

BUILDINGENERGY NYC

Spinach and Sustainability: Making Green Irresistible

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A close-up photograph of fresh spinach leaves, covered in small water droplets, creating a vibrant green background.

Making Green Irresistible
NESEA BuildingEnergy NYC 2026

Spinach and Sustainability

Nice to Meet You



Juan Guarin
Perkins Eastman



Jana Silsby
DLR Group

Why We Are Here

Hiding the Spinach

You made this smoothie

Your family asks what's in it

What do you say?



What Is Our Objective

Our goal is not to hide information.

We want to execute best practices that meet their goals,
without distractions or barriers

- Sometimes too much info is distracting
- Sometimes there are triggers, biases, or misconceptions that can stand in the way



**Let's focus on
what really
matters**

How you understand your client's values

Without saying the s word

If Good Design is Sustainable
Design...

Do we even need to talk about
sustainability at all?

What does your client care about?



How you understand your client's values

Without saying the s word

DO: Broaden their perspective
with a framework

DO NOT: Ask them what their
sustainability goals are



How you understand your client's values

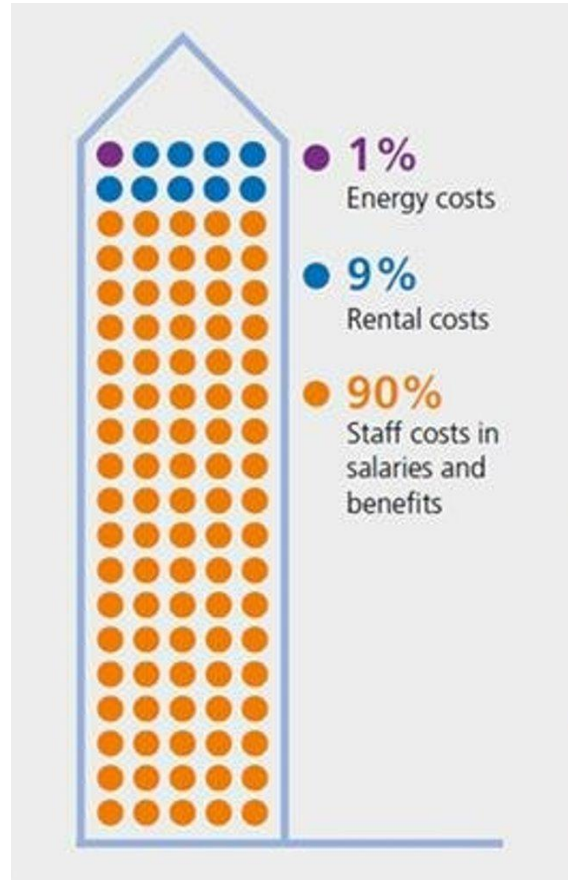
Without saying the s word

DO: Get them to vote/prioritize their values

DO NOT: Listen to just the loudest voice in the room



Not about sustainability.



Occupant Productivity

Indoor Environmental Quality

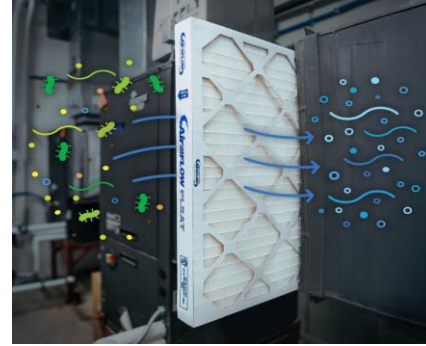
Visual Comfort



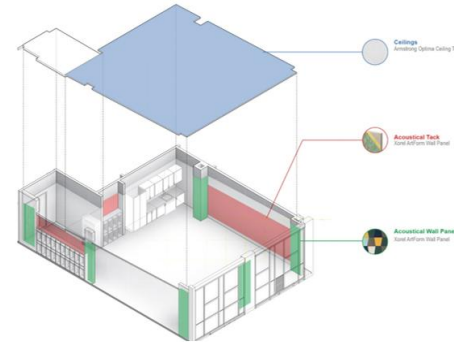
Thermal Comfort



Indoor Air Quality



Acoustics



Lower CO2 = -16% fatigue, +24% productivity
Better Daylight = +20% faster recovery times, +26% improved performance test

Risk

Resilience



① A patient waits to be evacuated from the devastated hospital. Photograph: Brad Loper/Dallas Morning News/Corbis



A close-up photograph of a green leaf, showing the intricate network of veins. The leaf is a vibrant green color, and the veins are a lighter shade of green. The text "Values In Action" is overlaid on the left side of the leaf in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The text is arranged in two lines, with "Values In" on the top line and "Action" on the bottom line. The background of the leaf is slightly out of focus, emphasizing the text.

