

Metrics-Driven Design and the Future of Green Infrastructure with Umesh Atre | Transcript

00:02

Speaker 1

Welcome to Green Building Matters, the original and most popular podcast focused on the green building movement. Your host is Charlie Cicchetti, one of the most credentialed experts in the green building industry and one of the few to be honored as a lead fellow. Each week, Charlie welcomes a green building professional from around the globe to share their war stories, career advice, and unique insight into how sustainability is shaping the built environment. So settle in, grab a fresh cup of coffee, and get ready to find out why. Green building. Green Building Matters. Hey everybody. Welcome to the next episode of the Green Building Matters podcast. Can't believe I've interviewed over 400 amazing green building professionals all over the world today. I've got another one with us. He's in Austin, Texas. Can't wait to unpack the story here with Umesh. How you doing today, sir?

00:50

Speaker 2

Doing great, Charlie. Thanks a lot for inviting me.

00:52

Speaker 1

Yeah, you're welcome. I, you know, I love to just have green building enthusiasts, green building professionals, and from time to time even some lead fellows on here. So welcome to the club first of all, and congrats for our podcast listeners. Take us back. Where did you grow up and go to university?

01:11

Speaker 2

Yeah, sure. Well, thanks a lot. Glad to be a lead fellow. Glad to be part of the group. That really was really an exciting accomplishment for me personally and professionally growing up. I mean, I'm originally from India, so I grew up in a small city close to Mumbai or Bombay. All of my elementary, middle school, high school was India and then I went to Denmark. Undergraduate architecture at the University of Mumbai, the surgery of architecture and so that was a five year program. After graduating, I actually worked in Mumbai and at a couple of other cities for about two to three years, mostly working on residential and mixed use products after that. Actually I came to the US in 2001 to get my Master of Science in Architecture. That was at Texas A and University on Hollow Station.

02:10

Speaker 2

And that was a program that was focused on sustainability. You know, lot of the work I did back then was talk to building energy modeling, data analyses, you know, energy calibrations, things like that. So that was a great foundation for the rest of my career. After graduating, I actually moved from Texas to North Carolina. I started working at a firm called Innovative Design in Raleigh, North Carolina. And we used to do a lot of dean schools and so elementary, middle, high school, community colleagues as well. And that's when I started to actually start applying some of that knowledge that I'd gained during my Masters and so, you know, did a lot of cleaning, energy modeling. I Think analyses, started working on lead products as well.

03:03

Speaker 2

And then after that you know, moved to got an opportunity to work in Canada, then moved to Calgary, was there for about three and a half years working with wsp and so you know that was a huge shift for me because working starting to work on school projects or educational projects and now I was working on these multimillion dollar projects, you know, huge developments in and around not just in Canada but in the United States as well. So got to thought was again great exposure. And then in 2015 I moved to Austin where I'm currently at started working at small six person firm called Office for Local Architecture. Most of my role was involved in helping on the sustainability consulting side of things.

03:51

Speaker 2

And so we used to did a lot of work with clients taking them through various green building certifications like Lead, well Fitwell, Green Globes, things like that. That's around the time when I got my well AP and Pitwell Ambassador accreditations abroad. And I've gotten my lead AP while I was still back in graduate school. And so yeah, I worked there for about, until about 2019 and then we actually were acquired by another firm called Studentoid. Worked there for a couple of years and then I've been at my current company which is Park Hill for just about two years now. So it's a very new role. But yeah, in general, I mean for the last 20 plus years I've been in the sustainability industry and it's been a wild ride. It's been a fantastic journey so far.

04:44

Speaker 1

Yes, I love that some really great companies there too. And I guess the

sustainability studies early, gosh, early 2000s, I mean LEED was just coming around and so yeah, I usually ask, hey, when did you first start seeing and feeling that sustainability? But I assume it was there in those studies with some of your early career work. Was LEED the program or was it energy savings? Because I know you were on the building energy side. What was sustainability like their early career and were you working on some lead projects there?

05:17

Speaker 2

Early? Early, I would say early as you rightly mentioned wasn't really around that much. And so a lot of our projects are actually we used to promote energy efficiency and a lot of that was actually coming through good or optimized daylighting and buildings and so many times it's a lot of people can't need that connection between daylighting and energy savings. And we actually used to run our daylighting models and then use that data, transfer that into our energy modeling tools and show how much of an Impact daylighting could actually have just getting your cooling energy loads down, for example. And once you show the clients those numbers, it's much easier for you to be able to convince them to go after certain sustainability strategies. Something which was big back then and it's still around is the Energy Star program.

