

2024 Sustainability Action Plan

A plan designed to elevate projects and office operations to healthier and more sustainable heights over the coming decades.

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MA Design presents our updated Sustainability Action Plan (SAP). Take a look and learn about why we are doing this, and the approach our firm took to upgrade this plan from our 2019 version.

The 2019 version helped us get to this point. We learned a lot from that process and from similar processes working with our clients. So we decided to take what we've learned and apply it here.

As part of this SAP update, we have rearranged our goals into two (2) main categories: internal office operations and external project-specific. Each category has goals for both sustainability and health & wellness. These goals are designed to highlight the good things we are already doing, but also to encourage growth to new heights.

As such, over the next couple of decades, we intend to transform our operations and projects to be healthier and more sustainable for all.

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Our Commitment

Our Why

Sustainable design is simply a best practice. As architects and designers of the built environment, it's our responsibility to reduce the impacts that our buildings have on the environment and to position ourselves as creators of positive change in our communities. At MA, we hold ourselves accountable for working toward sustainability—now and in the future.

By implementing sustainable design practices in every project, we can reduce the impact of our buildings on the environment and the people who live in them. Through research and innovative design, our projects can maximize positive health habits and reduce negative influences. By building healthier indoor environments, we aim to make a positive impact on occupant health and wellness.

We believe that building performance, in all its forms, is for people and our planet. Our objective is to promote healthy communities and a cleaner environment.



Bob Evans Corporate Headquarters

OUR SUSTAINABILITY VISION

Designing a better future by elevating the connection between our clients, our communities, and our planet.

OUR MISSION

As designers, we set the baseline of our projects above the required minimum, and strive to use our expertise to create projects that give back more than they take. We recognize the impact the built environment has on climate change, and aim to use our work as a tool to positively impact the world around us. We create spaces that are healthy, equitable, resilient, and inclusive for our clients and the communities around them. These efforts generate solutions that achieve our clients' goals and create positive change.



