

# FCA

Architecture  
Interior Design  
Planning

v5.0

08-12-25

## 2025 - 2030

# Sustainability Action Plan

**Submitted by the FCA  
Sustainability Steering Committee**

Approved by the FCA Board on July 22, 2025

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FCA

We Challenge  
The Expected.  
We Inspire  
Smart Design.  
FCA



# Executive Summary



## Welcome to The FCA Sustainability Action Plan

The world is a far different place than it was just five years ago. The onset of COVID and the witnessing of relentless environmental disasters have combined to create a new era of awareness regarding the vulnerability of the human species and the eco-systems upon which we depend.

It also signals a new era of responsibility for architects and designers. The credo of Health, Safety and Welfare has never been more relevant and important as it is today. This plan reflects the context of our time and the state of the art in the AEC industry. It is intended to elevate FCA to a new level of environmental responsibility.

FCA expressed its commitment to sustainability by joining hundreds of other design firms by signing the AIA 2030 Climate Commitment. The commitment includes two major requirements:

- » The creation of a Sustainability Action Plan (SAP).
- » Regular reporting on the energy efficiency of our large projects to the AIA 2030 DDx.

The SAP is a road map towards meeting an ambitious set of sustainability goals as organized by the AIA Framework for Design Excellence. FCA has taken the bold step to envision a time when the 2030DDx will provide a platform for goal setting and reporting all ten Framework principles.

### A Collaborative Development Process

The development process of this plan included the engagement of the entire firm in an open dialogue. Employees and at all levels helped to shape the plan through a variety of collaborative experience, meetings and open comment periods.

### Our Actions to Date

To assist in the development and implementation plan, FCA took the following definitive steps:

- » Hired a Director of Sustainability.
- » Established a Sustainability Steering Committee.

- » Conducted a firm wide training in the foundations of sustainable design.
- » Developed a robust, holistic educational program focused first on the mindset shift towards sustainable thinking and second on the knowledge based required to deliver sustainability across all projects.
- » Developed and tested a no-nonsense, straightforward way to integrate sustainability into all medium and large sized projects.
- » Headquarters that features LEED Silver Certification and WELL Pending Certification.
- » In July of 2025, FCA formally launched the start of its Environmental, Social and Governance Platform (ESG). FCA shares its ESG status on the SEDEX and Integrity Next Platforms. EcoVadis status is "pending" at this time.





Our Transformative Approach

In the Sustainability Action Plan (SAP) we set the stage for the end to the age-old distinction between mainstream design and sustainable design. Historically these have been kept separate with sustainable design often associated with third party rating systems like LEED or Well. This schism has been quite damaging to the overall sustainability movement and to the larger natural environment. The SAP seeks to transcend this situation by adopting an intentional, holistic, integrated, and long-term sustainability approach that features:

- » Meeting our clients where they are on their sustainability journey.
- » Setting, reporting, and meeting our own sustainable design goals and targets.
- » Integrating our sustainable design processes early and

often into the firm's standard design processes and evolving the firm's standard practices to engage sustainability on a consistent basis.

- » Developing a new “first party” system with organized self-reporting on all large projects shared via a public dashboard.

Walking the Walk

FCA has made significant strides in sustainable design through the completion of our office renovation by:

- » Reducing energy use by an estimated 50% through a strategic decision to reduce the size of the firm's Philadelphia and New York Offices.
- » Instituted a work from home policy, which eliminates thousands of commutes per year.

- » Upcycled and recycled used furniture and unused products during the office downsize. Achieved LEED Silver certification of the Philadelphia Office with WELL certification pending.

- » Created a unique and beautiful interior design that will hold its intrinsic aesthetic value much longer than a more traditional design, thereby reducing the need for costly renovations.

Sustainability is About a Lot More than Saving the Planet

The formal adoption of a Sustainability Action Plan is just the latest step in the proud legacy of the firm which has a proven track record of civic engagement, industry leadership, and volunteerism. There are considerable benefits to pursuing sustainability as listed below:

- » Our clients will see us as civic leaders and innovative designers.
- » Our junior staff will see a career path at FCA that aligns with their values and leads to higher levels of employee satisfaction.
- » FCA will increase its probability of hiring the best and brightest talent.
- » Our growth in sustainability will organically accelerate the leadership skills of current and future FCA leaders.

Sustainability as a Competitive Advantage

Competition for new work is fierce. FCA will use its newfound strength in sustainable design to:

- » Gain a competitive advantage by differentiating ourselves from the pack with a clear and compelling sustainability story.
- » Gain new clients who are interested in sustainable design and who see us as a knowledgeable and trusted partner.
- » Build new strategic partnerships with like-minded construction, manufacturing, academic research centers and consulting firms to co-create the FCA Sustainability Platform and solidify FCA as a regional and eventually a national leader in sustainable design.

To be sure, FCA's Sustainability Action Plan is ambitious. It will take five years of continuous education, innovation and culture change to reach the goals set forth in the plan by 2030. The normal

day-to-day pressure to produce projects that meet the budget and schedule is already a difficult challenge. But, with more intentionality, purpose, and imagination, we will make the shift towards integrating sustainability into the firm culture. It will not happen overnight, but it will happen.

Sincerely,  
The FCA Sustainability Steering Committee



Table of Contents

Purpose & Context.....10

What is a Sustainability Action Plan?.....12

Culture Change at FCA .....14

The Design Approach .....20

Goal Setting & Evaluation .....24

ESG Alignment & Reporting .....26

Internal Training & Education Outreach, Advocacy, & External Knowledge-Sharing .....28

Outreach, Advocacy& External Knowledge Sharing .....30

Operations & Outlook.....32

Conclusion.....34





# Purpose & Context

## The Purpose

It's a rare occurrence indeed when a firm develops a multi-year strategic plan for any purpose, let alone sustainability. The purpose of this document is to:

- » Provide a road map towards the integration of sustainability into the DNA of the firm.
- » Provide a high-level framework to organize the sustainability efforts of the firm.
- » Define key concepts and metrics as they relate to sustainability.

## The Context

Regardless of our individual beliefs about climate change and our political stance on climate actions, there is one thing we can agree upon: Our credo as designers and architects falls under the banner of health, safety, and welfare. Whether that means we take actions to mitigate the rate of climate change, or increase our efforts pursue resilient design strategies, or focus on health and well-being of our end-users, the role of the designer is clear:

*“We have the professional responsibility to act.”*

During the time that this plan was written, the world witnessed the following environmental events: unprecedented flooding in Vermont, record heat waves in the south and southwest, forest fires and toxic plumes in Canada, a horrifying fire in Maui, and yet another hurricane in Florida. 2023 was the hottest year on record and 2024 is already on pace to be even hotter.

Whether we see these climatic events as part of a natural pattern or because of unprecedented emission of greenhouse gases, the negative impacts including loss of life, damage to property and economic hardship are very real, indeed.

Acting on these issues illustrates FCA's commitment to leadership and sends an important message to:

- » Our clients, who look to us as the keepers of knowledge and expertise to assist them in their efforts to pursue sustainability.

- » Our partners and consultants who look to us to guide the overall sustainable design process.
- » Our employees who are looking to be part of an organization that takes sustainability seriously as they seek a career with meaning and impact.

This Sustainability Action Plan is the first step in FCA's journey towards fulfilling its role as a leader in protecting the public and improving the quality of life for all.