06:11

Speaker 2

And so we used to do a lot of projects. There is this label called Designed to Energy Star. And so, you know, some of the clients were not really wanting to go after a full Energy Star certification, for example, but you could sort of design those projects up to a certain building energy efficiency standard. And so we used to help a lot of schools with that. And then something that we used to also do was actually try to sell the idea of installing renewable energy systems, especially in elementary and middle schools. Because, you know, school, I mean, we see a lot of public schools, I mean, all public schools have limited budgets. But we used to sell the idea of don't look at these as an added cost, but look at it as an investment.

06:59

Speaker 2

And so even if you can have a small 4 or 5 collector, like a 1 to 2 kilowatt system, that can still be such a huge instructional and educational resource for the kids, or you can have a small wind turbine, or you can have a small domestic hot water system. So we redesigned a lot of schools back then where the entire hot water load of the demand for your kitchens would be satisfied through solar domestic hot water systems. And so a lot of schools saw the value in that because that is like the right age to expose kids to these kind of

technologies. And so slowly we started working on lead products as well. But most of the projects we did in house were not really going for lead. We are actually behind a separate arm which used to provide consulting to outside clients.

07:52

Speaker 2

And so we used to provide lead consulting, mostly on the energy modeling and daylighting side the plants. That's how amazing.

08:02

Speaker 1

No early technical experience too. And I'm a big fan of the Energy Star program. So thanks for showing us what you're working on. Early Mesh. If you look back, have you had any mentors along the way? Yeah, for sure.

08:15

Speaker 2

I mean, there's too many to name, but I'll just take you through how and a couple of people that have been a significant influence throughout my career, but even before that, growing up, I should mention that I come from a family of architects and town planners and artists. And so my dad is an architect, my grandfather was a town planner. And so we had this huge library of architecture and planning books. Well, growing up in elementary and middle school, that's when I actually started getting exposed to building design. So pretty early. This was before I even started thinking of architecture as a career. But I guess it was just in my blood I was bound to be an architect. That was. We also had biographies of some of the great architects, international architects, including like Frank Lloyd Wright and Corbusier and other grades.

09:09

Speaker 2

And I actually had started reading those books early on even though I was in my early schooling phase. And so that obviously left a big impact on me. And then when I was in architecture school, our architecture school was actually just 10 red walks from where my dad's office was. And so whenever I had the time, I used to just go spend time with him. Started actually started reading blueprints and things like that for computers to cover everything, right. But I kind of, I think, you know, got a jump start on my career just getting to spend time with him. And you know, during the holidays, especially summer holidays, he used to actually do a lot of traveling because he was the chief architect for the entire state that were in.

09:58

Speaker 2

And he used to have to travel all over the state and I just used to tag along with it and go to construction site results. And so, you know, just getting to see all these projects being built, it was a great influence early on. So for sure that was my first big mentor. And then you know, I've been really lucky with my advisors both at the undergraduate and graduate level education, but more so at the graduate school at Texas. And I, my thesis Advisor was Dr. Mark Clayton. He was again always used to encourage me to look at technologies, anything to do with sustainability. And then Dr. Jeff Pedro who actually is part of the mechanical engineering department but he leads all the efforts related to building performance, energy modeling and he actually heads the energy systems lab at Texas A&M.

10:54

Speaker 2

So those two for sure are huge mentors. And then after I moved to North Carolina, my principal at Innovative Design across the Forum, I started working my first job. His name was Mike Nicholas and he is a person who's always been involved with solar and he's been lighting the chair of the American Solar Energy Society and industrial large things like that. He was the one who really exposed me to good daylighting and you know, also encourage me to start actually submitting abstracts and speaking at conferences which as a new, as a project can be a bit daunting. But now when I look back, that actually helped me a lot because you know, standing and speaking in front of like hundred or so hundred people is something that you just like you know, has to learn over time.

