CLOSING THE LOOP: COLLABORATION FOR BETTER BUILDINGS

MAY 1, 2019
LIVING FUTURE UNCONFERENCE
SUMMIT REPORT

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Introduction

Words can inspire but action creates change. - Simon Sinek

On May 1, 2019, the International Living Future Institute (ILFI) hosted a summit at the Living Future unConference in Seattle, WA, entitled “Closing the Loop: Collaboration for Better Buildings”. Over 100 individuals from primarily the Architecture and Design (A+D) and Manufacturing communities came together to discuss how to accelerate progress towards a future with healthier materials for all.

The summit provided a crucial space to share, discuss and collaborate to break down industry silos and shape the future of materials in the built environment.

The past year has seen significant action from both groups. Starting in April 2018, a group of leading product manufacturers, known as the Living Product 50 (LP50), wrote a letter to the A+D community to ask for more concrete commitments to use products that meet the transparency and optimization attributes that A+D have requested in the past (in a letter campaign in 2012-2013).

In April of 2019, the A+D community released their response in the form of the Materials Pledge, a letter that signals designers’ renewed commitment to prefer products that demonstrate transparency and sustainability attributes. The letter also signals a broader set of holistic attributes that designers will be using to identify sustainable products.

Both letters, however, lack specific actionable content. The letters were intended primarily to signal alignment within each industry, spark meaningful dialogue, and lay the groundwork for collaborative action.

Reflective of the urgency of sustainability goals, the summit was designed to inform each group’s next steps and help turn each group’s lofty goals into real action now. It is the expectation that each group will evaluate the feedback in this report (pgs 7-10) and work to incorporate it in the coming months.

Agenda

Welcome & Context

Alexandra Muller (ILFI) and Annie Bevan (Superior Essex) welcomed attendees to the summit and framed its purpose around “Words into Action” – how do we make real progress within our own industries, and also collaborate to grow the green building industry as a whole.

Presentation: Living Product 50

Alexandra and Annie presented on behalf of the LP50 and laid out actions taken by the group to begin to track and make progress on goals outlined in the LP50 letter since its release.

Presentation: Materials Pledge

Lona Rerick (ZGF), Chris Hellstern (Miller Hull) and Melissa Morancy (AIA) presented the rationale behind the contents of the Materials Pledge and outlined what potential next steps look like.

Breakout: Words into Action

Nadav Malin facilitated the first breakout, used to provide feedback to both LP50 and the A+D community on how to meet the commitments outlined in their respective letters. Emphasis was placed on solutions and taking action now. Feedback was then discussed as a room is presented in summary below. Each group will now incorporate this feedback into their action plans moving forward.

Breakout: Growing the Movement

The second breakout period centered around growing the movement of industries committed to a healthy, sustainable materials economy; growing the LP50 and Materials Pledge, but also new groups like suppliers, engineers, sub-contractors, or laborers. Increased communication and collaboration along the entire value chain, and more standardized product specifications was also a theme.
Speakers

Annie Bevan | Superior Essex
Chris Hellstern | Miller Hull Partnership
Nadav Malin | BuildingGreen
Melissa Morancy | AIA
Alexandra Muller | ILFI
Lona Rerick | ZGF Architects

Attendees

The summit was attended by over 100 individuals from almost 90 companies, from A+D and manufacturers, to engineers, suppliers, owners, contractors, technology solutions, labor unions and higher education.