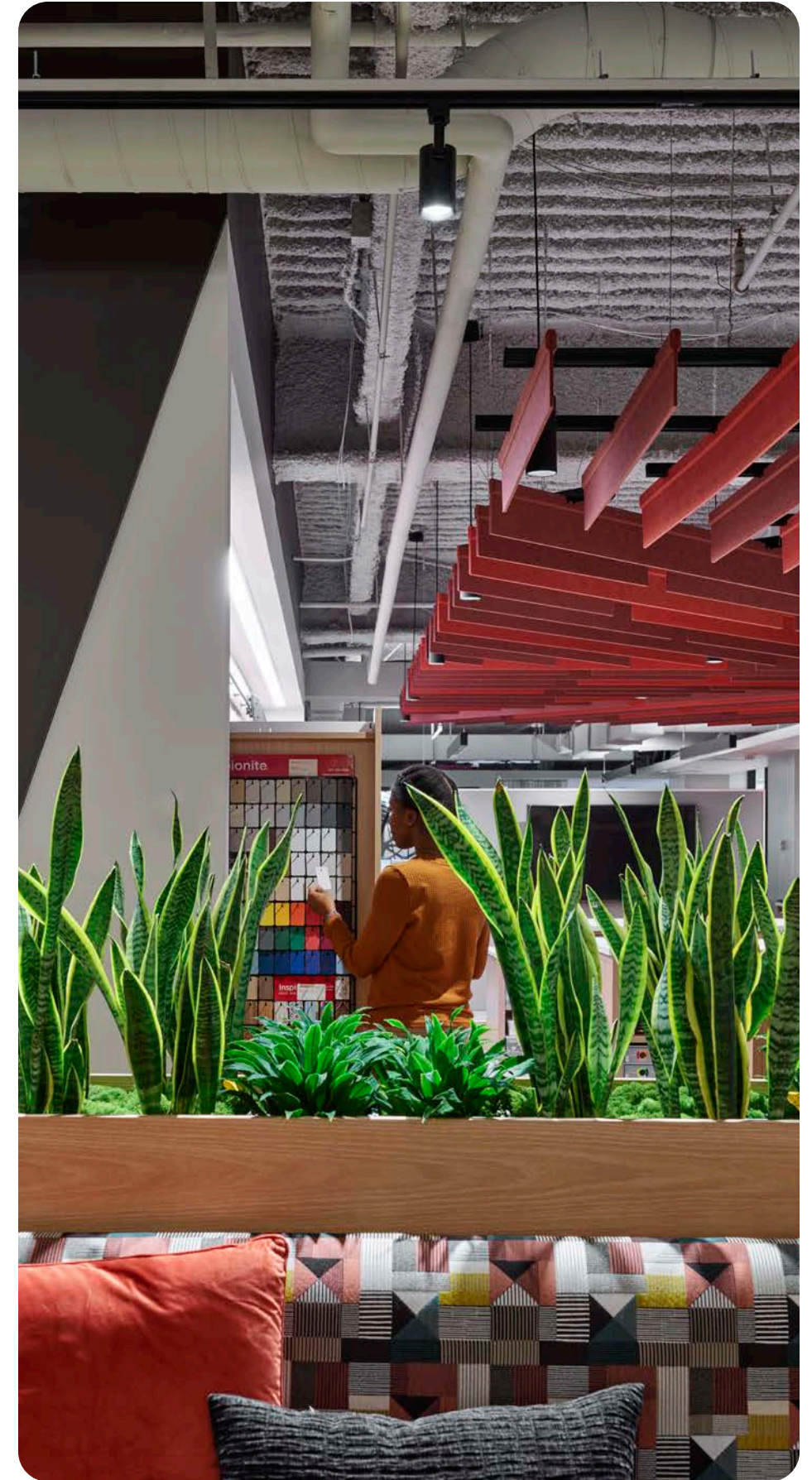


# What is a Sustainability Action Plan?

## What is a Sustainability Action Plan

At its core, a Sustainability Action Plan is a statement of a company's approach to sustainable design. According to the American Institute of Architects a Sustainability Action Plan is:

1. An actionable, company-wide strategy for developing sustainable design best practices.
2. A measurement and reporting tool with a continual focus on evaluation, adaptation, and improvement.
3. A long-term planning tool to ensure ongoing alignment of values, goals, and practice.
4. An information-sharing platform that communicates your values to clients and peers.
5. A shared understanding among staff of how the company achieves consistently higher levels of performance and aligns consultants with its goals.







# Culture

## Change at FCA

Many people see sustainability as an “extra objective” to be integrated into an existing design process. It’s quite typical to hear the following phrase:

*“Sustainable design is just part of good design”*

If that were true, then we have a lot of bad design occurring. In fact, sustainability

is often non-existent, or given short shrift on many traditional mainstream design projects. Here is a corollary but challenging quote:

*“Good design is an integral part of sustainability.”*

The difference between these two quotes underscores the challenge we face in the establishment of a sustainability culture at this firm.

Furthermore, one of the mandates from the firm leadership for this initiative is to weave sustainability into the fabric of the firm.

Since its inception in 1954 FCA has considered itself a partner to its clients and has put the societal role of their projects at the center of FCA’s mission. This Sustainability Action Plan is a important next step, and

it will require a high level of intentionality, self-awareness, and vulnerability. In this section the steps towards culture change are briefly outlined. In short, this initiative, if successful, will transform the firm.

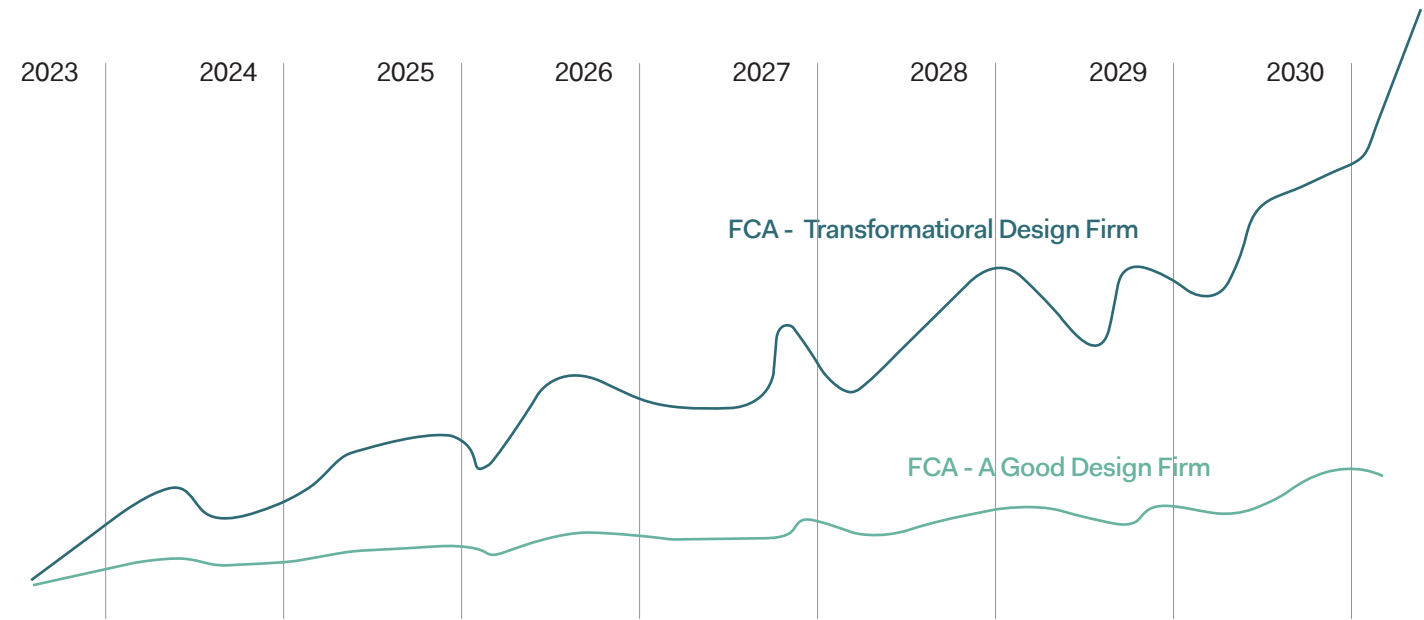
*“Our firm must now transition to a more targeted approach that begins at project inception and leverages an Integrated Framework for Sustainable design process, similar to the AIA Framework for Design Excellence, that outlines the 10 Measures for Sustainability success. Our clients will be able to adjust improvement percentages for the project across each of the 10 goals.”*