11:45

Speaker 2

But the sooner someone actually, you know, makes you more encourage you to do that, I think the better. So for sure he was a big mentor as well. After I moved to Austin, I mean honestly, the entire Austin green building community is just amazing. I just consider the entire community as a mentor and a special shout out to Austin Energy Green Building. This is a team which manages the local green building rating system here in Austin. Everybody is very welcoming, always energized, always driven. And then locally, I mean, two people I've always looked up to as mentors are Gail Vitari and Pliny Flis. And they run this center in Austin, called CNPBS, which is the center for maximum potential buildings with great team. Again, just them and the entire team at CNPBS is amazing.

12:38

Speaker 2

And Sarah Talkington is someone who was past chair of the Accolade Steering committee, did a lot of work on Lean version 5. She is another person would like to mention as well. And then you know, beyond that, the entire USGBC community have been involved with lead obviously for a long time, UHGBC as well. Everybody is great to work with. And then currently at my current role at Park Hill, our executive Vice president of architecture, his name is Dan Hart. He was actually a past president of national AI in 2022 and he's been a great mentor to me in my current role.

13:16

Speaker 1

Amazing. Wow, what a long list of mentors. And I'm sure there's more. And there's so many great sustainability folks in Austin, Texas. And I know there's a lot of elite fellows there too, so that's just amazing. Okay, so as you look back, what are some of your proudest achievements so far?

13:33

Speaker 2

I guess it's both professional and personal.

13:36

Speaker 1

Yes, that's right.

13:37

Speaker 2

So professionally, I mean, for sure, getting Lead Fellow has to be at the top of the list. It's just something that I've been advocating a lot for, if anyone is interested. You know, just go through the process. You get a chance to reflect on everything that you have worked on. It's. It's just a very extremely worthwhile process to just go through whether you like it or not. Other than that, I mean I've been fortunate to have worked on over until 150 green building projects, various sizes, various types, got to be worked with a lot of different people over the years. So for sure that's been a significant milestone. And then a couple of projects I just wanted to mention, I mean being in Austin, we have a local community college in Austin, Community College.

14:26

Speaker 2

And there being a big number proponents for sustainability locally and what they have done in products that I was watching to work with them on are actually two building reuse products. And one is what used to be an old high

school which is now their new one of the flagship campuses. And the other was actually an old mall which has now been converted into one of their other flagship campuses here in Oscar and Cinema. Just something again I wanted to note is, you know, existing buildings, there is just too many of them. I mean we as architects, as an everyday professionals have to take this really seriously. You have to start focusing on the existing building stock because I mean that is something that hasn't been tackled as much in my opinion. So I've been fortunate to work on those projects.

15:21

Speaker 2

You know, at Park Hill here. I know you have already interviewed my, one of my colleagues, Julio, and he's actually B's lead fellow. We both got our lead solo at the same time last year. It was an extremely proud woman Park Hill. And we actually have other elite solo PA kill. His name is Chris Mandel. And so having a firm with three lead fellows is, I know is a rarity. Not a lot of firms can playing that. And so that just shows like, you know, there is what is this inherent dedication or there is this drive, this commitment to sustainability that we have at Apple's current firm. And so I'm just glad to be part of such a firm, right where you are like constantly thinking about how can you make yourself better personally and professionally.

16:13

Speaker 2

I was on that and then being on this podcast, obviously I contributed as a proud achievement. I know you've been really doing this podcast for a long time and I've been lucky to actually have heard a couple of the episodes just to be a part of that team. It just feels like you have kind of reached a stage in your career where you can be on par in level with some of the people that you've always looked up to. And so first year is a huge achievement. Personally, I mean, I have a loving family, wife, teenage daughter and a cat. And my daughter is actually very interested interior design. And so she's an amazing person, very independent, very mature for rich, so really looking forward to what she achieves.

17:04

Speaker 2

And then personally and professionally, I think something I have to mention is, you know, when it comes from a different company like India and you land in the United States and this was 25 years back, I've never been outside India at that point. So it can be extremely challenging. And so you know, you have literally like starting to rebuild your life one step at a time. So it's not being smooth. It hasn't been smooth sailing all the time. But I'm just really proud of

what I've been able to achieve both personally and professionally over the last 25 years.

17:40

Speaker 1

What an amazing career. And you've got the energy to keep going and do some big things, man. So thank you. And gosh. And to our listeners, you're probably thinking, oh, here's Charlie and here's Dimesh and lead fellows. You know, yeah, we've been doing this a while, but you know what? Hopefully what you're hearing is here's our steps to get to where we are, which is mentoring, giving back, work on amazing projects. And yes, it's been an amazing highlight to be in the club of lead fellows. Technically, you have to have been a lead professional for 10 years or more. And there's some other requirements, but you can get this too. Okay, so let's talk about Park Hill and some of the projects you're working on today. What's a day in the life of you look like today?