3Form
Allegion
American Chemistry Council
Andersen Windows and Doors
Ankrom Moisan Architects
Annonomiss Global development
Armstrong Ceiling Solutions
Arup
Aspecta N.A.
Bassetti Architects
BlueGreen Alliance
Bora Architects
Brightworks Sustainability
CalAg LLC/CalPlant I
Cambria
Center for Public Interest Design, Portland State University
Coldspring
Collins
Columbia Forest Products
Construction Specialties
Cookfox Architects
ecomedes
GAF
GCI General Contractors
Goody Clancy
Google
Graphite Design Group
GreenCircle Certified, LLC
Healthy Materials Lab, Parsons School of Design
Herman Miller
Hexion Inc.
Hightower
HPD Collaborative
Humanscale Corporation
ICD High Performance Coatings
Industrial Louvers Inc.
Integrated Eco Strategy, LLC
Integrus Architecture Interface, Inc.
interior architects
International Living Future Institute
James Guerrero Architects, Inc
Jendoco Construction Corporation
KieranTimberlake
Kingspan
Kohler Company
Legrand, North and Central America
LightArt
LMN Architects
Long Green Specs
mafi- America, INC.
Mahlum Architects
Mannington
Mecho
MG2 Design
Milliken
Parabola Architecture
Pathway Design & Construction
Payette
Priopta
Prosoco, Inc.
Rockwool
Schacht Aslani Architects
Sellen
Shaw
Sherwin-Williams Paint Company
Superior Essex
Sustainable Minds
Sustainable Northwest Wood
Tarkett North America
Teknion
Thornton Tomasetti
ToxNot
Turner Construction
University of Washington
USGBC
USGBC MA
VaproShield
Walsh Sustainability Group
WAP Sustainability Consulting
YGH
ZGF Architects
About The LP50

LP50 STATEMENT

The Living Product 50 (LP50) is a collaboration of leading building product manufacturers working to ensure that healthy, high performing building materials with full ingredient and environmental transparency are the rule, not the exception. Their collective vision is a future where every product is optimized to give more than it takes.

While each manufacturer in the green building industry on its own plays an important role in pushing the market, the LP50 provides the opportunity to effect industry-wide transformation by leveraging a common voice and shared practices. The LP50 wants to inspire change on a much larger scale, leading by example and bringing many more companies to the table.

Success is also not possible with a single industry, so the LP50 is convening conversations with the design community, engineers, suppliers, contractors, owners and beyond to discuss how to dramatically grow the entire green building movement to ensure sure healthy, high performing buildings composed of transparently disclosed and sustainable materials are the rule, not the exception.

WORDS INTO ACTION

In 2012, the architecture and design (A+D) community formally sent letters to all major building product manufacturers asking them support transparency and provide information about products’ health and environmental impacts.

2012-2018 saw a proliferation of various material ingredient and life cycle impact transparency and optimization certifications and reports published by the building product manufacturing community.

In 2018, a group of manufacturers known as the LP50 collectively agreed that the uptake of transparent and sustainable building materials needed to accelerate to rapidly transform the built environment. In an effort to begin a new type of conversation, more than forty of the world’s leading building product manufacturers each signed onto a letter designed to re-engage all stakeholders in the green building industry.

Knowing that a letter and dialogue is not enough, the LP50 is working to turn their written commitments into bold, transparent, measurable actions. The LP50 hopes to inspire other companies and other industry groups to collaborate to transform the sustainable materials economy.

LP50 COMMITMENTS

1. Building sustainability practices into manufacturing and material selection.
   By tracking, disclosing and increasing what sustainability measures are implemented LP50 members the group can demonstrate leadership and create roadmaps that help other manufacturers engage with sustainability.

2. Investing in product transparency measures and programs.
   To achieve a future where all buildings are made of products that are transparently disclosed and optimized, the LP50 must grow the availability of products that meet these needs.

3. Using common platforms for product information to make it easier to specify products with preferable environmental attributes.
   By agreeing to a common set of platforms (material libraries) to represent their product transparency and optimization information, the LP50 can make it easier for A+D to find products that meet building certification and specification sustainability requirements.

4. Prioritizing suppliers that support manufacturing transparency and environmental impact reduction efforts.
   The LP50 should use all opportunities to collectively and collaboratively engage suppliers to optimize their supply chains and therefore their products and operations.

5. Educating internally at each of their companies, and externally in supply chains, about the importance of transparency and sustainable products.
   The LP50 must educate their supply chains, sales reps, and project teams to help grow the movement of professionals committed to the use of transparent and optimized products.