- Catherine Gow  
Principal



Timing and Pace:

It is worth saying that the cultural changes at FCA will take some time and patience. Big changes should not happen all at once. By taking small, reasonable steps we give people time to adjust, reinforced with easy early successes. By 2030, we plan to see the concept of sustainability as an organic part of the DNA of the firm. The pathway may encounter starts, stops, and plateaus along the way but the overall trajectory will continue to move closer towards the goal of sustainability being completely integrated into the work of the firm.



Incremental Vs Transformational Change

Inclusivity Within the Firm

For the culture to change, FCA will need to dedicate efforts towards inclusivity. The SAP has been co-created by everyone in the firm, and lead by a cross section of employees with different roles and levels of seniority; so that there is a sense of agency and ownership of the plan.

- » Interns and staff designers are empowered and encouraged to provide insights and innovations that will alleviate pinch points throughout the design process.
- » Mid-level managers and project architects will lead the strategic integration of sustainability goals into every project.

- » Principals will support the overall integration and will increasingly provide sustainability leadership throughout the project process.
- » The Sustainability Steering Committee includes a wide variety of people from entry level and mid-level team members, senior leadership, different practice areas, and representation from the EDI Committee.
- » The marketing team has been included in the process since the beginning and is trained to handle the Philadelphia and Pennsylvania AIA Design Awards Sustainability Spreadsheet.
- » The Sustainability Director will guide the overall effort towards a shift in FCA culture.

IPD Light: Inclusive Design With Our Consultants and Partners

Our sustainability goals will be influenced by our partners to increase the likelihood of adoption across disciplines.

FCA's Budget Friendly Sustainability Approach

A customizable, affordable, set of strategies based on the AIA Framework for Design Excellence



Three, simple, clear levels of sustainability integration



Basic

Meet all codes, comply with all environmental requirements, and pursue at least 3 environmentally responsible design strategies



Achievable

Pursue at least seven budget-neutral environmentally responsible design strategies



Aspirational

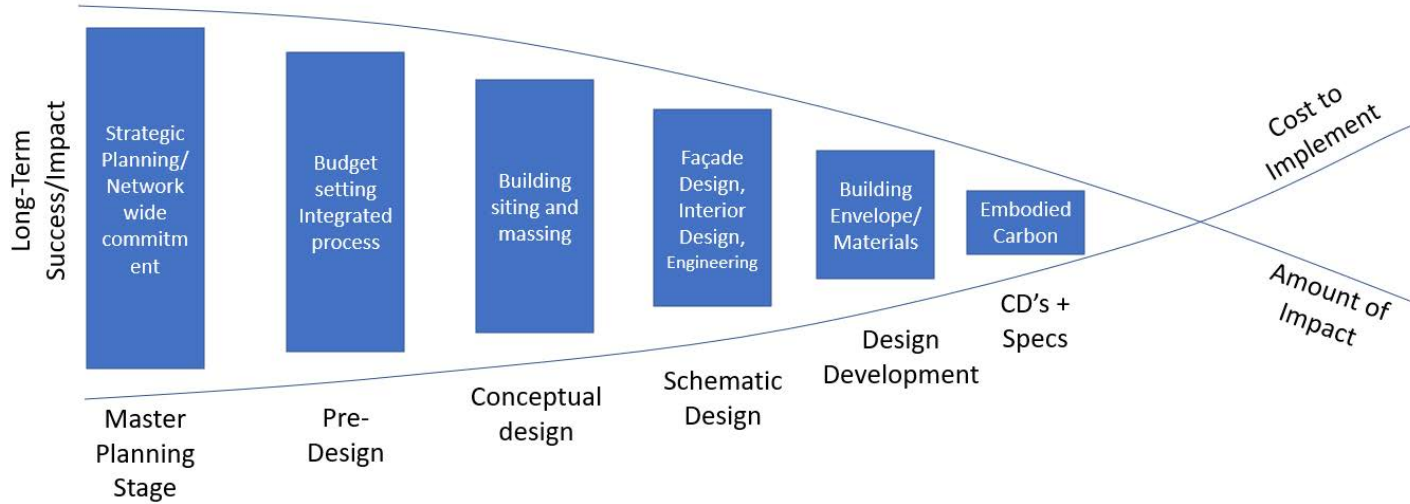
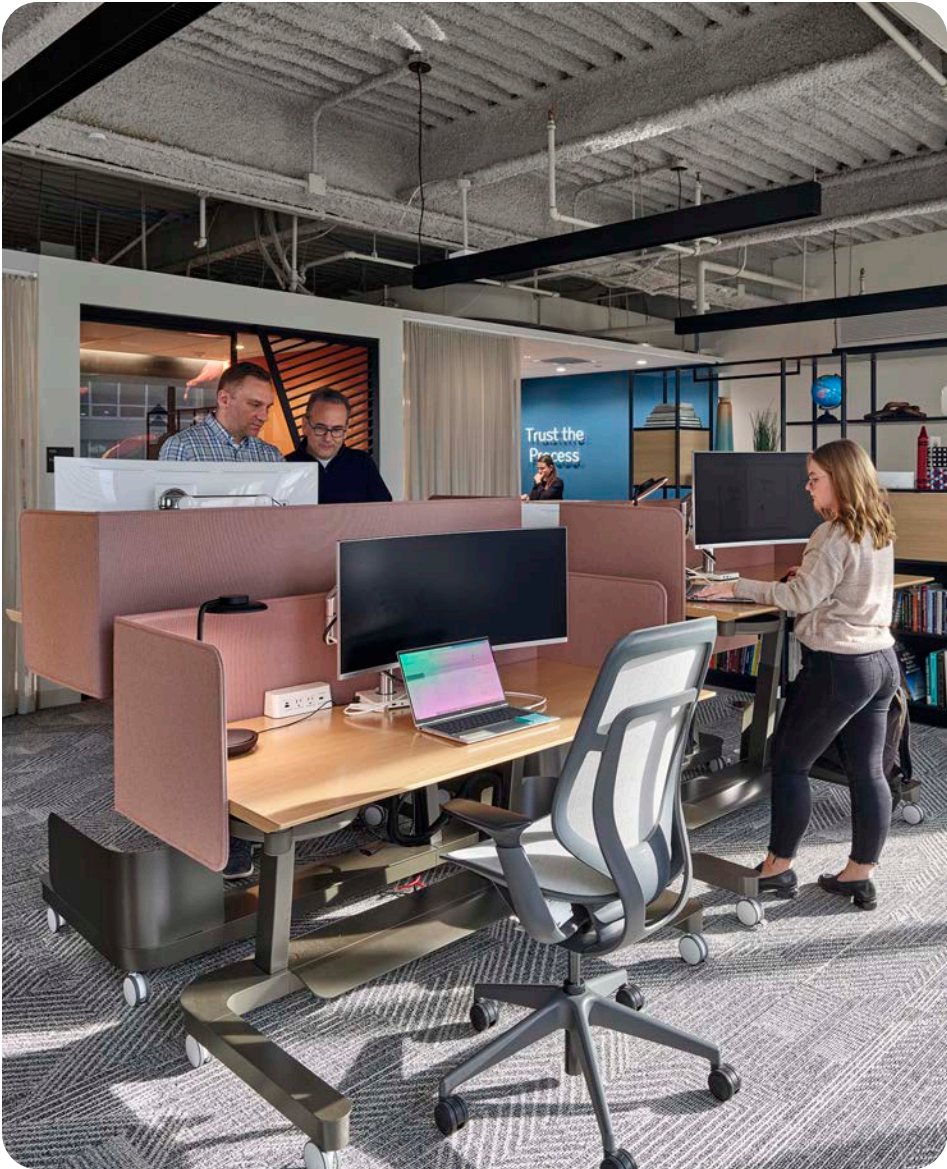
Pursue all ten environmentally responsible design strategies or, upon the client's request, pursue the LEED and/or WELL certification.