18:21

Speaker 2

Yeah, sure. So Park Hill, for any of the listeners, they don't know, we are close to a 700 person firm. We do architecture and engineering. We've been around for about 80 years now. We're headquartered in Texas. And what is unique is though we are so big, we are very regional. So the majority of our offices are actually in Texas. And then we have the office in Oklahoma and one in New Mexico. We do a lot of sustainability, but it's also very challenging. And I wanted to make sure I point that out is because working in the western part of Texas is very different than working in a state like California or New York, where I'm not saying it's easy, but it's relatively not as challenging.

19:11

Speaker 2

And so when we are building or when we are designing a school in West Texas, the serenity is something that sometimes is not a word that you are comfortable using. And I had the last Greenbird. Texas actually did a great session on how you can actually change, how you should change your language when you're talking to certain clients who may not be as willing to talk about sustainability. Right. So that is something we face day to day. But we are still trying to push the envelope. We are still trying to make our projects as sustainable as we can. And to me, really, my past life, the way I look at it, has been a lot of collecting and refining my technical skills and my current role.

20:00

Speaker 2

I Almost look at it as like an application of what I've been learning so far in that

makes sense. A big part of my role is also being a resource to everyone. So doesn't matter if a project is personal in lead or not. I am a sustainability resource to all of our teams. And we have 25 plus different sectors. We do everything from site service, civil engineering, all branches of engineering. We do construction as well. We have an infrastructure wing, so we work on roadways, bridges, airports, everything really under the building industry. And so I get to actually work on a lot of different teams and a lot of different very interesting projects and something that I had not really looked at until now because most of my career has been focused on buildings.

20:51

Speaker 2

And while we are looking at, you know, what kind of concrete mixes should we be looking at when we are looking at bridges or roads? And so, you know, we signed up for the SE 2050 commitment which looks at, well, how can you actually start getting to net zero emissions on your structural systems by 2050? And so that kind of, you know, changes your outlook to things because you can talk about energy savings and water savings all day, but it's that whole embodied carbon calculation portion, right, which is slowly starting to come into focus for building industry. And so I'm really excited.

21:29

Speaker 2

You know, we have been signatories to the AI 2030 commitments for the last six years, but we recently signed up for SA 2050 as well as the AI materials pledge which looks at mostly interior materials on that get used in projects. So I mean, again, part of my role is to head those commitments to make sure that all the reporting is done in time. And so I obviously lead those efforts on this sustainable infrastructure side. We actually became a member of the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure last year and they are the ones who have created this rating system similar to leed, but it's for infrastructure projects called Envision. And so we have a couple of our staff here now have become ENVs, which are envisioned sustainability professionals, which is similar to lead aps, but on sustainable infrastructure.

22:27

Speaker 2

We recently became a member of Mindful Materials as well, which is this amazing organization that has been doing great work. They have made the cmf, which is the Kahan materials, Springworth, just doing amazing work in the material space. So obviously there's things tied to that we work on as well. You know, this was actually, we did not want to just keep, we don't want to just keep working on green building projects. We want to hold ourselves accountable as

well. And so last year we actually went to our first greenhouse gas inventory. And so this was a firm wide inventory of our carbon emissions. And so now we know what our carbon footprint is as a firm. And so the next step is to tackle those emissions, see how we can reduce those emissions. And then obviously we are continuing to do that every year.

23:18

Speaker 2

So we are starting it again for the previous year and then we'll obviously continue doing it in the future years as well. Another thing which again is actually tied to some of the achievements we talked about earlier is, you know, I'm a very metrics driven person. A big part of my career, my early career was spent doing energy modeling and daylighting analysis. And I just feel like as a design firm you have to have an in house building performance team. And so that's been a dream of mine since I started at Parkhill. And now I'm proud to say that we actually have a building performance team. We have two professionals that are dedicated to drawing, energy modeling, daylighting and embodied carbon analysis.