6. Walking the talk through encouraging the specification of transparent products in their own buildings, factories, and purchasing programs.
   The LP50 itself represents significant purchasing power and can act now to implement sustainable purchasing policies that prioritize transparent and optimized products and demonstrate return on investment. These policies can then be templatized to decrease barriers to implementation at new companies.
About The Materials Pledge

The Materials Pledge defines the aspirations that all building products should ultimately meet. We want to design and build with materials that support Human Health, Climate Health, Ecosystem Health, Social Health and Equity, and a Circular Economy.

Adopting the Materials Pledge is a grassroots effort of design firms coming together to bring clarity and a common message to the discussion. The Materials Pledge letter was originally published on April 15, 2019 with 56 firms, and adoption is rapidly growing.

The Materials Pledge will be followed by an evolving slate of actions, metrics, and reporting mechanisms that firms can use to support their pledge and transformation of the built environment to one where all buildings are composed of materials that are transparently disclosed and optimized.

PLEDGE COMMITMENTS

Transparency and optimization information is used by pledge signatories to select and specify products.

- Publicly available material ingredient disclosure information.
- Publicly available environmental impact disclosure information.
- Documentation of compliance with strict VOC emissions requirements.
- Proof that they do not contain chemicals of concern identified by the Living Building Challenge Red List, the WELL Building Standard, the Healthier Hospitals Initiative’s Safer Chemicals Challenge, and/or the Green Science Policy Institute’s Six Classes.

Additionally, the letter signals where A+D community is headed in terms of their requests for product sustainability. Instead of asking for manufacturers to identify and improve various product attributes in a piecemeal fashion, the letter clearly indicates the intent of its signatories to design and construct with holistically optimized materials.

Each signatory pledges to:

- Continue asking for transparency and better products.
- Continuously improve and update our specifications and procurement processes to require transparent and optimized products.
- Collaborate and share best practices, tools, and education.
- Support Human Health by preferring products which support and foster life throughout their lifecycles and seek to eliminate the use of substances that are hazardous.
- Support Climate Health by preferring products which reduce carbon emissions and ultimately sequester more carbon than emitted.
- Support Ecosystem Health by preferring products which support and regenerate the natural air, water, and biological cycles of life through thoughtful supply chain management and restorative company practices.
- Support Social Health and Equity by preferring products from manufacturers who secure human rights in their own operations and in their supply chains, and which provide positive impacts for their workers and the communities where they operate.
- Support a Circular Economy by reusing buildings and materials; designing for material efficiency, long life, and perpetual cycling.

PROPOSED INITIAL ACTIONS (DRAFT)

- **Human Health** - require transparency (HPDs, Declare, etc), then optimized products
- **Climate Health** - require transparency (LCA, EPDs), then embodied carbon reduction
- **Ecosystem Health** - require transparency (supply chain mapping and impacts)
- **Social Health and Equity** - require transparency (no slavery or child labor)
- **Circular Economy** - require manufacturer take back programs, design for disassembly, adaptive reuse
Breakout: LP50 Feedback

For the first breakout, 1/2 of the room gave feedback on three of six LP50 commitments:

Commitment #1: Continue building sustainability practices into manufacturing and material selection

“The LP50 surveyed its members about a long list of potential sustainability metrics to track (i.e. do you have a Carbon Neutral company plan, do you have 1+ Declare product lines). Which initiatives seem important to track and what is missing from the list?”

Feedback + Ideas:
- Develop and share clear definitions of sustainable manufacturing (Baseline, Leading, and Visionary)
- Help A+D understand which manufacturing operational metrics may apply to A+D’s work as well
- Track and disclose supply chain engagement
- Ask members if they have a water neutral plan, not just carbon neutral
- Help better define chemical and carbon optimization (align with existing work)
- Help owners understand the benefits of product changes based on sustainability: how does the product relate to what A+D know and trust? How does it perform?
- Share more success stories/case studies of products swaps in projects to eliminate problematic chemicals
- Consider adding an ethical component to LP50, similar to AIA’s Code of Ethics, perhaps by CSI division
- Explore existing global frameworks

Commitment #2: Commitment #2 (Invest in Transparency and Optimization efforts)

“The LP50 is tracking the number of material health and environmental transparency and optimization labels/certifications its members hold in order to show investment and growth. Do these seem reasonable and which others could we be looking at and investing in?”