A Culture and Practice:  
Early Integration

Completing a building, from design through construction, is no easy feat. Treating sustainability as an extra add-on increases tension and adds to the challenge. This is where the cultural changes that come with sustainability hit the reality of design practice. Early integration is critical to achieving higher levels of sustainability. Sustainability concepts can be disruptive to standard practice and are very difficult to integrate later in the projects. The diagram below illustrates how a strategy to connect with clients before budgets are set is a key to success along with compiling a list of partners and consultants who understand the process and tools we use to accomplish this. Revit models are vital, as are energy & daylight modeling, embodied carbon and life cycle analysis and more. Failure to take these steps will result in a missed opportunity to create a truly sustainable project.

As a response, FCA is beginning to build a new practice area in climate action planning which includes potential partnerships with academic and corporate partners who bring additional expertise in key areas. FCA already brings strength in master planning and strategic planning. This strength can be leveraged and developed further to make forays into the realm of sustainability master planning.





# The Design Approach



## Shared Definitions Are the Key to Alignment

Sustainability means many things to many people within the AEC Community. However, a more singular concept is quite clearly understood and implemented in most other industries, governments, and corporations. That shared concept is the Triple Bottom Line of sustainability. (Source: AIA 2030DDx)

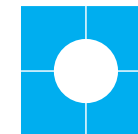
## The Quadruple Bottom Line of Sustainability

For many corporations, government organizations, educational institutions and non-profits, the Triple Bottom Line of People, Planet and Profit is a well understood framework for defining sustainability. At FCA we have added "Place" as a means to convey the importance of human experience in the spaces and places we create. The firm's Guiding principles are organized around these four broad themes and our 5th Principle, Process, is focused on how we bring our principles into play on our projects and within the firm operations.



### People

We design spaces for all, through an inclusive process, tailored to each of our client's cultures.



### Place

We create environments that elevate the human experience through a deep "sense of place", using holistic, empathetic design.



### Planet

We are committed to environmental responsibility, through innovative, sustainable strategies.



### Process

We live a collaborative journey through imaginative, and inspiring design.

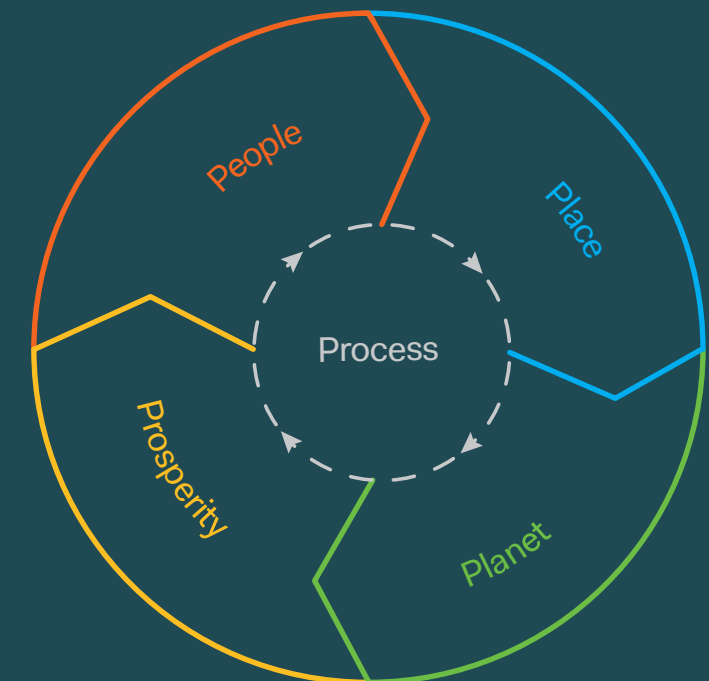


### Prosperity

We create value for our clients and communities to thrive and succeed.

## FCA's Guiding Principles are aligned with sustainability.

The finalization of *Guiding Principle Statements* is key to the completion of this plan. By ensuring that our guiding principles align with our sustainability goals we can help foster a mindset that creates space for sustainable design.





Design Approach

The Development of the Project Delivery Manual (formerly Cognition) in parallel with the SAP allows for the sustainable design processes discussed in this section to be structurally integrated into the practices of the firm. The statement of work contained within this document is coordinated with FCA's Quality Assurance Program.

Delivery Methods

FCA will be using a variety of sustainable design delivery methods to benefit our clients as outlined in the bullets below:

- 1. Early integration of strategic sustainability thinking on proposals.
- 2. Increase the number of integrated design charrettes, with our own internal teams, consultants, construction managers, end-users, and with the broader community achieved when possible.
- 3. The use of a reporting structure to collect, share and interpret the level of sustainability commitment each year.
- 4. Create a public "dashboard" to share our progress towards meeting our firm wide goals.

The Use of Energy Modeling and Other Simulation Tools

For larger projects, FCA is committed to conducting building simulations at each phase of the design process for larger projects. The results of the analysis will be used to discover ways to increase the environmental performance of our projects. Specifically, we will use the following:

- » Energy modeling and daylighting with Sefaira, Pollination and Insight 360.
- » Embodied carbon assessment using Cscale, EC3, and Tally.
- » Indoor water calculations using industry standard spreadsheets.
- » Indoor and outdoor water use calculation with the assistance of our civil engineering partners.

3D models used for these calculations will be generated from clean, single plane, parallel models. This allows for a much faster and less mistake prone modeling process and is suitable to compare design ideas but not as an absolute predictor of energy performance. We will always have a disclaimer with any calculations shown to our clients to avoid any liability or unrealistic expectations for energy performance. This will be an opportunity for younger

designers in the office to contribute to a project earlier than usual.

