assist our design teams in better assessing and understanding occupants' personal satisfaction with elements of indoor environmental quality, including acoustics, thermal comfort, visual comfort, and spatial qualities. This new resource will begin to be utilized on select projects in 2019.**

SUSTAINABLE PROJECTS

LEED: We have certified over one million square feet of LEED buildings, including two LEED-Platinum projects, through the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program. Our LEED-certified projects include higher education, multifamily housing, and municipal work. Our portfolio includes a wide range of sustainable solutions from state-of-the-art research laboratories to simple and elegant adaptive reuse projects that serve those in our community most in need.

Since our published sustainability report in 2015, we have certified nine projects under the LEED rating system.

- ▶ **We will maintain our leadership and commitment to the LEED Rating System and will ensure the success of future projects through internal team education and client information sessions regarding updates to the system, including the new LEED v4.1.**



Other Sustainable Design Opportunities: SWBR's Housing Studio is involved with one of six affordable housing projects in New York State that are participating in RetrofitNY, an energy-efficiency program through the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). This NYSERDA program aims to bring affordable housing projects to, or near, net-zero energy over the next decade or so.

SWBR has worked on several projects that have installed photovoltaic arrays to help offset their energy consumption. We have installed green roofs on numerous buildings in addition to utilizing rainwater capture systems to help reduce our projects' impact on water use and on-site rainwater management.

- ▶ **In addition to supporting this NYSERDA program and LEED certification, we have been working frequently with the Passive House Institute US (PHIUS) and the WELL Rating System. We look forward to increased work with these systems on future projects and supporting more aggressive strategies for energy reduction, carbon reduction, and improved health.**
- ▶ **We will continue to seek opportunities to utilize on-site renewable energy and support innovative sustainable technologies that provide positive environmental impacts.**



BUILDING SCIENCE

Our experience with innovative, sustainable, and high-performance building design continues to grow. In 2019, we established a Building Science Initiative in support of a strategic effort that integrates our expertise in design, performance, and sustainability and leverages new technologies to advance our design practice. In collaboration with our Green Building and Design Initiatives, our Building Science Initiative will use focused training, education, and strategic alliances to expand our capabilities in this innovative and highly technical arena.

This initiative will focus on the following:

- Performance-based design that leverages early-stage energy modeling tools and analysis to inform design decisions related to high-performance enclosures, resilient design, materials and performance characteristics.
 - High-performance design efforts focused on the design and details of resilient, high-performance enclosures, and integrated building systems to support today's aggressive environmental design goals.
 - Advanced technology applications utilizing technology to evaluate existing construction conditions, identify opportunities to improve performance, and ensure projects are performing as designed.
 - Increasing our research in hygrothermal design, thermal performance, daylight modeling, post-occupancy evaluations, and project learning.
- ▶ **As this initiative advances, we will conduct summit meetings with all studios and departments to identify strategic alliances, applications, and resources.**

SUSTAINABILITY IN THE OFFICE

A passion for sustainability is embedded in our office culture and shared with our clients and our community.

FOUR OPERATIONAL ACTIONS

Energy Consumption: Due to our lease agreements, we are unable to install energy meters for our two offices. We have renovated our Rochester office over the past few years in several phases, which has afforded us opportunities to reduce our energy consumption. Through our Rochester office renovations, we have installed LED light fixtures with dimmers and vacancy sensors to help reduce our electrical consumption by approximately 15%. In Syracuse, our office has operable windows that allow us to rely on natural/passive ventilation in the spring and fall along with early summer mornings to reduce reliance on the mechanical systems. The Syracuse office floor plan was strategically designed so that daylight could reach deeper into the space, reducing dependence on artificial lighting. Both offices typically purchase Energy Star products for new equipment and appliances to further reduce our energy consumption.

- ▶ To ensure we are committed to energy-saving equipment for our future purchases, we will formalize our firm-wide policies, including our approach to offset our footprint through the purchase of Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) and Carbon Offsets.



Alternative Transportation Opportunities: During the design of the first phase of our Rochester office renovation, SWBR added bike storage and a shower facility to encourage SWBR employees to bike to work. Our Syracuse office is smaller in size, but has space to allow for employees to store their bikes inside the office securely. To further reduce personal vehicle use by employees, consultants, and clients, we encourage the use of virtual meetings by the use of WebEx.

- ▶ **We will be exploring new incentives to encourage employees to use available public transportation and to better support electric vehicles.**

Office Food and Tableware: In 2013, SWBR made a commitment to reduce its disposable tableware products and purchased flatware, glasses, and plates for use with clients and employees. When food is catered, we request no paper or plastic tableware products be provided.