24:04

Speaker 2

I just feel that is such a crucial, that is such a critical piece because metrics driven design is definitely going to yield much better or more sustainable design than just designing something which is not really looking at what exactly is that percent savings we are looking at through using alert on sustainability measure. So that again I help lead that team as well. And beyond that, I do a lot of volunteering. I used to volunteer on the Austere Committee on the Environment which is coat. But now I spend most of my time with the USGBC and I sit on the USGBC Central Texas Regional Council. I'm also an advisor for something called GNfZ which is a global network for Xero, which is an organization that was created by Mahesh Ramanujan who is a past CEO of GBS AI. Beyond that, I'm a GDC mentor.

25:08

Speaker 2

And then I actually get a lot of people reach out to me on LinkedIn. These are like young professionals who are just getting into the game building industry and they just reach out to connect and for a short chat. So I've been doing a lot of unofficial mentoring, just meeting with people. I mean it's really honestly 15, 20 minutes of my time. But it can provide them with much needed answers. Right. And so if 15 minutes of my time is going to help them with the rest of their career, then you know it's time worth spent. Beyond that, something else I've been trying to do here within Parkhill is promote more people start

attending events and conferences such as greenbuild. And so you know, the first Year I joined, we had. We got approved to send four people to Greenbird, which was great.

25:58

Speaker 2

And then last year we actually had eight of us attending Greenblad. And the reason why I mentioned that I think it's important is because if you have a variety of disciplines, like if you are doing architecture, engineering and like civil, mechanical, landscape, all of that, I just think it's important for each of those disciplines to be represented at an international conference such as Green World, and then get all that collective knowledge back and then share it with your colleagues so I can keep on going. I wear a lot of hats, but hopefully that gives you a little bit of help all build.

26:38

Speaker 1

It's a lot of responsibility and I love that you make time to, you know, to support others, mentor others. Because you're right that 15 minutes has that ripple effect. Right. And it really could. You may never get the feedback, but it might have made a big difference. And, you know, it's just sharing wisdom. Right. Good advice. Sounds like you should. And no one wants to hear that, not even my. My kids. Right. Hey, let me share some experiences I've.

27:03

Speaker 2

Had kind of like that.

27:05

Speaker 1

And someone can opt in to that wisdom or not. So, yeah, you're doing some great work there. And, and I just love meeting your colleague 1. And for our listeners, we'll link to the other Park Hill lead fellow interview from December. So thank you for that. All right, let's talk about where are green buildings going next? Is there anything you're real excited about? What's coming next?

27:26

Speaker 2

And that's a good question. And there is, I think, a number of days which I think are coming up next. And this is the. We have an internal. It's like an intranet. And I try to post as much as I can around what I've learned through projects or through conferences. And so towards the end of last year, after we came back from Green Belt, I actually wrote a post around, you know, what were the

highlights? What were the trends that we saw at greenbuild? And some things which I think are coming up. And I saw a lot of talk about these. One, first is materials. Second is obviously lead version five, decarbonization resilient buildings and AI, for sure.

28:16

Speaker 2

And so materials, I mean, every reason, focusing on embodied carbon, choice of materials, looking at the overall act of materials, not just, you know, not just looking at VOCs, but let's go beyond that. Let's look at climate health and let's look at equity and things like that, which the industry had not really started looking at until now. So for sure, materials is something I see just being the talk for at least this next year or so. The other is, I mean, resiliency. I mean, not just in Texas, but across the country and worldwide. We are seeing, unfortunately, we've seen so many climate disasters that resiliency has obviously come into focus a lot. And locally here we had some horrible events in Texas and close to Austin where I am, and just like, you know, that discussion has started.

29:15

Speaker 2

I'm starting to see that not just within our practice, but other firms as well. And that again, internally, what we have been talking about, and I know others in the building industry are focusing on this as well, is there a way we can actually raise the minimum standard of care as building designers? So instead of just designing to the minimum code and minimum energy requirements, what if we actually start designing for the future? Right. What if we start designing for future climate scenarios? Because until we as designers start educating our clients, they may not even be thinking about it. Right. And so we are, we have internally created something called a resiliency task force, which is starting to look at that. So I think resiliency for sure is something that I see being discussed a lot more in the future.

30:10

Speaker 2

Other than that, I mean, AI, I know here generally you have a company as well that obviously focuses on AI. I'm interested to see where AI goes next. And then I mentioned Coolio, who's my colleague here. Also Lead fellow is big into cities and communities. And I see LEED at scale lead. Obviously the green building rating system was mostly tied to building design, but it is now starting to take off and starting to get bigger, like scaling up to include green building cities and community scale projects. And so I'm really excited, I was really excited to see that at Green Build as well. And I'm starting to see a lot more movement around

teams actually starting to think about applying green building principles not just to a single building at a time, but across larger projects. Man.

