

## **Breana Wheeler, BREEAM USA on Transforming Building Performance Through Science-Based Standards | Transcript**

Welcome to Green Building Matters, the original and most popular podcast focused on the green building movement. Your host is Charlie Cichetti, one of the most credentialed experts in the green building industry and one of the few to be honored as a LEED 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. Once a week, I interview a green building professional somewhere in the world and just kind of talk about their career, how they got to where they are. Today, we talk about the future. Got a really great guest today.

**00:49**

Charlie

I've got Breana with us. We're going to talk about everything and just what's going on with that program. How are you doing today?

**00:56**

Breana

I'm doing well. Thanks, Charlie, for having me on.

**00:59**

Charlie

I know we know each other through our green building circles over the years. Excited for you in this role. You've been in it for a while now. And I really literally have made a career around LEED and LEED. Did a good job keeping out this program for a long time. And then it seems like overnight, wow, our clients are calling, hey, we need this. I want to unpack that with

you and talk about how we can bring some more awareness to your team. So take us back though, where did you grow up and go to school?

**01:25**

Breana

I was born and raised in Reno, Nevada. I went to high school on the north shore of Lake Tahoe, so all four years there. A bit of a small town on that. And then I moved to San Francisco to do my undergrad education at San Francisco State University. I got my undergrad degree in geography. And along the way I spent two years of study abroad in England at the University of Bradford's peace studies department, which ended. Which means I ended up with a double degree, actually, geography and political science. So that was my undergrad. That's where I also met my wife. My wife's British. And so in 2004, I packed up and moved to London to settle in the UK. I was there for a decade, so kind of where I started my career.

**02:13**

Charlie

I love that. Curious during that time, had you heard of some of these programs that are out there? Because in a minute we got to talk about how you end up on the building side of things too. Maybe just tell us a little more about early career building on that big move to the UK. And then when did more buildings start showing up in your career?

**02:32**

Breana

When I landed in the UK, I didn't really have a plan. My life up to that point, I had a plan. And then it all kind of changed and I just kind of landed on my two feet in London. And initially it was just about getting a job and paying bills. But when I was looking for a role, I was looking at the company that I maybe wanted to work for. And I was thinking more about their values and what I was interested in. I found a job with Skanska Infrastructure Development. Skanska does a lot of different things, but one of their pillars,

infrastructure development, was all about design, build, operate and return infrastructure projects to, mostly to governments. In the UK it was hospitals and roads and a lot of different things.

**03:20**

Breana

I was hired as a receptionist. Nothing glamorous there, but basically I needed the job. But I really liked Skanska's approach to a lot of things. I liked their sustainability approach. And even though that wasn't what I thought I'd be doing with my life with them, I was like, okay, this is a good company to work for. I started as a receptionist. Within a couple of months I was an administrative assistant. And then within a couple of months of that, I became the executive PA to two directors and eventually the executive vice president. So again, it was just, I really liked the company. But I was an admin and organizing lives. And I was working in this company, thinking about what I wanted in my bigger life.

**04:04**

Breana

I decided to go back to school and do a master's degree. I enrolled at King's College London and my EVP sat me down right before I was about to take my sabbatical to go do my research. And he just said to me, he's clearly you don't want to just be an admin. What do you want? What do you want to do? And so I laid it out for him. I want to do sustainability for our company. Like, we're on the periphery of most of the most. Tskovsky was focusing on construction impacts. I said, but we're having real world impacts in what we finance and in what we pursue. I'd like to do more in this field. And he went, okay, when you get back, you got the job.

**04:42**

Breana

It was kind of Serendipitous in that way. I went and did my master's. I did my master's in essentially political ecology. It was globalization,

environmental problems. I did my research on basically how resources are allocated using Southern Africa as my test, my study area. But anyway, when I came back to Skanska, that's when I started my career and that was 2007. But this was very much around an organizational impact. It could have been, it could have been any company really. And in the UK there's a really clear career path for folks like that, corporate sustainability people at that time to have an, a career path, a, a competency based program where you could learn about environmental management and how to apply that in any circumstance.