- ▶ **We are currently establishing a purchasing policy that favors and supports local and environmentally-friendly businesses that support reusable serving and tableware products.**

Cleaning Supplies: Our Rochester office typically purchases dish soap, hand soap, dishwasher detergent, and disinfecting products from environmentally-conscious companies such as Method, Seventh Generation, and Honest. Our Syracuse office uses Green Seal Certified hand soap and utilizes recyclable containers.

- ▶ **We will formalize a policy regarding environmentally-friendly cleaning products and practices to support our operations.**



OFFICE OPERATIONS AND PROCEDURES

Paper Products: Our Rochester and Syracuse office copier paper and cardstock contain recycled content. Other paper products in our offices, such as paper towels, contain either recycled content or come with an FSC-certified label.

- ▶ We will continue to evaluate ways to increase recycled content or FSC-certified products in our office paper use.
- ▶ We will continue to advance strategies toward a paper-free practice and workflow, including the elimination of printed materials for SWBR-hosted meetings.

Equipment: Our black and white copiers and plotters have settings that send them into “sleep” mode after a certain period of inactivity to reduce energy consumption in both offices. We encourage staff to turn off their monitors at the end of the work day.

Our Rochester office color copiers utilize solid ink, improving our indoor air quality by preventing particles from being released into the air. We also implemented an accounting system for large scale plots in our Rochester office that has greatly reduced the plots not picked up by employees.

- ▶ We will work with our Information Technology (IT) Department to explore additional practices that can be implemented on our energy-using equipment, such as personal computers and conference room monitors.
- ▶ We will be working on implementing this same plotter accounting system in our Syracuse office.



Waste and Recycling: With the growth of our Rochester office in recent years, we continue to work on streamlining our recycling to ensure our reduction of landfill waste. Following an update from Monroe County during Earth Week 2019, we have revised our recycling station labeling system in the Rochester office. Our Syracuse office utilizes commingled recycling services for paper, cardboard, glass, plastics, and metals.

A couple years ago, we also removed personal waste bins from employee desks (unless otherwise requested). This effort was to reduce the amount of waste placed, intentionally or accidentally, into a waste bin. This has also saved our maintenance staff time emptying waste bins, allowing them to focus on other tasks. We continue to monitor waste bin use through the occasional waste audit to confirm we are diverting as many items as possible from the landfill.

Both our Rochester and Syracuse office compost food waste, significantly reducing our landfill waste and our contribution to global warming. We learned through numerous waste audits that the majority of our landfill waste was food waste and other organic matter.

In 2018, our Rochester office began composting on all three floors of our building. On average, our Rochester offices composts over 70 lbs. per week. Our Syracuse office began its composting program in April 2019.

- ▶ **Our Syracuse office will begin developing their own recycling station labeling system after their recent meeting with Onondaga County.**



Office Renovation: Over the past year, we have been renovating our office in Rochester to accommodate our company's growth. During this renovation, we implemented a strict construction waste management plan that included hiring an organization to decommission our old systems furniture and recycle it in an economically, socially, and environmentally responsible way and avoiding placing it in a landfill.

We have removed the fluorescent lighting in our office and have installed LED lighting with dimmers and vacancy sensors to reduce our energy consumption in the Rochester office.

All of the specified flooring carries Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs). All of the specified ceiling systems carry EPDs and Health Product Declarations (HPDs). A conscious decision was made to utilize PVC-free and low-VOC products and materials to improve occupant health and comfort. We donated any old, but in good condition, finishes and light fixtures to our landlord for reuse elsewhere in the 5-story building. We reused existing wood doors throughout the renovation and most of our new furniture is certified under SCS Global's Indoor Advantage Gold indicating compliance with ANSI/BIFMA e3-2014 for furniture emissions.

► **We are currently renovating our Syracuse office and are working on utilizing the same principles for decisions regarding lighting and finishes.**



INTERNAL EDUCATION

Our culture and practice benefit as we educate our people and advocate for sustainability in our community. Our sustainability-focused educational program began in 2007 and culminates each year with firmwide events during Earth Week

Training and Learning Opportunities: These sessions are employee- or manufacturer-led presentations that focus on best practices and emerging technologies/techniques. Sustainability is often a part of these presentations as sustainable design is fundamental to meaningful design. This encourages SWBR employees to be mindful and deliberate with their project approaches to environmental issues. Our training coordinator actively seeks sustainably-focused presentations that also offer credit for LEED Credential Maintenance (CMP) and is implementing a bi-weekly schedule for this programming. SWBR also attends sustainability-focused conferences, including Greenbuild, North American Passive House Conference, and the NYS Green Building Conference.