31:06

Speaker 1

Well, so good. And you're right, just resiliency. So many other great things you said in there. And then AI too, right? There's so much coming at us, but to our listeners, you're probably noticing the last few interviews I've had that word resiliency keeps coming up and maybe in a way were tested during the pandemic, but then you zoom out and you have great programs like Lead for cities and communities that do a better job of describing it. So I would agree. Maybe one of the new umbrellas is decarbonization maybe the other big umbrella is resiliency and with AI. Yeah, thanks for noticing. We're building schema AI and it's a fast forward tool for designers and owners and heck, even contractors and suppliers can use the data because I think the construction industry, there's not a lot of trust, right?

31:57

Speaker 1

It's the architect designs it, then the contractor counts things, the subcontractors count things. But then they add fluff, they add contingency. And if everybody does that, everything's costing way too much. So how do we get back to trusting some data that actually can be shared? Some of it may be even reused from past projects. And so I'm in the middle of it. I think it's going to help and let's not be afraid about it. So yeah. Anything else with volunteering? Anything else with just a peek into the future and then we'll go and talk to our rapid fire questions. I think.

32:32

Speaker 2

Yeah, I mean you rightly mentioned new version 5 and decarbonization because, you know, I, I was one of the peer reviewers for lead version 5 and I changed the peer reviewers. But when the public version was released, I made sure that I understood what was coming up next. And decarbonization obviously is one of the huge focus areas of Playroom 5. And so I'm really looking forward to how that shapes up in the future because I mean, again, as lead fellow, it kind of, I shouldn't say I'm at the end of my lead career. I almost see lead fellow getting a lead fellow as being like a restart of the lead journey. It's like you now have added responsibility. You want to make sure that you are actually helping drive the movement even more. I just mentioned that and yeah, you're right.

33:25

Speaker 1

It's, it's the new fire, that new spark and there's more work to do. But we've done a good job so far. All right, let's get to know you more. What would you say is your specialty or gift?

33:34

Speaker 2

I think, I mean this is not, this, I don't know if this is really tied to green buildings, but I'm a pretty soft spoken fellow, as you can tell from my voice. But I am also a very patient person. You know, I, I think that has helped me a lot in my career. So patience is a virtue which not a lot of people have. It's also something that takes a lot of time to learn and I've been fortunate that I've learned a new patient person over the years. We also At Parkhill, every new employee has to go through something called Clifton Strengths Assessment. So this is like a performance based assessment tool that was developed to help you discover your top five strengths or personality traits. And one of my top five strengths is empathy.

34:26

Speaker 2

And to me that is, you know, it starts getting, look, starts looking at more of your emotional side. Right. And it's something which I feel like is sometimes lacking in a lot of professionals. And I feel like it is really important not just in the sustainability industry, but in today's climate as well. Right. You just have to patience and empathy both to be able to just be a good sustainability professional, as a good designer. Other than that, I would say I think I'm pretty easy to work with. Modari. I love collaborating with different teams across different team members. I like to meet clients and colleagues where they are without like pushing myself into any discussion. And I love to discuss things. I like to, you know, just have a lot of brainstorming sessions. And so I've always believed something called discuss before dismiss. Right.

35:26

Speaker 2

So before you completely dismiss an idea, let's just talk about and if everybody agrees that's not a great idea, well that's fine, but let's give it that chance. And so I found that has helped me a lot in my career because sometimes I'm the only person around the table that wants to do something. And until you discuss it with everyone, and I've had a lot of successful notifications, learned I've been able to turn the table and make them actually agree with me. Because sometimes not everybody can easily visualize something that like you can. Right. Other than that, I mean, I was at Texas A and M doing my graduate studies. It's a great program by the way. If anybody listening wants to learn

more about it, please feel free to get in touch with me or look them up on their website.

36:15

Speaker 2

But what it does is like my background was architecture, but because I was doing the sustainability focused program, I actually was required to take courses in the mechanical engineering department. And so I had to do the mechanical fundamentals and I had to learn about HVC systems and how they work. Because if you're building and if you're building an energy model, just knowing about the building envelope, for example, as an architect is not, is obviously not sufficient. Right. You need to know how each and every one of those systems that are going to building actually works. And so I call myself like a half architecting, half mechanical engineer. And again in theory industry, that has worked very well. For me.