More detailed energy models, which occur at the design development phase are typically built by our MEP partners. In the example of the Geisinger project, an energy model was constructed to determine a more exacting estimate of energy performance of the project. As we move further along the path to integrated sustainable design, our engineering partners will develop more robust models to help test and determine design approaches such as the impact of different wall sections in the future.

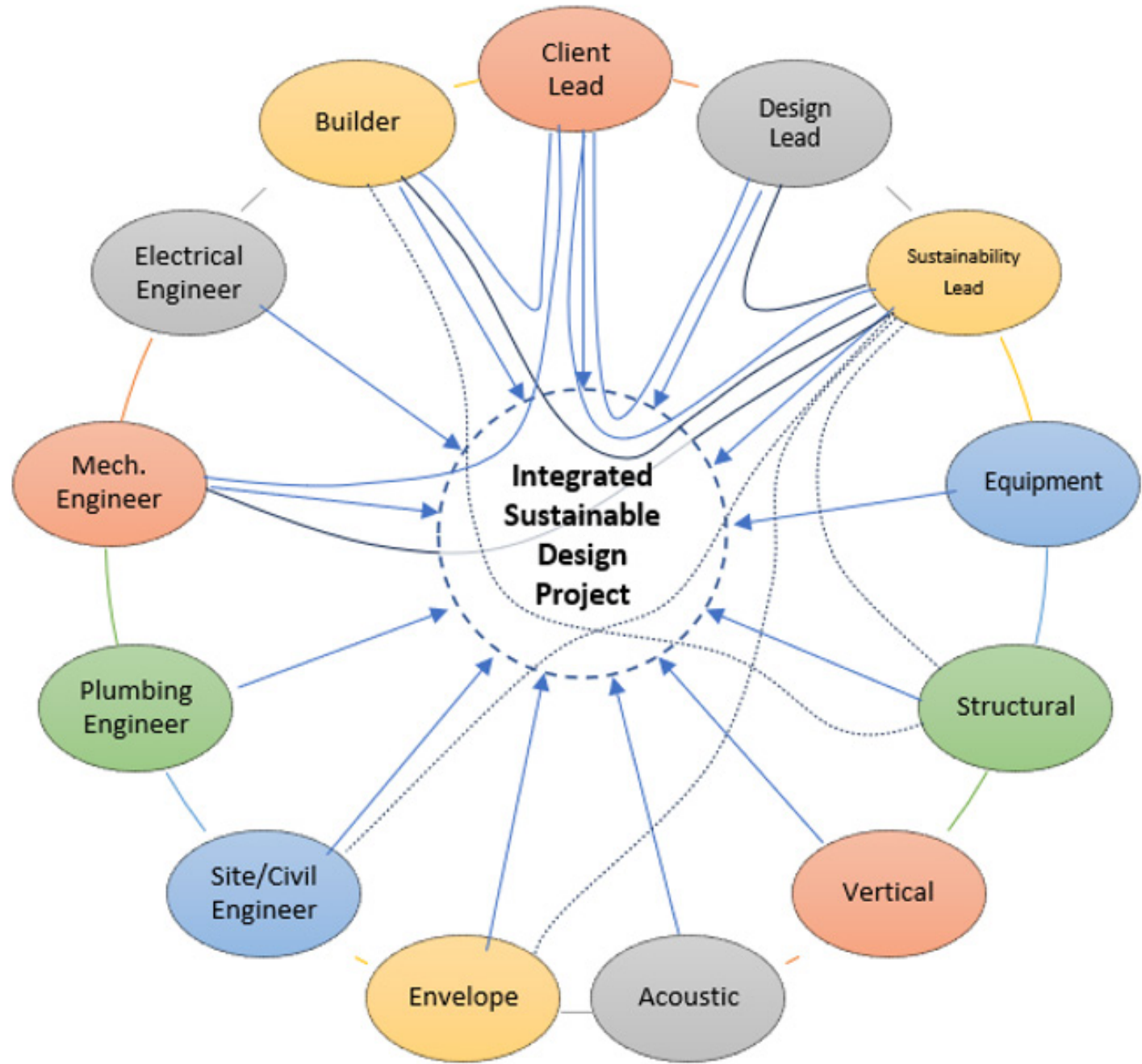
FCA's Simple Sustainable Design Process

Sustainability adds complexity, time, dollars, and energy to an already challenging process of designing and building a project. Careful planning and integration can help lessen the impacts by providing early decisions on key topics and targets. The sequence below has been tested multiple times with high levels of success.



Promote and Create an Innovation Culture

FCA will continue to test the SAP on large projects and consistently consider how the plan is working, and how it can be improved. Challenges that emerge can serve as a catalyst for more innovation. The SAP is designed to evolve as better data, tools, practices and thinking evolves.





# Goal Setting & Evaluation



## A Shared Framework for the Goals and Targets

FCA is using the AIA Framework for Design Excellence to organize sustainability goals and targets into ten categories. Note that the word sustainability does not appear in the name of the framework. This is a conscious decision to position sustainability as central to the definition of excellent design. The Framework is designed to shape and inform the design process to chart a course towards less destruction and eventually environmentally friendly design approaches.

### Co-Created and Shared Performance Goals

Underneath the 10 principles of the Framework, FCA uses SMART Goals to drive innovation within the firm and with our clients and consultants. SMART stands for Strategic, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely

### Baselines and Metrics

Every project is different and there are different project types which require different SMART goals. Project teams will use the baselines and metrics in the SAP (See Appendix) for the Achievable level of sustainability and work with our client to define the Aspirational goal levels specific to each project. We will not be relying on LEED or WELL to determine the goals. Instead, we will co-create them with our clients in real time.

### Overall FCA targets

The targets are specific metrics that help to measure how well the design team is meeting the goals. FCA's firm wide targets are organized to start slow and easy, and escalate annually towards more ambitious goals culminating in 2030. It is not realistic to make radical jumps without a parallel culture change initiative. We have to start slow and achieve some easy, early wins to build confidence that

## Ten Principles of Design Excellence



Design for Integration



Design for Equitable Communities



Design for Ecosystems



Design for Water



Design for Economy



Design for Energy



Design for Well-Being



Design for Resources



Design for Change



Design for Discovery

[www.aia.org/Design-Excellence](http://www.aia.org/Design-Excellence)

the firm can reach the more ambitious goals for 2030.

The targets are organized by the tiers of Basic, Achievable, and Aspirational. This allows for an easy and less stressful way to work with our clients and to make sustainability more achievable.

### Tracking Data

Prior to the development of this plan, FCA did not track sustainability data at any phase. When the firm completed a LEED project, metrics were generated but they were never collated into a comprehensive method to track the success of FCA Projects. In this plan, FCA commits to tracking sustainability metrics on all large projects. Tracking will be accomplished by utilizing the internally developed Sustainability Workbook that is based on the AIA 10 Measures of Design Excellence and best practices in the industry.

3  
level

#### Aspirational

Pursue strategic financial investments in sustainability to provide increased value.

2  
level

#### Achievable

Pursue budget neutral sustainability and resilience goals.

1  
level

#### Basic

Health, Safety and Welfare: Meet Codes, Support Compliance and engage in meaningful conversations.



# ESG Alignment & Reporting

## Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's):

In 2025, FCA informally began the process of aligning its design approach and internal operations with the SDG's.