Feedback + Ideas:
- Train sales reps and A+D about how sustainability attributes contribute to building certs and why those attributes matter to the creation of a building
- Work with A+D to identify feedback mechanisms when purchases are made based on sustainability attributes.
- Automate this spec/purchase feedback in collaboration with tech providers.
- Create a sustainability roadmap that offers best practices to inspire other, and smaller manufacturers to engage.
- Supply chain case studies: communicate supply chain engagement efforts and success to the industry
- Farm-to-table labelling of products: ethically-sourced labeling to track what you’re building, where it came from, how it was sourced, etc.
- Make the most sustainable products and components the least expensive and least sustainable the most costly to offset product development costs
- Eliminate problematic chemistries so that they are not an issue for anyone in the value chain or end of life.

Commitment #3 (Use Commons Platforms to display sustainability achievements and attributes of transparent products)

“The LP50 were surveyed and found to be using mindfulMATERIALS, Sustainable Minds, Ecomedes and Tapestry in the most frequency. The goal is to have all LP50 transparent products on at least one of these platforms. Are these the right platforms A+D to target; how can the LP50 work with tech platforms to get better feedback about when products are spec’d?”

Feedback + Ideas:
- Advocate for EC3 (Embodied Carbon Calculator for Construction) tool to connected to other tools.
- Advocate for UL Spot integration with other platforms, currently many UL-listed products can’t be listed on other platforms due to trademark infringement.
- Engage platform providers to address issues of listing complex systems/custom configurations.
- Collaborate with A+D to create resources/communication tools that explain alphabet soup and communicate what initiatives and labels mean.
Breakout: Materials Pledge Feedback

For the first breakout, half of the room provided feedback on the Materials Pledge commitments and focused on how to ground the aspirational statements in action now:

“The Materials Pledge sets a goal of one day creating buildings made only of products that are transparent and optimized for human health, climate health, ecosystem health, social health + equity and the circular economy. What do next steps look like? We need action now, so what items could we identify for the A+D community to start tracking, disclosing, and making progress towards these goals?”

CLARIFY THE COMMITMENTS

- Clearly and publicly define the intended outcome for each Materials Pledge commitment with actions and deadlines
- Define “better products” and set metrics to meet that definition using existing industry language and programs to harmonize
- Durability is a missing piece of the puzzle
- Ecosystem Health: can be tracked to a degree within EPDs/LCA metrics; once again, use existing tools where possible
- Social Equity: perhaps require Just label for participation in Materials Pledge to demonstrate organizational equity. Ask for it from manufacturers you specify.
- Research metrics for their impacts on slave and child labor. Reference international standards (Catherine Benoit Norris - Social LCA expert is a good resource on this).

MAKE THE MATERIALS ASK, ALWAYS

- Don’t wait for the owner. Always make the ask for transparency and optimization for all products and all projects. This consistent demand will help increase availability and drive down cost.
- Standardize requests for product documentation and standards within firms, and across firms; it’s easier to respond to
- Track and communicate product decisions more consistently and effectively; within each firm, and find solutions across firms.
- Track and disclose what percentage of each firm’s projects are asking for transparency and optimization information; for what percentage of products within those projects; within which CSI divisions?

PUSH FOR CERTIFICATION

- Wherever possible, certify projects and push for certification explicitly: there is value in certification and how many projects are pursuing certifications.
- Always educate owners, engineers, subs, labor, on the value of sustainability performance, regardless of certification pursuit.
- Certifications help to spread green building awareness and practice more broadly and hold groups accountable for their actions instead of just “Net Zero ready” etc. i.e. would you really try so hard on the Red List if you weren’t pursuing certification? Same for LEED.
- Advocate to building certification bodies to (a) push the market further with Red Lists (b) harmonize materials reqs between programs to grow adoption
- Audit past projects to identify how far off of “LBC Petal,” “Red List Free,” “Net Zero Energy,” etc., you were to help identify opportunities for improvement or capture where you weren’t far off of certification
- Communicate inherent value of choosing sustainable products to owners in all projects. Then when Value Engineering comes up, they can help advocate for their use because they know they are better for employees/tenants than business-as-usual products.