Our Process

Past to Present

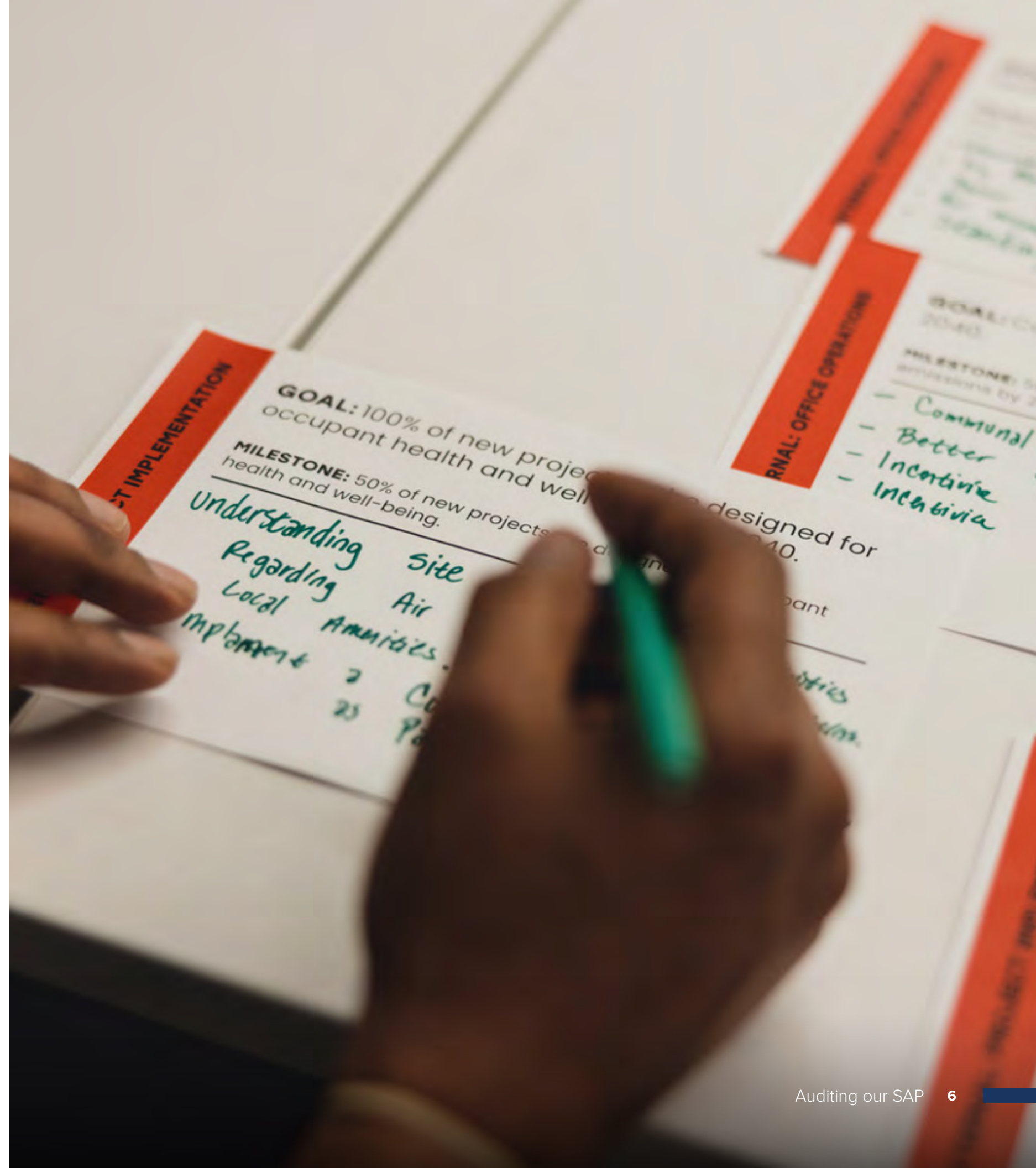
Auditing our SAP

MA Design created our first Sustainability Action Plan (SAP) in 2019. Since then, our firm has been resilient and adaptable to a significant amount of changes in how the firm operates due to the pandemic and our firm rebrand. As such, we determined it was time to take stock of the last SAP, and determine what worked and what didn't. We then took what we learned to revamp the plan.

The MA Sustainability Team started the process by conducting a firm-wide survey. Afterward, the team followed up with two (2) in-person Engagement Sessions. We held separate Engagement Sessions for both our offices in Cincinnati and Columbus. This provided multiple opportunities for participation, which maximized the collaboration possible. At the end of these sessions, which spanned two months, there was one last opportunity for employee engagement through a pin-up.

Over a period of three days, we pinned up goals and milestones in an accessible space. This opportunity encouraged staff of all levels to provide anonymous feedback, suggestions and potential changes.

This process allowed for maximum engagement and buy-in. Everyone had a chance to have their voice heard, which is important to us.



Success + Lessons Learned

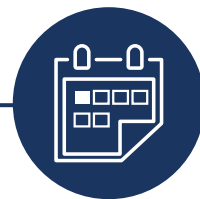
As we looked back on our 2019 SAP, we wanted to make note of the successes and lessons learned. We wanted to acknowledge the positive outcomes, but also take note of the things that we can do better.

- “Greening” of MA Design’s standard project specifications
- Implementation of building performance tools, like cove.tool, on projects that have sustainability goals to evaluate daylighting energy and water usage.
- Increased use of material management databases, like Mindful Materials and Material Bank, to select ecolabel materials and finishes for our projects.
- Incorporation of respite rooms in both MA Design Offices for employee well-being.
- Increased presence of the Sustainability Committee internally
- Growth and development in Sustainability Service
- Continued involvement in community organizations such as:
 - USGBC Ohio
 - Cincinnati 2030 District
 - Green Umbrella
 - AIA Committee on the Environment (COTE)
 - DesignColumbus



- Use SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) goals.
- Set up a process for implementing actions, assessing data to measure progress and updating documentation regularly.
- Engage the entire firm in the creation of the SAP document.
- Educate employees on sustainability trends and strategies to implement within our projects.