**05:37**

Breana

So the fact that I started in a construction company is quite funny given where I've ended up now. But that wasn't my intention. So that was kind of the start. I started learning about how organizations manage environmental impacts, risk management opportunities, how you use systems and processes like ISO14001 to evaluate and provide a framework for essentially I think at the time it was reducing harm. I wouldn't say it's always a positive, but that was kind of the kickstart of the career for the decade that I was in London then I wasn't at. I moved on from Skanska, I went to a company called Michelle, which was design and engineering and then onto Atkins which is now SNC Lavlin. So design and engineering, definitely big infrastructure projects. But always looking at it from an organizational perspective.

**06:33**

Breana

I wasn't on the projects themselves. It was, yeah, it was about the organization. It was, buildings were of interest, but it was part its only part of it. One of the things is occupiers. We were tenants where all those organizations are knowledge based. The parts that I worked for, particularly Tchanska. I kind of came at it from a tenant perspective and for environmental management as a tenant I needed to understand how to

manage, measure and manage our impacts as a tenant across many different sites. At one point in one of my companies, I was looking after over 40 office locations in the UK, just me. And that wasn't. It was considerable. But having to manage like how do you do that? What are the methodologies again, frameworks were really helpful.

**07:25**

Charlie

As you can say, I love that you had that organizational and the ISO and just kind of looking at from a company footprint, not just building. I'm sure that really helped you? Anything else there? Early career?

**07:38**

Breana

It was just a, the sustainability wasn't always at the front of mind. I mean, there's this kind of concept that Europe is really far ahead of the US and, but we're all at different parts of the journey. And I would say the UK was actually even behind Europe. There's definitely some stages there. But I think the thing that really helped me was having a really clear pathway and professional organization that I could look to for competency based, for training for accreditation. There's an organization called the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, which I've been a member of for many years now, that basically gave me a pathway to recognizing my work experience, my competency in that way. And I've been able to progress my membership to really show that over time.

**08:31**

Breana

I'm a full member of iima. I'm also a chartered environmentalist with the Society for the Environment. And that I think that's been really helpful to kind of help guide my career a little bit on that too.

**08:45**

Charlie

Fantastic background and the leaps of faith you took to go there and be kind of curious, just the graduate programs there versus the US which have probably come a long way. And it's just life's about timing and things happen for a reason. Thank you for that background. I like to follow up with mentors. A mentor is someone we read their material, we see them from afar on stage. Sometimes it's someone that meets with us, has lunch, challenges us, opens doors. Have you had any mentors along the way?

**09:14**

Breana

When I became an executive PA to two directors, these directors were incredible women. Two women, very different people, had started their careers in heavily male dominated industries, so finance in particular, one was a lawyer. And both of them had been groundbreaking in their own way. And they were so interesting to see the different pathways, the different choices they had made to kind of forge their career at a time when women certainly weren't very widely accepted. And yet how did they maintain themselves? How did they maintain their sense of self, but also adapt and work within those systems? And they were incredibly instrumental to me thinking about what did that mean in any kind of career path? How do you make your choices? Where do you push, where do you pull? And so they.

**10:19**

Breana

I think the thing about mentoring is that it's not about finding a pathway or somebody who's followed a pathway that you then want to replicate. Right. It's more about what you can learn from that. And when you're looking at your own choices, thinking about how you want to forge on from there, but you're blazing your own too. And I think that they really gave me the support to think about what my strengths were. They were also really honest about what I needed to work on. This is kind of weird because obviously I was American in the UK, which had its own facet. I had

immigrated there. It was a privileged immigration for sure because I spoke English and you know, and I'm also a redhead, so it's not like I didn't blend in. But being American in a UK business corp culture, I had to learn a lot. And I see it even now. Like we have very distinct corporate cultures. So they were incredibly helpful for me to think about as a woman, what that might mean in a very male dominated space, but also what could I do differently? And I think they were hugely instrumental and I'm immensely grateful to them for the support they gave me early in my career.