Values In Action

The background consists of several overlapping, diagonal layers of paper in various shades of green, creating a sense of depth and movement. The layers are cut at different angles, with some appearing to fold or overlap others.

COST

Boston Arts Academy

Boston, Massachusetts | K-12 school

What does my client care about most?

Cost

What do I want?

Triple-Pane Glazing

What are the co-benefits?

- **Lower Operating Costs**
- **Lower Energy Usage**
- **Improved Thermal Comfort**
- **Reduced Noise**



- System Cost Savings: \$508,250
 - Cost of Glazing: \$515,550
- \$7,300 premium**

During buy-out,
Saved over **\$800,000**
in **first costs**
by pursuing triple pane glazing

La Mora Senior Apartments

Yonkers, New York | Senior Living

What does my client care about most?

Operational Cost and Tax Incentives

What do I want?

An energy efficient building

What are the co-benefits?

- **Longer lasting building**
- **Lower Energy Usage**
- **Improved Thermal Comfort**
- **Systems that are easier to operate**



The background of the image is a vibrant green with a marbled or watercolor-like texture. The colors range from a deep forest green to a lighter, almost yellowish-green, with some darker, brownish-green veins and patches. The overall effect is organic and textured.

USER OUTCOMES

Latrobe Research

DC and Baltimore City | K-12 Schools



What does my client care about most?
Educational Outcomes

What do I want?
\$\$ for school modernization

What are the co-benefits?

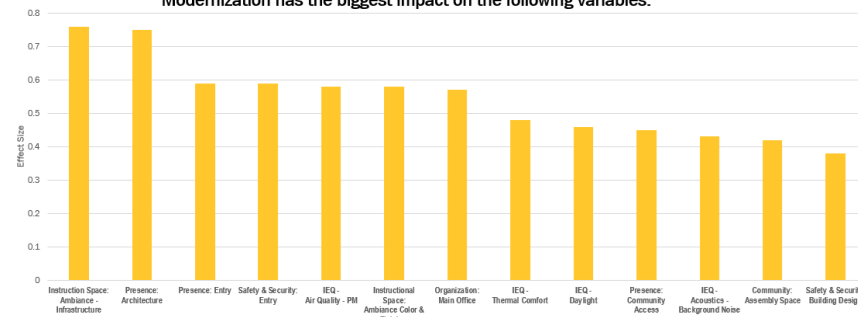
- **Teacher retention**
- **Student/Teacher health/wellness**

Study Design



PERKINS + EASTMAN
JEROME J. ROBBINS
School of Education

Modernization has the biggest impact on the following variables:



Enrollment



Graduation Rates



Standardized Test Scores

OSF Healthcare

Peoria, IL | Healthcare

What did the client value most?

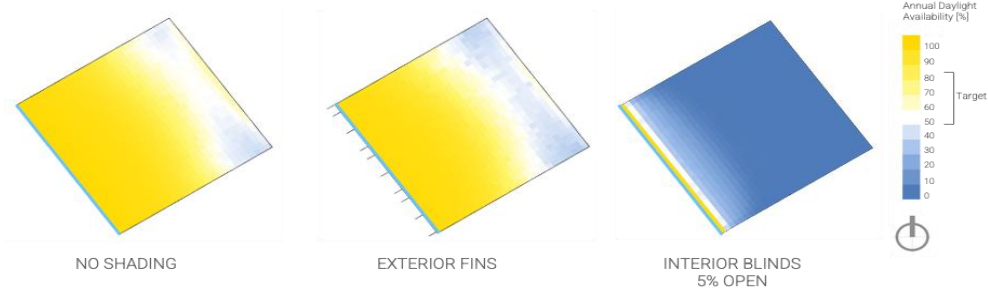
Lower Cost

What did the design team want?

Exterior Shading

What are the co-benefits?

- **Better daylight quality**
- **Lower shade deployment**
- **Improved thermal comfort**
- ~~Energy Savings~~
- ~~Smaller HVAC~~



44% reduction in
uncomfortable hours
w/exterior fins

95% less daylight
with shades down

OSF Healthcare

Peoria, IL | Healthcare

What did the client value most?

Lower Cost

What did the design team want?