36:59

Speaker 2

So again, I don't know if these are specialties or gifts, but these are some of the traits, some of the personality traits or my strengths that I've been able to assess in my own life.

37:11

Speaker 1

Love that. Thank you for sharing. Do you have any good habits or routines that help you stay on point?

37:17

Speaker 2

Well, recently, and this is again I realized this later in my career, they start focusing on myself more. And so I used to be overworked, over, stressed working over the weekends and then I started taking time to focus on my personal health and well being, spending more time with family and friends and that is just something which makes you actually more focused and more productive and something that I've been preaching to whoever I can. At Parkin, we also have one of our collective values is called life balance and this is different from work life balance, which is something that we typically hear of. And that is what life balance, where it differs from work life balance is it recognizes that work is actually part of your life and you don't have to view it separately.

38:07

Speaker 2

And also to realize that work is important to us, but it's not everything. And so it has a big focus on prioritizing your health, well being and happiness. And it seems like it's easy to say and think about, it's difficult to put it into practice, but we have been doing it successfully and really proud of that. That's something that I've been following for the last couple of years. With that said, I am extremely obsessive about reading my emails and keeping track of my inboxes. And I shouldn't be reading, but I at least like to scroll through all my emails before I go to bed every day because I just cannot go to sleep without knowing what's in mind. And who knows, sometimes it might be something extremely important. And so it's better to know before the next day. Right?

38:57

Speaker 2

You don't have to like go into detail and reach each and every one of your emails. Just a quick scroll can sometimes help. I also like to keep my calendar up to date for the next month or so. It's not just for me, but just former colleagues. If they want to set up some time with me. That always helps. And then finally professional. Personally, one of my hobbies is I love to cook. And as my wife likes to say, that is my personal that's my meditation time. So when I'm cooking nobody disturbs me. I'm in my own zone and I can use that time to think about anything I want. Right? And if you know anything about Indian cooking, it's not quick. It takes, there's like five or ten different steps involved.

39:42

Speaker 2

So, you know, sometimes you're like in that process for an hour or two, but it does give you know, you can disassociate yourself from your day. You can think about something entirely different and again, promote everybody. Take up something like that with books, running, sports, whatever you're interested in. Find a hobby that kind of can help you just maybe, you know, they are maybe just go into that blank space, right, and just meditate and that can literally refresh you. Just like the 5 to 10 year thing can actually help you a lot.

40:20

Speaker 1

That's so good. Well, thanks for giving us a peek into what works for you, all those best practices. You know, I'm a fan of the bucket list. What are a couple things maybe on your bucket list?

40:31

Speaker 2

I mean, I don't really have a bucket list, but one thing or just travel wise. Me and my wife have been talking about traveling to Japan. It's a place that has always

fascinated me with their culture, their way of thinking, but their architecture as well. And we haven't done a lot of international travel. We have traveled within the US So just traveling globally is something that we would like to do. And then eventually after I retire, we'll see. Something I've been thinking of is I'm in, you know, being in the sustainability industry for so long and a lot of like architects I'm sure have the same dream is to kind of have their own place, right. Have this, it could be completely off grid, it could be up in the mountains or whatever you like.

41:18

Speaker 2

But just designing something for yourself and being able to kind of have this lead a very simple life, right. Is something that I would love to do sometime in the future.

41:30

Speaker 1

So. Great. Well, make sure you look me up when you play in Japan. I took my family there about a year and a half ago. Is amazing. So I love that. What a great bucket list. Just a few more things as we start to wrap up. Is there a book you'd recommend to our listeners?

41:45

Speaker 2

Not really a book. I mean I actually, I do a lot of traveling and so as I'm driving, I've actually started listening to a lot more podcasts the last five or so years. There are a couple of podcasts I can mention. One is called Climate Rising and this is by the Howard Business School. Another one is called Zero by Bloomberg Green. And then the third one is, it's called Energy Gang by Wood Mackenzie. And these are podcasts that kind of take you beyond the world of buildings most of the time and they expose you to the overall world of sustainability, energy, politics related to climate. And so it allows you to expand your thinking. And it has helped me to kind of, you know, gather this world view, if you will.