**11:41**

Charlie

They sound amazing. That's so cool. That's why I love asking this mentor question. It's good to give them a shout out, maybe. Let's start stacking this sustainability career, these buildings. Obviously we've had programs like LEED now for 24 plus years, but then there's bre, which has been around for a long time, a lot longer. And so can you start getting us a little more up to speed on present day?

**12:06**

Breana

After a decade in the uk, my family and I decided to move back to San Francisco. My family's been in San Francisco for many generations now, and so it's always been home. And it's not a bad place to live, despite what anybody else might say about it. From the outside, I promise you it's an awesome place. But we decided to move back to San Francisco and once again kind of landed on my feet and needed to find a job and pay bills and do all the boring stuff. While I started out, what next, I came with no plan, so I got a 10th job. Everybody has a backup job. And for everybody who's listening to this, you should always have a backup job.

**12:42**

Breana

For some people that's likewaitressing or staff working in restaurants, for

me, it's always been office administration. I've always just been able to do that. I got a temp job. I ended up getting a temp job at one of the most prominent skyscrapers in San Francisco. 345 California St. I was just working as a receptionist and got to talk to their chief engineer. Fantastic man. I am very enthusiastic about LEED. I love this building. We're talking about sustainability and he starts telling me all about this. And I said, what's LEED? And he about fell over. He was like, what do you mean, what's LEED? I'm like, listen, I worked in sustainability at that point.

**13:25**

Breana

I worked in sustainability for almost a decade and I was like, I've never even heard of this thing. Like, what is this? So he explained it to me and I was like, oh, systems. Systems thinking, right? Nothing new there, right? Frameworks, ISO14001 and I became really interested. I was like, isn't that an interesting thing? Because I had found, like in contrast to the UK, there was no other real sustainability professional network here, but I found it in buildings. And I thought, oh, okay, here's a community of people focused on real estate. Interesting. I hadn't really thought about it in the aggregate. Okay, well, what does that mean? I started learning about LEED. I ended up working for the consultant who was doing the LEED work for that building and others. And in the end, they were the ones.

**14:15**

Breana

We ended up working with BRE to bring Bria to the United States. I became part of the founding team. So with Bram, we launched in 2016 and I basically built the architecture of the program. So the operational aspects of certification here, but also the technical translation or adaptation of the standards. I mean, I spent a year doing LEED consulting work. So 26 buildings were certified at that time. A huge, like, huge project because it was a campus. It was so complicated, but so it was kind of a bit of trial by fire. But what it did is it gave me this really interesting view into real estate.



And then I got really excited because I can see this as a huge area from an impact perspective. What I wanted out of my career was impact.

**15:03**

Breana

And real estate actually became a really nice focus area for that and systems that make sense. So with BREAM, I got really excited about it because it was science based and it was very much. It was very much a comprehensive system in that way. There were certain things that made more sense to me than, say, LEED did, but it was just really exciting to bring a program that I felt really could have the impact that we needed to, particularly on existing buildings. And that's where we focused initially. I'm an existing building fan. It's like I tell people, I'm like, listen, I totally, that's my niche. That's what I love. I love existing buildings, particularly historic ones. I love chief engineers who love their buildings.

**15:49**

Breana

I really admire people who really appreciate these buildings over time. We brought Briam and kind of, I've been working Briam ever since.

**16:01**

Charlie

I love existing buildings. I built my career on greening up existing buildings and I love BRIEM in use. We'll talk more about that. But I didn't know all that because again as being a sustainability consultant and educator for many years, it just seemed like, okay, where did this breakthrough happen to bring this program really into the US and you've had a key part of that. So I love that. That's really cool. And that's a great place to start it right there in California. Existing buildings, existing building mandates. To the layperson listening that really isn't as familiar with BRE in this years of research. You mentioned science back. Just talk at a high level what do we

need to know about bre and maybe give us a peek on some cool things you're working on now.