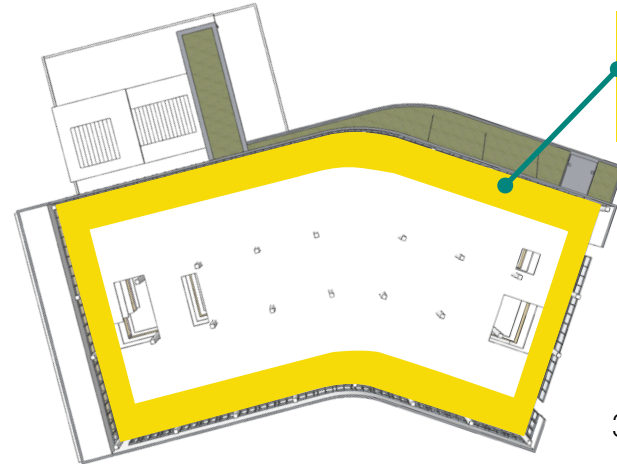
Exterior Shading

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- **Better daylight quality**
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- ~~Energy Savings~~
- ~~Smaller HVAC~~

* 20% of building occupants

** annual cost per employee (salaries/benefits/etc)



Occupants most impacted by façade design decisions

~340 occupants*

X

\$100,000 / yr**

=

34 M / yr of salary costs₂₁

LIABILITY & RISK

Western Supply

Tulsa, Oklahoma | Multi-family residential

What does my client care about most?
Community well-being and justice

What do I want?
To go beyond code minimums

What are the co-benefits?

- **Improved thermal comfort**
- **Significant energy savings**
- **Operational cost savings**
- **Passive survivability**



	Code	Enhanced	EUI savings
Walls	R 6.5	R 16.5 (2" continuous)	-5%
Windows	U 0.60	U 0.30	-7%
Infiltration		0.4	-5%
Heating	Electric resistance	Heat pump	-19%

Total energy savings: **30%**

USVI Dept. of Education - Design Standards

Multiple Campuses: St Thomas, St John, St Croix | K-12 Schools

What did the client ask for?

Modern Educational Facilities

What did the client really value most?

Withstanding Climate & Hazards

What was the common ground?

- **Passive survivability & IEQ**
- **Low maintenance systems**
- **Materials to withstand wet & humid conditions, corrosion, & pests**
- **Off-grid capability**



MSK Cancer Center - Design Standards

New York City, New York | Healthcare

What did the client ask for?

Continuous operations for cancer care and research

What do I want?

Healthcare facility that can withstand extreme weather events

What was the common ground?

- **Passive survivability & IEQ**
- **Systems protected from flood plain**
- **Materials to withstand wet & humid conditions, corrosion, & pests**
- **Off-grid capability for critical equipment**





GUERRILLA SUSTAINABILITY

American University, Meltzer Center

Washington, DC | Higher Education

What does my client care about most?

Providing a center for the holistic wellness of their student athletes

What do I want?

Net Zero Energy

What are the co-benefits?

- **Supports their carbon neutral goal**
- **Helps with BEPS compliance**



AU IS NOW THE FIRST
CARBON NEUTRAL
UNIVERSITY IN THE US

Carbon Neutrality at AU=

1,253,460

trees planted



EUI 27.3 kBTU/sf/yr

627 kW PV array

+\$1.7M from initial budget

-\$550k federal tax credit

~\$100,000/yr energy cost savings

14 year payback

Woodward-Granger Middle School

Des Moines, IA | K-12 School

What does my client care about most?

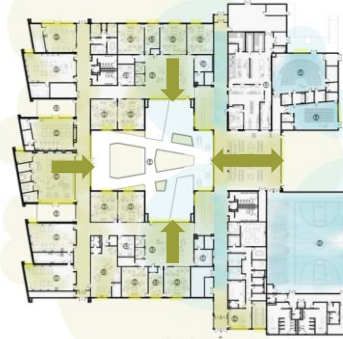
Educational Outcomes; Cost

What does the team want?

Meet our Climate Commitments

What are the co-benefits?

- **Energy savings**
- **Operational cost savings**
- **Ease of Maintenance**
- **Indoor/Outdoor Env. Quality**
- **Reduced Carbon**
- **Reduced 1st Cost allowing investment in energy alternatives**



Integrated Design Strategies for:

- AIA 2030: NZE (pEUI 17; w/PV's nEUI 0); EC Reduction of Arch (GWP)
- SE 2050: EC Reduction Target 50%
- ME2040: GSHP + IRA; All Electric
- Materials Pledge: EPD's, HPD's, Red-List Free, EC Reduction (GWP)



ACTIVITY!