EDUCATION

- Tell the story of why at every opportunity, and make the story of the need for change relatable to each group. Don’t assume everyone already gets the ‘why’.
- Work with universities to build this education in earlier so the ‘why’ is obvious to incoming workforce and they have the will to change the way things work.
- Track and disclose metrics around training and education such as:
OVERHAUL YOUR SPECIFICATIONS

- Create resources that show how certifications/labels map to each of the 5 A+D goals (also UN SDGs!)
- Tell the story simply to other firms to make it accessible (without the lingo)
- Share pledge with each client.

BUST THE COST (MYTH)

- Address premiums that arise due to subcontractors layering in costs because of unfamiliar requests for sustainable docs or attributes (i.e. must have HPD or EPD).
- Communication from manufacturer to general contractors can often eliminate an upcharge cost. Allow more price direct conversations with the manufacturer.
- Bust the myth that sustainable costs more. That way people can’t refuse based on cost, and affordable housing projects can access these same health and environmental benefits.
- How can we create and share more cost studies and success stories?
- Reach out to manufacturers to say “we bought your product and for this reason”
- Contractors MUST be a part of this conversation. Support their inclusion!

"WE MUST EMBODY WHAT WE ASK OF OUR CLIENTS" – MILLER HULL

Chris Hellstern presented on materials actions undertaken by Miller Hull as part of their Sustainability Action Plan. The plan lays out clear design goals and actions around regenerative design, occupant health, core values and healthier material choices, i.e.

- Design to achieve LBC Materials Petal for all projects by 2020
- Organize and purge library to stop cycle of using same materials
- Use mindfulMATERIALS and transparency docs to ensure products in library meet Red List
- Identify gatekeeper for product reps
- Treat manufacturers as partners
- Join a local healthy materials collaborative to share knowledge, advocate for change and inspire others
Breakout: Growing the Movement

“How do we bring in other stakeholders in the green building industry beyond A+D and manufacturers to ensure engagement throughout the value chain?”

KEY GROUPS

- **Policymakers**: invite them and make it affordable to participate in these conversations
  - How can they then make policy that requires material sustainability?
- **Material retailers**: Home Depot, and smaller high quality companies, to push big ones
- **Residential market**: manufacturers should approach residential organizations: DBIA (Design-Build Institute of America), or NAYOP (Commercial Real Estate Development Association)
- **Labor Unions**: Laborers know products and installation best; the material health conversation is crucial to their health and wellbeing. Need to educate better and also elevate labor voice for bottom-up grassroots influence. Look into green materials trade programs in NYC to start.
- **Project Teams**: use building/design meetings effectively, have a human health announcement like we have safety announcements at start of every meeting. Elevate human health to all meetings.
- **Use live events centered on certain topics, like embodied carbon or human health
- **Engineering + others**: Bring material health convos to those groups controlled by A+D
- **LBC Tech Leaders Group**: start to drive these requirements from a spec section perspective—private entities can require these things in the specs, and they can afford to pay a premium sometimes. Then create a framework for other homeowners to follow the same path forward
- **Contractors**: can some contractors lead on this issue and demonstrate best practice?
- **Are there accreditation programs for contractors + subs where we could build in the type of education promoted by AIA?**
- **Contractors**: Bring in contractors earlier in process, empower them and make them a real part of the conversation.
- **Subcontractors**: Could all architects reach out to sub-contractors with a letter?
- **AIA Sustainability + Resilience theme**: pledge will feed into this effort. It’s an opportunity to engage 94,000+ members.
- **Make education that is accessible**: webinar, ambassador program- something digestible, standardized and easy to share.
- **Curriculums + educating students**: integrate into university programs. Makes the conversation easier when students emerge and will bring new ideas.
- **Regional Efforts**: engage with local LBC Collaboratives or start your own. i.e. Healthy Materials Collaborative (Seattle), or Portland Materials Transparency
- **Manufacturers for Transparency group in Portland is starting up May 30th.**
- **Have the healthy materials conversations at new events – CSI or Contractor Expos?**
- **Building Cert Harmonization/Alignment will make ask and task easier. Same for harmonization between product certs.**
- **Take this conversation where it’s less comfortable – what events could we be at where this is all less obvious?**
- **What if all companies in the room wrote a letter together to building owners?**
Key Summit Take-Aways