We encourage staff to pursue their LEED Accredited Professional (AP) credential, offering study materials and reimbursement for our employees' exam fees. Our office currently has 6 LEED Green Associates, 7 Legacy LEED Accredited Professionals, and 10 LEED Accredited Professionals with Specialty. This professional commitment helps SWBR deliver solutions that are better, greener, and higher performing every day.

- ▶ While we have presented at the NYS Green Building Conference in the past, we intend to increase our profile as a presenter at these conferences and events.
- ▶ Over the next few years, we will further incentivize our staff to obtain LEED and other key sustainable design credentials.

Earth Week: Since 2007, SWBR's Green Operations Task Force has been putting together a week-long celebration with five days of firm-wide sustainable design education and outreach to celebrate Earth Week. Daily lunchtime presentations focus on a wide-range of sustainable design topics. Office displays communicating new sustainable technologies and projects are shared around the office, and a regional or community donation program takes place throughout the week. In 2018, we raised money for the local chapter of the Nature Conservancy to improve water quality in Canandaigua Lake, located 30-minutes from our office in downtown Rochester. In 2019, the group arranged for an environmentally-friendly product raffle to benefit the Natural Resources Defense Council, in addition to hands-on educational activities to promote sustainability and the environment deeper into our culture.

- ▶ **For our 2020 Earth Week celebration, the Green Operations Committee is going to reach out to local educational institutions and community partners to explore the opportunity to host a community event together for broader outreach on sustainability.**



GREEN TEAM

SWBR has several employee groups that contribute to sustainability efforts in our work and culture. These individuals work with our Sustainable Design Director and Sustainable Design Manager to implement and advocate for sustainability, environmental goals, and holistic improvement of our buildings.

Green Building Initiative Committee: Our Green Building Initiative Committee fosters SWBR's sustainable design practice, encourages a more sustainable culture through education and advocacy, and promotes the firm's accomplishments in sustainability. The group meets quarterly to review sustainability initiatives, training and resource needs, and discuss firm engagement regarding sustainable design.

Green Operations Task Force: This informal volunteer group works to implement many of the initiatives and goals set forth by the Green Building Initiative Committee. With representatives from many studios and departments, this group champions the Earth Week celebration and the operations-side of the firm's sustainability action items.

These individuals develop framework each year to celebrate Earth Week, selecting new and exciting "green" education topics. This group also conducted numerous waste audits, leading to our revised recycling label system and our composting program.

Sustainability Advocates in Studios: All three architectural studios, landscape architecture, interior design, and structural engineering departments have Sustainability Advocates that work closely with our Sustainable Design Director and Sustainable Design Manager to implement sustainability into all aspects of our firm's design work. These Sustainability Advocates have access to additional resources, such as a BuildingGreen subscription, to allow them to be a resource to their studio or department regarding sustainable technologies and ideas. This spreads sustainability deeper into our culture and allows many to develop their skill sets and passion for sustainability.



GREEN BUSINESS PLAN

Social Corporate Responsibility: SWBR seeks to continually improve our firm, our community, and our culture. We have obtained feedback from the B Impact Assessment (BIA) by B Lab, the organization responsible for the Benefit Corporation (B Corp) initiative. Our intent in utilizing this assessment tool is to continue to measure and improve our firm – to identify areas of strength and places for improvement – as we seek to provide an increasingly positive impact in our community and in the world. We are also exploring other programs and platforms, such as JUST by the International Living Future Institute (ILFI) as well as Conscious Capitalism.

- ▶ **With guidance from SWBR's Board of Directors, we will commit to a path forward regarding these programs in the near future.**



CULTURE

Culture Committee: In 2017, SWBR recognized it needed to demonstrate its commitment to social sustainability and equity during our Strategic Planning Retreat. Out of this two-day retreat, our Culture Committee was developed and a culture statement created to remind employees who we want to be and where we want to go. This statement is located at each employee's desk and in all conference rooms as a reminder that every day we should strive for innovation, inclusion, and engagement that will foster great design with powerful results.

Equity and Diversity: SWBR recognizes the importance of culture, social equity and justice, human health, and overall well-being. From supporting causes outside of work that positively impact our local community to the diverse project types and clients we serve, SWBR places a high value on creating a safe and welcoming built environment, as well as a social environment that supports prosperity and enjoyment by all.