**16:44**

Breana

Yeah, so bre is a 100 plus year old building science research organization. So we're headquartered in the uk, we have operational centers here in the US in China and in Ireland for our European business. But ultimately our organization over that 100 plus years has been about researching and understanding built environment challenges to find solutions, science driven solutions. So in that time there's really not any part of the built environment we haven't touched. So you know, kind of in the late 1980s when sustainable development became a term, that's when our researchers started to think about buildings through a sustainability lens. Well, what is sustainability development, that academic term? You know, for those of you who are old school, picture the three pillars, right? Economic, social, environmental. What does that actually mean for building?

**17:36**

Breana

And for us that became if we repurpose the three pillars, sustainability in buildings was about reducing environmental impact, supporting and protecting occupant health and well being and also financial viability and assets that create value. And value being an interesting word. Right. In commercial real estate that could be cash. In an education environment it could be good educational outcomes. Value is somewhat relative in that way. But of course in the late 1980s, there was nothing anywhere in the world that really defined what that looked like in a building. And that's where Brian was born. We launched in 1990. So was the first green building certification program in the world. And the idea was to recognize the sustainability ladder. Define excellence. That absolutely was part of it.

**18:30**

Breana

But also to define kind of the, in a way, I guess, the shades of green that come along with that we knew that there were decisions being made that made projects more sustainable. The question was to what degree? So Briem really started out as a way of looking at the shades of green and sort of how projects were moving towards what could be defined as the most sustainable. And over that I mean, so we've been operation over 30 years. We now have a standard for every phase of the built building life cycle. So we have new construction, which is obviously for ground up development. We have in use for existing buildings. And then we have a program called Refurbishment and fit out which covers everything from whole building renovation all the way to tenant improvements.

**19:13**

Breana

It's all about that kind of phase. Looking over that and saying in each aspect there is an opportunity to understand and drive better sustainable outcomes. But it's all performance based. It's all about looking at that performance and then using certification as a way of being transparent about the impact that business decisions made. Again, not necessarily perfection. There's a broad range here. But where is sustainable value present in these projects? And really that there are business decisions made. I love the term value engineering because it just seems to me that everything of value gets taken out. I mean, what is that? In this case it's really about that transparency of those decisions and how that changes the sustainability impact of that project or building.

**20:04**

Charlie

I've witnessed this over the last probably five years. A lot of European real estate owners maybe started to say, hey, I really would like this brand can

be an option for my properties here. But I mean, has it shifted? What's kind of the current state of the market? Are you seeing more US developers, US Real estate investment trust? Just anyone and everyone? I mean, who's really pursuing this right now?

**20:25**

It's a lot of different groups. European investors are very excited about this because they know and trust Briem. They know it's the gold standard. They trust the process. The rigor in the process is really important. One of the, one of the things that's required to get our certification is. Is the use of a licensed assessor to go on site to verify the performance. And that level of trust is super important to lots of people now. Because. Because the way that sustainability certification has really shifted over time. Like 10 years ago, you would sit the pursuit of certification would be about marketing. You find your best asset, you'd shine it up, you'd get the certification, you'd be like, look at this great thing.

**21:11**

Breana

But now we're seeing certification starting to be integrated into that asset value. The importance of that rating and the integrity of that rating has become super important. Much more so. And I would say it's almost not quite stealth, I think. I think certification started to be used in a way that perhaps caught some by surprise in that. But that process became really important here in the US though. One of the things that we have offered has been the ability to. Well, two. Two things. One of the types of assets that we work with, BRAM and use in particular, offers a pathway for assets like industrial multifamily, which essentially are triple net leases, right? So owners have they own building, but they don't control operations. And that is unique for. For Bram is the program.

**22:06**

Breana

Almost all of the rating systems, in fact, all of the rating systems focus on the operational aspects of it. If you don't have control over that, though, there's. There's very little incentive or even return. We think about the term split incentive, right? There's very little reason to invest in it. If I can't control it, why am I measuring it? Why am I. Why am I kind of talking about it and investing time and energy on something I can't fix? So BREAM and Youth offers that pathway. And so sectors like industrial, which again, pre pandemic, just didn't really do much around sustainability, very limited to certain companies basically all of a sudden had an option where the alignment of the standard.