Listening Activity

Cards Against Sustainability

A card game to help you listen and respond to your clients without using the S word.

Senior Living Community

What They Care About

- Resident well-being, independence, and social connection
- Operational efficiency and long-term viability
- Family and staff satisfaction

Pain Points

- Tight margins and complex regulations



Design for Ecosystems

Good design mutually benefits humans and nonhuman inhabitants. It considers the greater environment for opportunities to create harmony.

Point A

Point B

Listening Activity

Cards Against Sustainability

A card game to help you listen
and respond to your clients
without using the S word.

Sustainability
costs too
much.



Listening Activity

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Design for Ecosystems

Good design mutually benefits humans and nonhuman inhabitants. It considers the greater environment for opportunities to create harmony.

- Connection to outdoors critical to resident health
- Investing in bioretention with native/adaptive planting creates robust outdoor gardens without a ton of work/maintenance
- Doubles to meet your stormwater regulations

Listening Activity

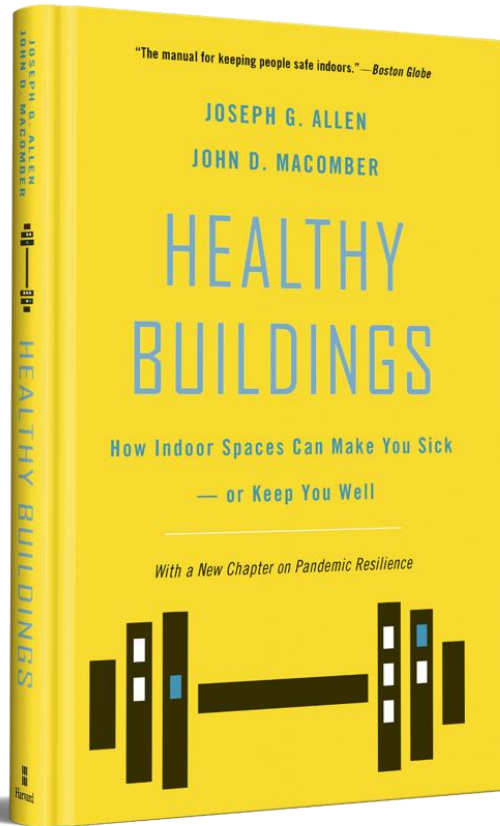


- Plan to report out to the larger group on:
 - Your **FAVORITE** client scenario card and response
 - The one that stumped you

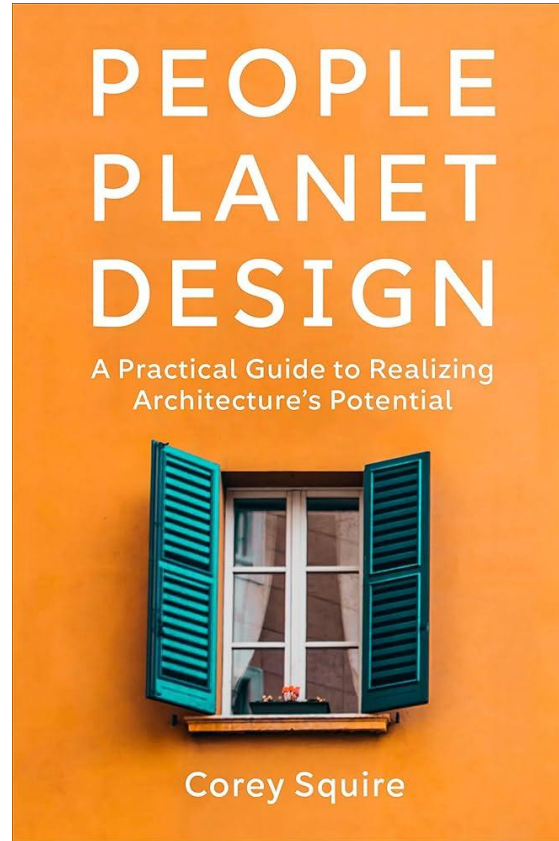
The background consists of several overlapping triangles in different shades of green, creating a layered, geometric effect. The triangles are oriented in various directions, with some pointing towards the top and others towards the bottom.

RESOURCES

Financial Benefits of Healthy Buildings



Focusing on What Matters



Staying Motivated





Q&A

Reach Out!



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BUILDINGENERGY NYC

Please fill out an evaluation for this session



or: nesea.org/eval

Northeast Sustainable Energy Association (NESEA)