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2020 Women in Construction: Tamar Warburg, Director of Sustainability at Sasaki

March 27, 2020 - Spotlights



What was your greatest professional achievement or most notable project in the last 12 months? In my first year as sustainability director, my top professional priority has been integrating sustainability

into the design workflow. My most notable achievement is not one particular project, but a 3-month training of 18 architects as Sustainability Leads, now embedded in each new Sasaki architecture and interiors project. The training includes full-project energy modeling, water analysis and embodied carbon modeling, including qualitative discussions and quantitative modeling tools in Revit. The goal of the training is to have our leaders ask the right questions, at the right moment in the design process.

What are you doing differently in 2020 that has had a positive impact on your career? I left a position as principal of a small architecture firm to become the sustainability director of Sasaki, where I impact a range of larger projects across multiple disciplines: architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design and planning. I see each project as an opportunity to address climate change. We have the tools to significantly reduce these emissions; by cutting operational energy and carbon and creating energy-positive buildings; and by reducing the embodied carbon in our built work. It is our moral imperative—and a major competitive advantage to incorporate these services into excellent design work.

What trends are you seeing in your field this year? Within sustainable design, I see a definite trend away from LEED and other certification programs toward performance metrics, including net-zero energy and net-zero carbon. These performance goals are oriented toward measurable change in building operation, or in the experience of working and studying in the building, rather than in plaques or awards displayed on a lobby wall.

Who or what inspired you to join the construction industry? In my travels as an undergraduate I learned about the vast diversity of patterns of human settlement, and the incredible correlation- and impact- that urban design and architecture have on human experience. Design matters, and I dove in head-first: studying architecture and planning, working for architecture firms, and enrolling at the Harvard Graduate School of Design's March 1 program for students who did not study architecture as undergraduates.

When I'm not working I am...dancing. I love world music, including Bollywood, Israeli and salsa. I've been studying and teaching dance since I was 12—and continue to dance several times a week.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540