## Governance

FCA's Sustainability Governance structure is led by a Sustainability Committee. The Committee includes members, from all levels and disciplines within the firm from the principal level to the senior managers, to project architects to interns. The Committee works to steer the firm's sustainability goals and strategies for each year and works to coordinate the integration of sustainability into the firm's delivery process.

## Reporting

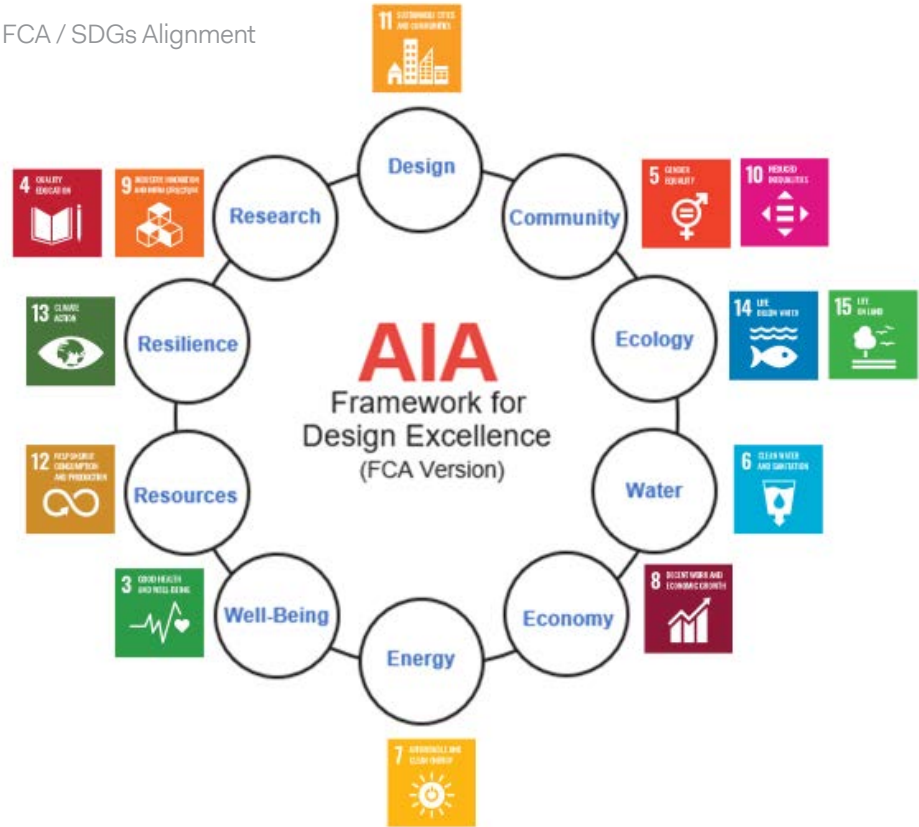
The Sustainability Director reports on a regular basis directly to the firm's principals and board members. All ESG Policies will be approved by the FCA Board each year.

## ESG Alignment

In FCA, 2025 pursued and is pursuing a range of ESG Certifications. FCA successfully completed SEDEX and Integrity IntegrityNext certification processes by end of Q3 2025, The scores will be made publicly available on the FCA web site. Also, in Q3 2025, FCA began its EcoVadis certification process, and will publicly post the results in late Q4 2025 (September). FCA intends to pursue SBTi public reporting platform in Q4 2025. In Q4 2025, FCA began the process of integrated ESG initiative formally into the 2025 - 2027 firmwide strategic plan. The strategic plan will be ratified in Q4 2025.

In Q1 2026, Policies, Measures, KPIs and the reporting structure will be further developed and placed into practice.

FCA / SDGs Alignment

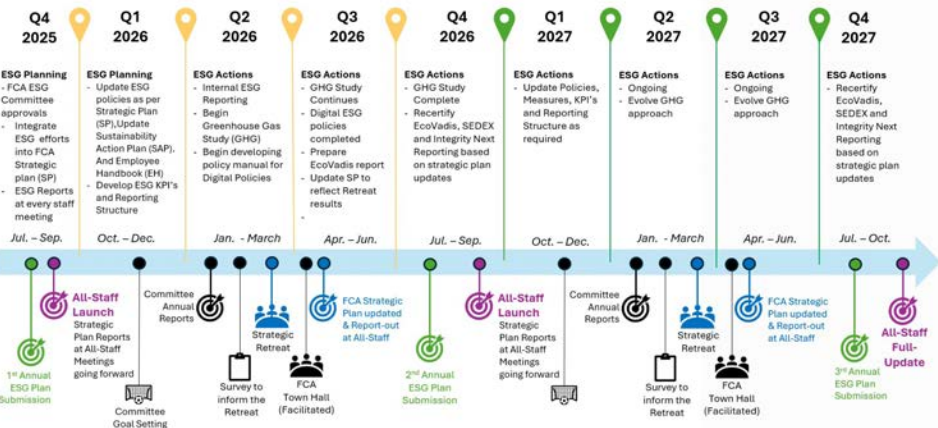




- Pending Review -

- FY 2026 -

FCA / ESG Plan Timeline





# Internal Training & Education Outreach, Advocacy, & External Knowledge-Sharing



## Internal Training and Education

As part of its investment in sustainability, FCA now offers ongoing workshops focused on a range of sustainability topics in-house. This will be a key to the continual change in culture in the firm.

- » 2023: Completed a series of foundation workshops on sustainable design.
- » 2024: Lunchtime workshops on each of the ten AIA Framework Principles and the FCA SAP.
- » 2025 Initial firm-wide ESG workshop which will include information regarding the firm's plans for waste, water use and carbon reduction.

## Onboarding of New Employees

The Sustainability Director will provide a short onboarding workshop for new employees on the FCA Sustainability Action Plan.

## Current Professional Certifications

FCA continues to support employees in gaining sustainability certifications. This practice will continue as appropriate.

- » Well AP transitioning towards Fitwel.
- » LEED Green Associate and AP
- » Passive House
- » Living Building Challenge Ambassador

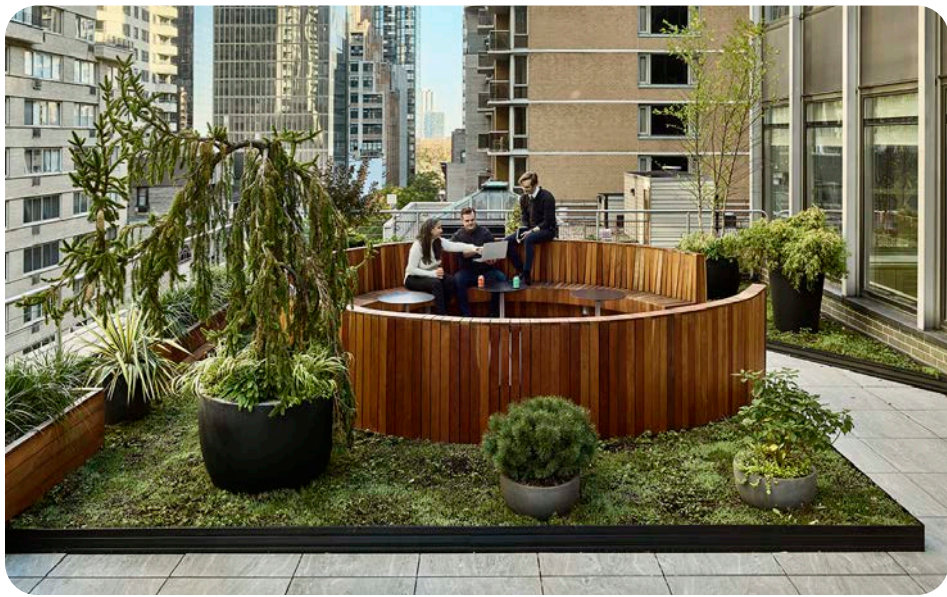
For designers and architects pursuing ongoing learning units specific to

FCA's sustainability goals rather than any third-party rating system, a menu of courses, like the one listed for the Principals, will be developed to guide the selection of courses that best align with the FCA SAP. We will track these completions internally and provide our own certifications to celebrate progress for each employee.