42:33

Speaker 2

And I think once you, once you get exposed to all these things and then you can literally bring a lot of that knowledge back and apply that to your day to day life and your projects. And so I keep expanding my list of podcasts every time I try to find something new. There is a podcast called Green Building Matters by this person called Charlie Chiketi, which loves and so surely add that to your list. I have actually started reading a book called the Ministry for the Future. It's by

Kim Stanley Robinson and it's a climate fiction novel, but it's about this again, imaginary organization that gets created to topple climate change in theater. And some of the books, I mean I've read and now have in my home library are Paul Hawkins's books, *Drawdown*, *Regeneration*.

43:25

Speaker 2

And I believe he's got a new book now which I need to get around Galvan. So there's a couple of things I want to chat.

43:32

Speaker 1

What great recommendations. We'll put links to those in the show notes. Is there anything as you look back on your career that you wish you'd have learned earlier?

43:41

Speaker 2

Something I've learned over the years and which I think is really critical not just in the green building industry, but if you're a professional, is networking and relationship building. Many times when you're new to the industry, you enter the room with 50 people. How do you start a conversation with someone that you've never met before? Right. And this will happen if you are ending an event or a conference. It's something that you are going to come across. That's a skill you learn gradually. But I would have liked to have, I would have liked to learn that earlier in my career. I'm pretty comfortable with it now. But that is definitely something that, the sooner I had gained that confidence and that skill to be able to just talk to anyone, I think would have definitely helped.

44:31

Speaker 2

And the other thing, and this is more so for people who are, you know, again, might have like a language barrier, like maybe English is not your first language. Similar to me, you know, when I was new, I had the knowledge, I knew, I knew things that maybe someone else did not, but I was not confident enough to talk about it. And so it's something that I've learned over the years as well is, you know, if you have the knowledge, if you have the skills, then do not hold back, be confident, speak up, share with thought, because you will be respected for that regardless of whether English is their course language.

45:08

Speaker 1

Thank you. Oh, so good. A lot of wisdom here. All right, we're wrapping up.

Last question. Someone listening is just jumping in to the green building movement. It's been good to you, it's been good to me. Any words of encouragement to someone just now jumping in?

45:21

Speaker 2

I would say it's the entire greenberley community has been great to me. It's a very welcoming community. So, yeah, just join us. There's still a lot of work to be done. Something I always encourage. Like I said, I do some. All the mentoring that I've done. I like to promote, I like to encourage especially young professionals to get involved with your local chapters, with your local communities, volunteer at events, start meeting people, start getting to know what others are working on. That is going to help you a lot in the future. The other thing is get accredited. I mean, this doesn't have to be lead. It could be anything that you are interested in, but that really helps you announce your knowledge base.

46:04

Speaker 2

But it also will make you more confident to talk about sustainability measures in the future and then feel free to reach out to me others in your network. It can be a bit daunting, but I found that at the same time, this newer generation which is coming out, they're actually a lot more confident than I was when I was 20. If I look back 20 or 25 years and then finally I'll just say I'm in. Be it. We are living in a crazy world, crazy time right now. So take time to slow down, take time to laugh, take time to spend time with friends and family. But most of all, be respectful of people around you. Be kind and be patient. And it's going to turn out great in the end.

46:44

Speaker 2

We all just need to keep working on it one step at a time, one day at a time. And yeah, I think that would be. Well, that would be my suggestion, my advice for anybody who's just starting in the industry.

46:58

Speaker 1

Amazing. Wow. Well, everybody make sure you connect with him as on LinkedIn. Check out all the great work at Park Hill now. A couple lead fellows there. If you're in Austin, Texas, look them up. You heard it. Reach out, Reach out to him, reach out to me. And welcome to the green building industry. Umesh. Thanks for being on the podcast today.

47:15

Speaker 2

Excellent. Have a nice thing thank you for.

47:19

Speaker 1

Listening to this episode of the Green Building matters podcast@gbes.com Our mission is to advance the Green Building movement through best in class education and encouragement. Remember, you can go to gbes.com podcast for any notes and links that we mentioned in today's episode, and you can actually see the other episodes that have already been recorded with our amazing guests. Please tell your friends about this podcast, tell your colleagues, and if you really enjoyed it, leave a positive review on itunes. Thank you so much and we'll see you on next week's episode.

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