A DROP IN THE BUCKET

While 100 companies in a room pushing for sustainable material selection in green buildings is an accomplishment, many more voices are needed soon to create real change, both from within A+D and manufacturing, and certainly outside from other industries.

The LP50 and Materials Pledge still represent only the first tier of companies. To create meaningful impact these groups will need to scale quickly and find ways to reach a much larger audience of companies that are not yet part of the conversation.

Contractors were a significant presence at the summit and should be invited specifically to participate at the next meeting. Owners were also identified as a key group to engage more strategically around the “why” in order to help this cascade along the value chain.

WHAT IF ALL 100 LP50 + PLEDGE COMPANIES CAME TOGETHER TO SIGN A LETTER TO BUILDING OWNER GROUPS, MAKING A SUSTAINABILITY AND BUSINESS CASE FOR TRANSPARENT, SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS IN EVERY BUILDING?

TAKING ACTION

While the LP50 letter was more specific in its requests and commitments, the Materials Pledge laid out broad aspirations for a holistic approach to sustainability, and therefore creates a useful signal to the manufacturing community. Both letters laid out important goals and commitments, but these must be followed quickly by action and meaningful metrics, communicated publicly to create accountability and to engage new participants. At their next meeting, both groups are expected to demonstrate where and how they have turned this summit’s feedback (pgs. 6-10) into action and progress.

Hopefully the engagement and communication showcased by these two stakeholder groups will serve to appropriately influence their courses of action and inspire other groups.

EDUCATION IS CRITICAL

The “Why” of sustainability is often different for everyone involved in a building project. Every attendee in the room must help to tell the story again and again of why the use of products that are ethically sourced, environmentally sustainable and safe to manufacture and use are so important to what a building becomes and how it performs.

Every project kickoff, Lunch & Learn, conference, etc. is an opportunity to engage and educate, especially if it is not a sustainability venue.

CERTIFICATIONS MATTER

All opportunities should be taken to request products that meet the goals of the Materials Pledge, regardless of certification. However, certifications have the potential create significant market demand for sustainable products and should be pursued whenever possible to demonstrate and grow demand.

SOCIAL IMPACTS ARE UP NEXT

Social impacts of supply chains and the internal equity of organizations are important to the cause of sustainability and making sure that environmental and material health solutions are not pursued in isolation.
How To Take Action

Join the LP50:
LP50@living-future.org

Sign LP50 letter to show your commitment:
living-future.org/LP50

Attend LP50 meeting at the Expo (Oct 2019)
productexpo.living-future.org

Near Portland? Join the Manufacturers for Transparency group (May 30), or start your own regional transparency collaborative!
https://living-future.org/events/portland-manufacturers-for-transparency/

Declare your Product
living-future.org/declare

ARCHITECTS

Sign the Materials Pledge
pmtc-pdx.org
or reach out to Lona.Rerick@zgf.com

Near Seattle? Join the Healthy Materials Collaborative or check out their website for events, educational resources and initiatives
http://healthymaterial.org/

Near Portland? All building industry professionals are welcome in the Portland Material Transparency Collaborative (Portland)
http://www.pmtc-pdx.org/

ALL

Attend or request an AIA Materials Matter Series near you.
https://www.aia.org/pages/136261-materials-matter

Attend the Living Product Expo (Oct 2019)
productexpo.living-future.org