# Outreach, Advocacy & External Knowledge Sharing



## Sustainability Communications

The SAP will be communicated to internal and external audiences via a quarterly updated snapshot that displays the latest progress towards meeting the goals of the plan. The dashboard will be used at monthly All-Staff meetings to reinforce the transparency of the SAP.

## Communicating Our Plan to the Public

Each year, FCA will publicly report and update the findings of ESG reports along with an updated version of this report. Social media will be a tool to message the ongoing efforts of FCA for sustainability.

## Community Participation

Internal communication to the entire firm will be ongoing. External social media posts will also be posted internally on the SharePoint feeds. Our consultants and other partners will receive email updates that contain the same information as the social media posts or they could be collated into a quarterly newsletter. These approaches will be considered as the outreach plan is further developed.

## Advocacy

Our work as board members of IIDA, and AIA and more demonstrates our efforts in the broader community to shape the larger

discourse on the professions. Further, FCA is working to create a consortium that includes educational, engineering, and building partners that can work together to provide a clear picture of sustainability efforts and practices in the AEC industry.

## Conferences

FCA actively seeks opportunities to present at conferences, especially ones where clients will be present. As part of the annual budget the Director of Sustainability will identify conferences we would like to attend and then will work with the Marketing and Communications team to create topics to submit as presentations.

## Awards

The first sustainability accomplishment at FCA was to assist the marketing team in filling out the AIA Awards spreadsheet which includes a lot of information on sustainability. As we work to weave sustainability into our process, projects will be documented in ways that support awards and speaking submissions for our sustainability efforts.

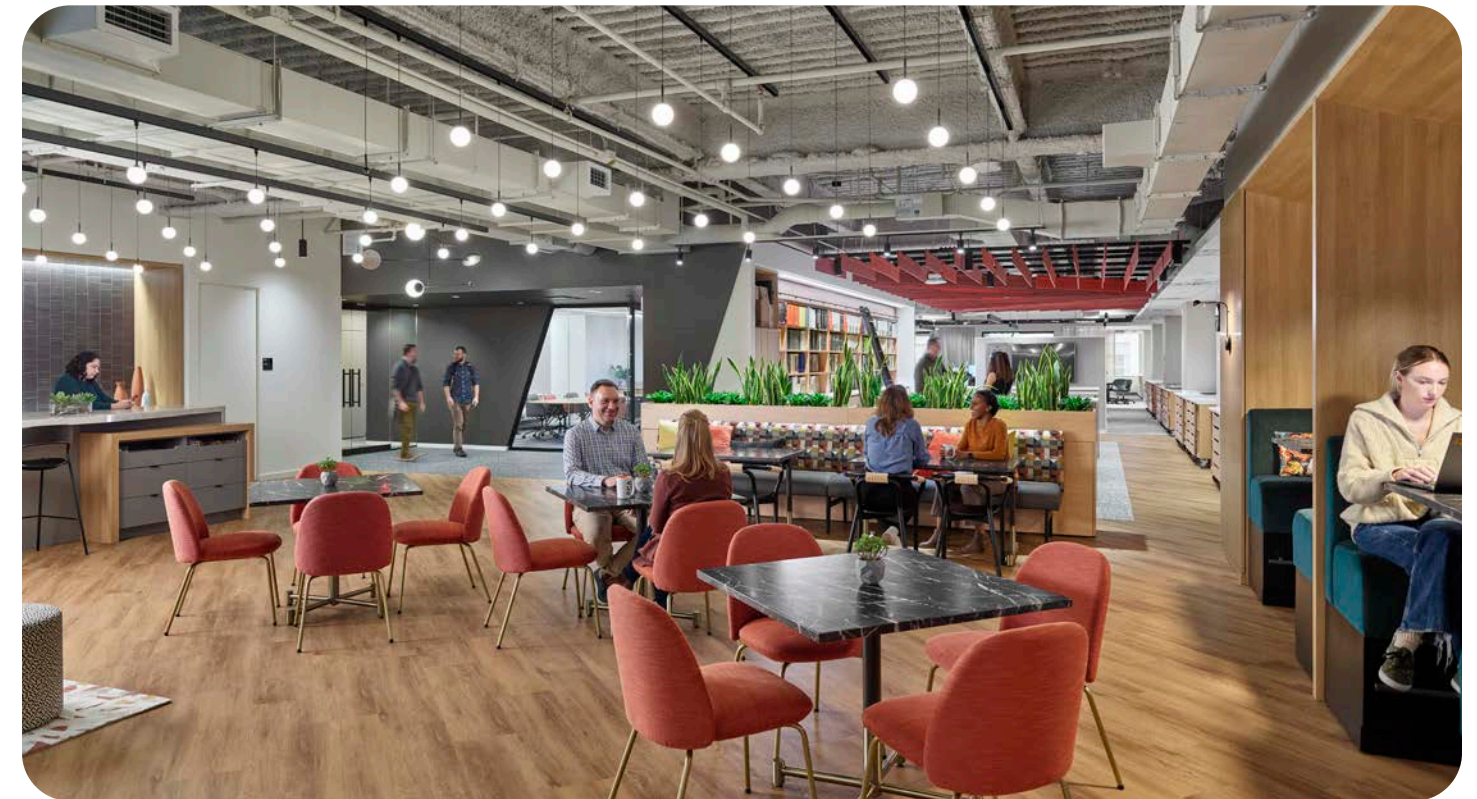
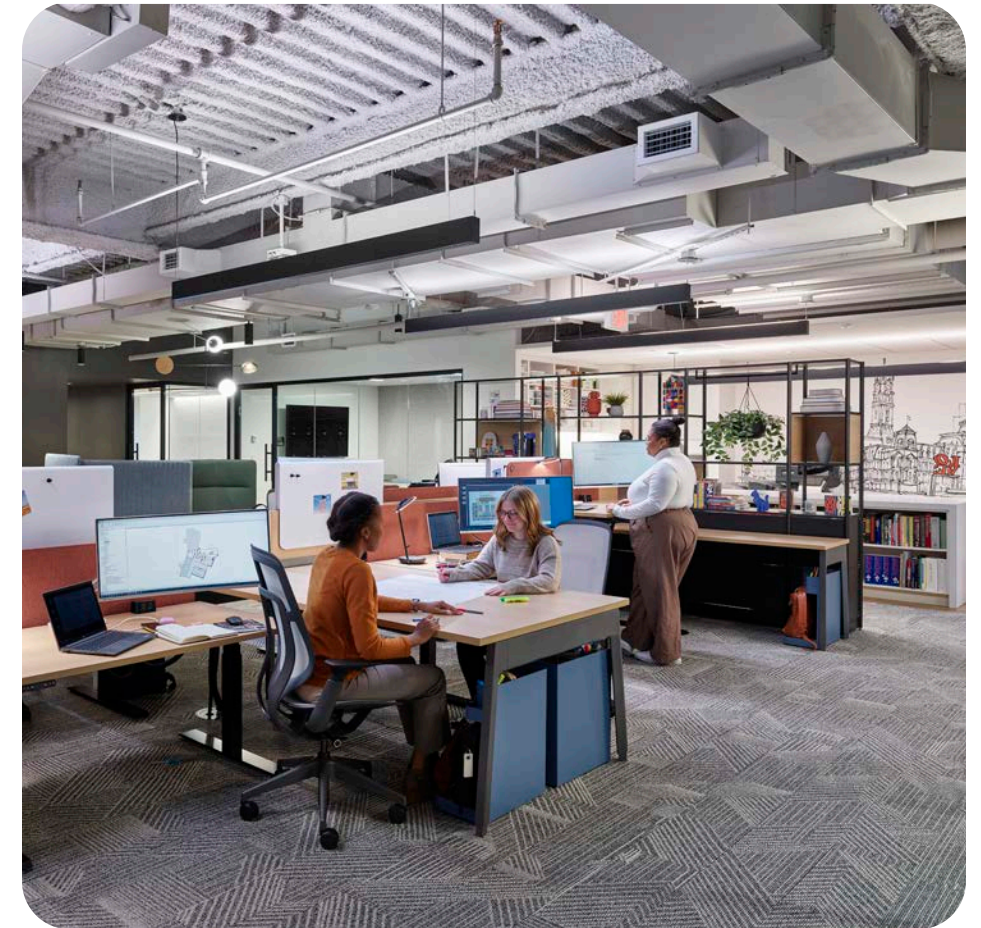