Engaging the MA Team

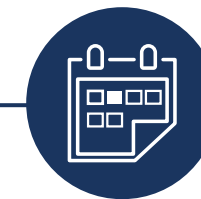


Engagement Session No. 1

At this Engagement Session, we asked attendees to write down their thoughts about how MA Design could make our projects more sustainable and healthier in the coming decades. We received a lot of feedback, and no thought was a bad one. Every idea had value.

Afterward, attendees in small groups evaluated the ideas based upon their levels of impact and effort. Then, these ideas were placed on an “Effort/Impact” Matrix. Once each group had a board of ideas, categorized on the matrix, all attendees reviewed the ideas together. Each person was given dots, and allowed to vote on ideas they agreed with.

Following the first sessions, the Sustainability Team took the ideas from the firm-wide survey and sessions to create the first passes at the new SAP goals.

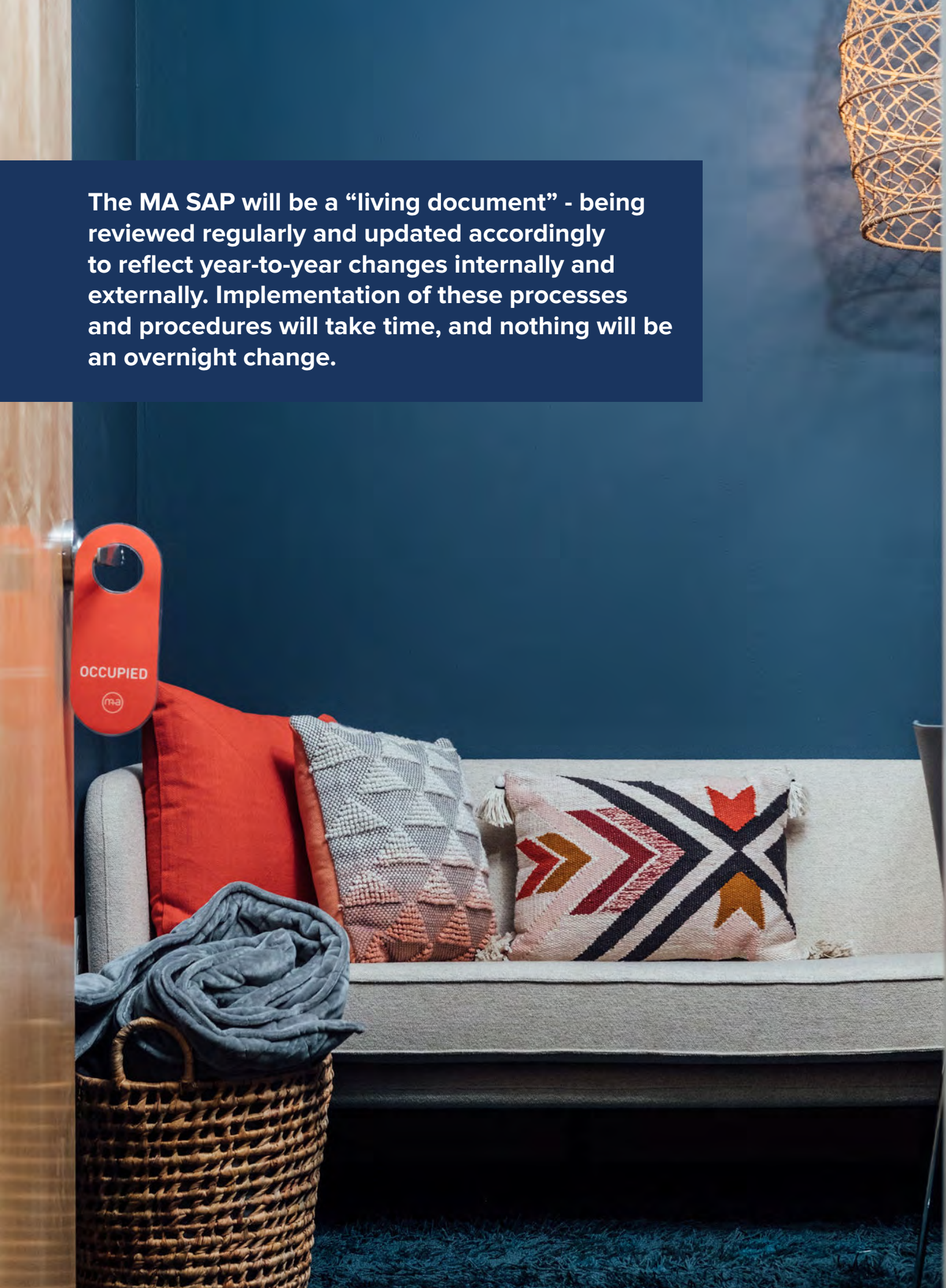


Engagement Session No. 2

After creating the first draft of the goals, the second session allowed the entire MA team to provide feedback on the specific goals.

Attendees at this session provided feedback in the form of anonymous comment cards. Each card had a goal and milestone listed on top. Then, in groups, attendees wrote down any comments, questions, or ideas in response to those goals and milestones. At the end, each small group reported out any key points their group had discussed to the room.

The level of feedback from our firm allowed for refinement and further development of the goals presented in this SAP.



The MA SAP will be a “living document” - being reviewed regularly and updated accordingly to reflect year-to-year changes internally and externally. Implementation of these processes and procedures will take time, and nothing will be an overnight change.

Restructuring

After the audit of the 2019 SAP and the engagement of the entire MA team, the Sustainability Team restructured the SAP to better fit our firm’s needs. As such, the new SAP has four (4) fundamental goals, broken into two (2) overall categories: internal office operations and external project-specific