**22:49**

Breana

It was not only about being able to access certification to be transparent about performance, but it actually aligned with where there was a real appetite for being able to invest. They could focus on things that they managed and controlled and put aside the things that they didn't. So Briam is set up to be able to do that. And that coincided kind of with industrial, with investors piling into industrial and other sectors outside office and bringing their expectations for sustainability, performance and transparency with them. Your traditional office investors came in, have come into industry and said, "I want you to report X, Y and Z." And industry like, no, that we can't do that and. Well, why not? It's been this tug of war. BREem provides an opportunity to do that, to provide transparency that makes sense for those sectors. That can translate to the need that the investors have for that transparency and for that trust in performance while still being able to move through. BREAM is really spread out into a number of different sectors that traditionally sustainability hasn't really been a huge part of. We also have an office, so that's there too. But, industrial is particularly a sweet spot. And when we think about square footage of the existing building stock, this is what we're talking about. I mean, industrial is the thing. One final point on that too has been about the journey.

**24:21**

Breana

We know existing buildings have a, as a stock has like a long way to go to meet net zero goals in 2050. It's a huge challenge. Part of that is being able to understand where these buildings are now. And going back to the shades of green, what does that mean? Like where are these buildings today? Where did they need to be in a certain amount of time depending on their investment strategy? We work with all different types of funds. Everything, not everything's going to be perfect, but how do we get these buildings moving on this conveyor belt from lets even say not certifiable under our program, which we expect 75% of buildings to be able to achieve a BREAM rating. So that's kind of formidable if they can't even do that. But you know, then within that, moving that up and along the pathway to kind of continue generating value. So I love it.

**25:13**

Charlie

And I know Grez, as portfolios report out and compare themselves to their peers, attract investor dollars, that's helps her too. But I see the near-shoring phenomenon with all these warehouses and the Americas. I know that's where you're getting a lot of certification work there. What are some of your proudest accomplishments? What's on the highlight reel?

**25:32**

Breana

I guess career wise it's seeing Bram success in the U.S. I would say when we first started, the idea that sustainability was about risk and opportunity was not a thing in the United States. I think back to it now and I'm like coming from my early career, right in this background of environmental risk and opportunity is just viewing business risk through this lens and applying it that just wasn't on the cards when we first landed and that has really shifted. I think the pandemic brought that home.

**26:07**

Breana

The pandemic felt like this black swan event that nobody anticipated how it would impact and yet everybody is then like, yeah, but we're looking at climate risk and we know climate change is coming and yet we're also doing nothing or not enough, let's say, okay, we need to fix this. So you know, seeing our message, shifting the perception of what certification can and should be, it should be about transparency. This is about risk management at its heart, but really this is about opportunity. Climate change and climate risk is really scary in some ways if we focus on the negative. But this is also one of the biggest economic opportunities that we have. And BREAM certification is being used not only to manage the risk, but to show that opportunity.

**26:59**

Breana

So that's my biggest work was when for my master's dissertation I achieved a distinction in my master's thesis, which is really great. I did a lot of work there and it was I was really proud of that. The master system in the UK is great. It's a one year program and the research aspect was really good. I spent time in southern Africa, did some other things there and then personally, my 13 year old kid, why I have a teenager. It's joyful. Middle school is just one of the funniest ages. It's sassy, it means these kids I look at them and I'm thinking what a world you're coming into. But at the same time it's a joy, it's a joy to watch.

**27:47**

Charlie

I've got three boys, they're 16, 13 and 11. So I feel.

**27:51**

Breana  
Bless you.

**27:53**

Charlie

13 and sassy, but good stuff. I love it. All right, well, before we talk about the future, just you know, what would help this movement especially here in the US and BREAM, I mean do you need more BREAM aps, do you just do more feasibility studies, what would help you?