In 2017, we also transitioned to a Design Professional Corporation (DPC) that allowed us to open up firm ownership to more of our employees, bringing diversity and professional depth to our shareholder group. Since 2018, four women have been promoted to leadership roles in the firm.

Women's Forum: In addition to the development of our Culture Committee, a Women's Forum (WForum) was formed to empower women in the workplace and in leadership by providing a space for collective thought, discussion, and growth. This group focuses on promoting and supporting equity within a more diverse and inclusive workplace. The WForum has brought in numerous out-of-office female leaders to share their journey and advice with the entire firm, along with hosting in-house female employee meetings for further personal and professional development.



SUSTAINABILITY IN OUR COMMUNITY

We believe sustainable design is not only good for the environment, it positively impacts our clients, our community, and our future.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Educational Opportunities: SWBR offers “shadow day” opportunities for high school students and internships for college students enrolled in an architecture, construction, or engineering (ACE) major. Our staff also participates in numerous construction industry-focused mentoring programs for middle and high school students, such as the Boy Scouts Explorer Program and the ACE Mentor Program of America. We believe educating the next generation of designers is critical to the industry’s success and actively work to provide these learning opportunities to those interested.

SWBR is involved with multiple scholarship awards in the community at various levels. The firm supports two scholarships at a local university’s School of Architecture, and awards a scholarship to a qualified Black Scholar through the Urban League of Rochester. In addition to these three scholarships, we contribute financial support to several other scholarship programs in the Rochester and Syracuse community.

- ▶ In the future, we will increase our support of these existing educational opportunities and seek new partnerships in the community to expand our outreach.
- ▶ We look forward to continuing our support of these important scholarships.



Speaking Engagements: Our Sustainable Design Director and Sustainable Design Manager share SWBR's sustainable design expertise with our clients and community, and speak at regional conferences and universities. SWBR believes that professional education is critical as we work to reduce the built environment's impacts on climate and the environment.

► **We will seek increased opportunities to share our knowledge in the community and at conferences.**

Community Involvement: SWBR puts an emphasis on giving back to the communities that we live and work in, supporting corporate social responsibility. Encouraging participation in our community empowers our employees to get involved outside of the office and make an impact. Our employees are involved in a wide-range of organizations and boards ranging from professional, advisory, and architectural review boards to groups focused on student mentoring and not-for-profit causes that fit our firm's mission and culture.

In 2018, our Syracuse Office participated in PARK(ing) Day, an annual event that encourages community members, students, and designers to transform metered parking spaces into temporary parklets. This SWBR-designed environment was built by a local carpenter out of salvaged wood bleachers and treads from a local school gymnasium and occupied one metered parking spot for the day to emphasize the benefits of public park space in the urban environment. With over 300 people occupying the structure throughout the day, environmental awareness was shared on the impacts of water management, heat island effect, and community spaces. The wood structure was returned to the donor who will relocate the structure to his property for reuse.

► **We hope to have a larger parklet this year and are currently working on strategic partnerships for the 2019 event.**



This year, in celebration of our 50th anniversary, we will complete 50 community service projects, honoring our longstanding history of supporting the community. As part of this “50 for 50” campaign, we will participate in sustainability and environmental awareness events to support organizations like the Natural Resources Defense Council, Earth Day Clean Up Downtown Syracuse, and the Nature Conservancy, along with promoting trail stewardship and bike ridership in lieu of automotive transportation.

- ▶ **With this developed community outreach list, we will continue our commitment to these organizations and causes beyond our 50th Anniversary celebration.**

EXTERNAL IMPACT

USGBC: Our Sustainable Design Director and Sustainable Design Manager participate in professional and community events throughout the year and engage with the regional USGBC New York Upstate Chapter. In 2018, they presented at the New York State Green Building Conference, hosted by SUNY ESF in partnership with USGBC New York Upstate and the Syracuse Center for Excellence in Environmental and Energy Systems.

Advocacy: SWBR engages and participates with other firms and industry colleagues to advocate for healthier, safer, and better buildings. We advocate for improved environmental policies for our country and industry.

- ▶ **We believe as industry leaders that it’s our responsibility to use our voice with others to shift the world to a more sustainable future and look forward to standing with our colleagues in the future on important environmental issues.**



IN CLOSING

As SWBR celebrates its 50th Anniversary in 2019, the firm looks ahead to our next 50 years. Our leadership is critical to a sustainable and thriving future for our people and our planet.

We take pride in our designs, in our teams, and in the communities we live in and serve.