Internal: Office Operations

HEALTH + WELLNESS

- **GOAL:** MA offices to be designed for occupant health and wellness by 2035
- **MILESTONE:** Pilot Office (Cincinnati) to be designed for occupant health and wellness by 2030

SUSTAINABILITY

- **GOAL:** Carbon neutral in office operations by 2035
- **MILESTONE:** 50% reduction / offset of office operations carbon emissions by 2030

External: Project-Specific

HEALTH + WELLNESS

- **GOAL:** 100% of new projects to be designed for occupant health and wellness by 2040
- **MILESTONE:** 50% of new projects are designed for occupant health and wellness by 2030

SUSTAINABILITY

- **GOAL:** Carbon neutral in 100% of new projects by 2040
- **MILESTONE:** 50% of new projects to be carbon neutral by 2030.



Internal Goals

Office Operations

Internal Goals

Office Operations

There are two considerable ways that a design firm can impact their carbon footprint. They can address the carbon footprints of each respective office and their projects.

This first portion, the Office Operations section, looks at all aspects in which our firm functions. A few examples include looking at purchases, transportation, office design, and internal processes. Within this section, we have set goals for our offices to become healthier and more sustainable over the upcoming decades.

The next section of this document will dive into how we can address the carbon footprints of our projects.



Goal 01



Health + Wellness

GOAL

MA offices to be designed for occupant health and wellness by 2035.

MILESTONE

Pilot Office (Cincinnati) to be designed for occupant health and wellness by 2030.

The health and wellness of our staff is very important to us. At MA, we believe in taking care of our staff, and have a dedicated wellness program throughout the year to support our team.

While this is important and a great perk, it's not the only thing that impacts the health of our team. With our internal health and wellness goal, we want to address other areas of office design, operations, and processes that impact occupant health.