# Operations & Outlook

## Reduction Program

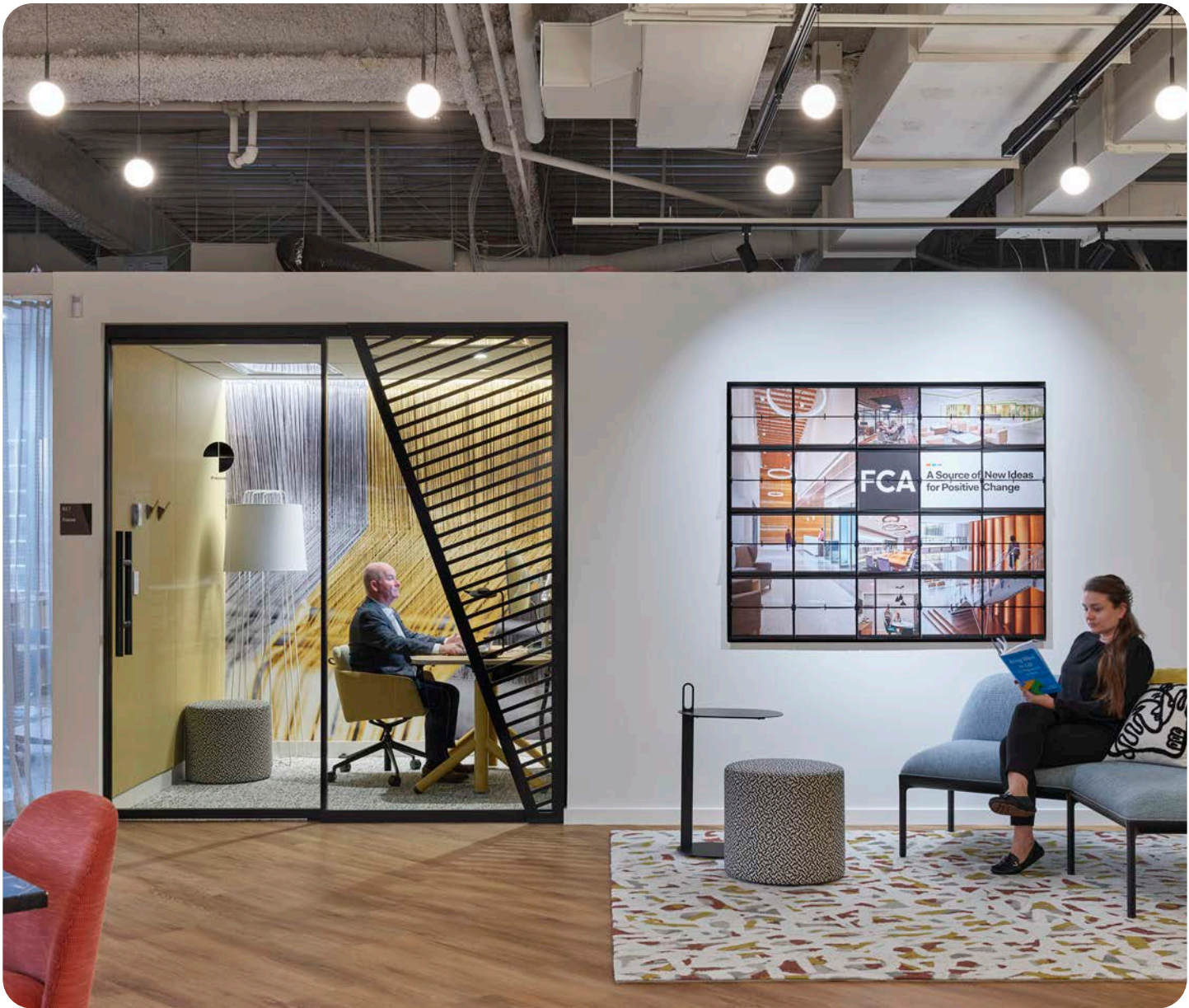
FCA, as part of its ESG commitment, will conduct a Greenhouse Gas Audit in 2026. FCA has already made great strides in reducing its carbon footprint.

- » Work from home policy reduces commuting.
- » Reduced our square footage by 50% which correlates to a 50% reduction in energy use.
- » Center City location allows for use of public transport and direct access to the city bike lane system, and access to a recreation and walking path within a quarter mile.
- » We made a huge effort to recycle or upcycle all the items from the move to a smaller office.





# Conclusion



## Conclusion

FCA sees Sustainability as an ethical mandate for the AEC industry. The built environment touches everyone, and we have a responsibility as designers to care for the health, safety and welfare of those around us. Being participants in the 2030 Agreement, hiring a Director of Sustainability, and committing to the increased reporting of progress for key climate metrics are the first steps in a larger cultural change at FCA.

We recognize that programs and guidelines such as LEED and WELL have a key

role in providing designers, clients and policy makers with a well researched and tested set of strategies necessary to achieve sustainable projects. We seek to build on the progress of those programs in a way that is a natural more attuned to the day to day realities of mainstream practice, thereby opening the possibility to achieving sustainability on every project in the office.. Using the principles set forth by the AIA in their guidelines for Design Excellence, we are establishing a free framework to measure the impact of projects that fall outside of the LEED and WELL sphere. Using this tool, we will bring sustainability into our everyday

conversations at FCA, with our internal teams and external client. , external and client teams.

This action plan is a step in a long-term culture change at FCA. It is a deepening of our commitment to our guiding principles and a roadmap to bringing our best to every project.





# FCA

Architecture  
Interior Design  
Planning

[fcarchitects.com](http://fcarchitects.com)