Many things within our physical environments determine occupant health and wellness. Common examples include air quality, water quality, acoustics, thermal comfort, lighting, access to nature, nutritious food, opportunities for movement, and places for respite.

Goal 02



Sustainability

GOAL

Carbon neutral in office operations by 2035.

MILESTONE

50% reduction / offset of office operations carbon emissions by 2030.

As architects and designers, we impact carbon emissions through the design of our projects, but also in how we function as a firm. Our operations and actions play a significant role in our carbon footprint as an organization.

As part of this process to revamp our SAP, we felt it is important to intentionally look at our own carbon emissions as we continue to create a more sustainable and healthy environment for all.

Over the next decade, we will make strides to fully understand our footprint, and find ways to reduce and eliminate as much as possible. Our last step will be determining the right approach to offset what we cannot reasonably eliminate.



External Goals

Project Specific

External Goals

Project Specific

As mentioned in the last section, firms can address carbon emissions by looking inward to office operations.

The second way is by intentionally addressing the carbon emissions of the projects we design. As architects and designers, this is where we have the most significant impact on the world we live in. However, this is often the most challenging goal to achieve for many reasons.

The most significant challenges with designing carbon-neutral and healthy buildings revolve around:

- Staff and client knowledge of how to achieve these goals, and the benefits of achieving them.
- Financial obstacles of first cost versus life-cycle cost of designing healthier, more sustainable buildings.
- Implementing project benchmarking as well as energy and carbon modeling processes in a way that minimizes time spent and overhead costs.

Our firm will be endeavoring to respond to these ways that best suit us and our clients.



Goal 01



Health + Wellness

GOAL

100% of new projects to be designed for occupant health and wellness by 2040.

MILESTONE

50% of new projects are designed for occupant health and wellness by 2030.

If there's anything the pandemic taught us, it's that designing for health and wellness is critical in today's world. This design philosophy remains essential many years later.

In 2020, MA Design signed the Materials Pledge, where we committed to advocating for more sustainable, healthy materials in our projects and throughout the architectural industry.

This goal only solidifies our dedication to designing healthy buildings in our communities.

Goal 02



Sustainability

GOAL

Carbon neutral in 100% of new projects by 2040.

MILESTONE

50% of new projects to be carbon neutral by 2030.

MA Design committed to the AIA 2030 Commitment back in 2017. As part of this commitment, we agreed to designing all new projects to be carbon neutral by 2030. Unfortunately, like most of the industry, we are not quite on track to meet that goal.

This is an opportunity for our firm to re-commit to this goal, and learn from what wasn't working.

Our team has learned a lot about the processes and requirements for meeting the commitment over the years. With this updated SAP, we are "righting the ship" with a renewed goal of meeting a 50% milestone by 2030.



Our Action

The Path Forward

Our Action

The Path Forward

The intent of this document is to set our sights on our big sustainability and health & wellness goals as a firm. The goals are then backed up with action steps and strategies to help us achieve those big goals.

In this section of the SAP, we are shifting to discuss the actions we will be following, and the strategies we will be considering over the coming years. Only by backing up our goals with strategic and intentional action can we hope to reach our desired destinations.

As we go through the steps in this section, and implement strategies, we will routinely update our progress in the SAP. This process of updating and tracking progress will happen semi-annually to truly allow this document to be a living, changing document along with us.



Our Steps

As our firm embarks on this journey over the next few decades, we will be consistent in the steps for each goal.



Audit Existing, Set Baseline

We will start by auditing existing conditions and processes to determine our starting point.



Determine Metrics for Success

Our team will work to set our baseline and determine the metrics we will use for measuring success.



Establish Plans for Implementation

These plans will include specific actions with anticipated costs to implement. This strategy will enable our firm to effectively prepare for any adjustments, including plans that require financial investments.



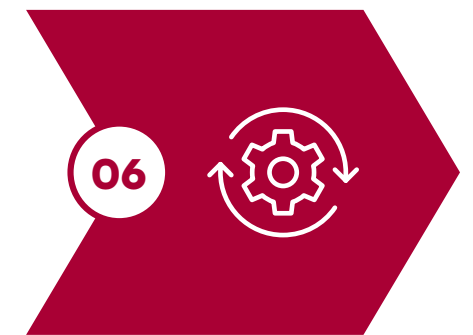
Implement Action Items

After we have set up the baseline with metrics and created our plans, the next step is to start implementing our strategy.



Semi-Annual Progress Check-In

Setting up regular check-ins will allow our team to adjust anything that might not be working out. Through this process, we will review the data and metrics to see where we stand. This process allows us to celebrate the wins along the way, too!



Make Adjustments as Needed

This document will constantly evolve and should be routinely assessed. To best support the firm on this journey, we will make any tweaks or adjustments to the goals, metrics, or plan as required to remain on track to our goals.

Internal Strategies

OFFICE OPERATIONS

This set of strategies focuses on general office operations and ways that we can incentivize sustainability and health & wellness. These strategies are focused on ways to make and encourage change internally.

As we go through the action steps, we will be looking for ways to incorporate as many of these strategies as is appropriate for our firm. Some might pivot or shift depending on the big picture strategies for achieving our goals.

- ✓ **Evaluate** lighting, thermal comfort and acoustics in each office. Set up plan for addressing pain points and revise as required.
- ✓ **Test** air and water quality in both offices. Set up plan to address any concerns with landlords and revise as required.
- ✓ **Establish** a biophilic design plan; how to incorporate more plants and natural elements in each office and provide proper maintenance as required.
- ✓ **Provide** healthier catered lunch and breakfast options.
- ✓ **Investigate** incentivized gym memberships.
- ✓ **Investigate** if insurance incentives exist for health and wellness or sustainable amenities.
- ✓ **Increase** visibility of sustainability, health and wellness efforts in each office. (Signage that highlights the improvements we are implementing)
- ✓ **Reduce** office waste. (Especially with lunch and learns, etc.)
- ✓ **Install** occupancy sensors in our spaces (as appropriate).
- ✓ **Discontinue** use of single use plastics in both offices. (Bottles, plates, utensils, etc.)
- ✓ **Incentivize** alternate transportation, carpooling.
- ✓ **Collaborate** with landlords to add/advocate for EV charging stations in respective garages.

External Strategies

PROJECT SPECIFIC

This list of strategies focuses on project specific ways we can increase sustainability and health & wellness, to make and encourage change externally.

As we go through the action steps, we will be looking for ways to incorporate as many of these strategies as is appropriate for our firm. Some might pivot or shift depending on the big picture strategies for achieving our goals.

- ✓ **Educate** staff, consultants and clients on how to incorporate healthy building strategies, designing for carbon neutrality and how to talk about it.
- ✓ **Implement** design process checklist.
- ✓ **Implement** material library standards and checklists
- ✓ **Research** and create a database of healthy, sustainable materials
- ✓ **Research** ROI or VOI (value on investment) of strategies to be implemented in projects.
- ✓ **Implement** MA Design Standards that our consultants will also be held to (i.e. MERV 13 filters min, EUI targets, lighting efficiencies, plumbing fixture performance)
- ✓ **Perform** Energy Modeling and light Lifecycle Analysis on each project.
- ✓ **Research** database of ROI (return on investment) and VOI (value on investment) for healthy and sustainable design strategies.
- ✓ **Establish** repertoire of grants and tax-incentives for clients.
- ✓ **Standardize** Sustainability as a basic service on each project with sustainability charrette performed on any project that would qualify for AIA 2030 DDx reporting.

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Sustainability at MA Design

As sustainability and health + wellness trends continue to shape the world around us, how are you and your organization responding to the challenge?

Reach out to MA Design's Sustainability Team (jessicagd@designwithma.com) to discuss ways that we can help you create a healthier and more sustainable world.