**28:10**

Breana

I think the market is growing. We're always looking for Briam professionals who bring building expertise and we teach them how to use BREAM as a lens to do evaluation. There's two types of professionals for us. The advisory professional is your traditional consultant who's providing client advice and trying to help them achieve their Goals, but also assessors. The assessor work is really critical to our certification and it's the independent verification of the performance being claimed. It's a different kind of beast than being an AP. I liken it to an AP getting the client what they want. The assessor tells the client what they need to hear. Not always the easiest kind of question. But the assessor is a critical part of that. And with the growth with S.P.R.I. Not only for our existing buildings, but for new construction as well, we're always looking for organizations who have the chops and understanding to bring that to their and join our network for that. The growth, I think really exciting, has been to see again, different sectors utilizing this and what they continue to utilize this for Sustainable finance is a big growing piece and it's interesting. I know there's been a lot made recently of financial firms pulling out of fans and other organizations. But the way I look at it is that once you see climate risk, you can't unsee it. No bank in the world is backing off. They may be backing off of their public commitments in this way, but there is no way they're backing off the biggest business risk they have to asset value in real estate.



**29:49**

Breana

It's not happening. I look at sustainable finance and I expect this will grow. And we see the most sophisticated clients of ours using sustainability as a way of accessing cheaper capital. They're really utilizing this in really exciting ways and lenders are on board with that. I think that's the thing that we're looking at kind of towards the future is how sustainable finance is going to evolve as well. Hopefully it'll just become finance. I love that. The day when I don't have to say sustainable finance and it's just finance will be a good one for all of us.

**30:26**

Charlie

A great day. But you're right, we more than ever have to connect. Where is some of the money for these initiatives that we know we need to be doing? So let's talk more about the future. I love to ask my guests, Breana, is there anything you're excited about in the future of this sustainability movement, green building movement? Anything you're reading up on now you're kind of excited about?

**30:46**

Breana

I guess for BREAM, I'm really excited because we will be launching our version seven this year. We're launching version seven and are going to update all three of our building standards. We're starting with new construction and it's really exciting. What's, what's coming down the line. A couple things that we're doing with that. We're adjusting our metrics, how we measure, and then award credits, the basis for which we award credits, essentially at this time, we always focused on carbon. That's been critical. And we've been looking at carbon emissions per square meter, per square foot, however that's being measured. But we're moving to a dual metric for

version seven in new construction. So energy use intensity and carbon use intensity, we know this is really critical.

**31:31**

Breana

BREAM's always been a kind of envelope first building efficiency, first standard. The way that our calculations and our methodologies work really put that right. Like you couldn't build an inefficient building and throw a bunch of solar on it and then give a high five from us. Like that didn't work like that. But we really think that bringing out the dual metrics is a really important part of bringing visibility to the tension between energy use intensity and the carbon aspects that go with that. We're elevating embodied carbon out of the LCA. LCA has always been an important part of BREAM. It's critical for well over 15 years now, but we're elevating the embodied carbon out of that. It sits alongside operational carbon to measure and again to award credits.

**32:19**

Breana

We're balancing those aspects and then we're bringing in new minimum standards. And for us, a minimum standard, if we think about a prerequisite like we have in LEED. A prerequisite is a floor. It sets the basis by which all projects have to meet before they can start participating. What Bream does is we bring in minimum standards which function as a cat. They're linked to specific ratings rather than the whole program. And so for versions of a new construction, we've got new ones. For our outstanding rating, which is our top rating, essentially no fossil fuel combustion on site, no refrigerants or refrigerants with an emission rate below 1,000 kilos of CO<sub>2</sub> per kilowatt, using a methodology that we created, and we are linking life cycle assessment completion also to those minimum standards.

**33:16**

Breana

So for outstanding, they have to have an LCA at all project stages. And then for excellence, which is one step down, they need to have completed at least one of those stages. Pretty the refrigerants thing we feel is incredibly critical to talk about, particularly as grids green. There's been a lot of change in emphasis on that. Well, if the grid's greening refrigerants are going to become a more outsized portion, we're really addressing it. Oh, and we're also bringing in water into our carbon metrics, which is an interesting place to go with that's really exciting. There's a lot coming. New construction first and then our other programs will follow.

**33:54**

Charlie

Busy. That's amazing. And I know our team at SIG loves working with you and on all things Bram. Let's get into our rapid fire part of the podcast interview. Brown is what would you say is your specialty or G Systems thinking?

**34:11**

Breana

Holistic solutions. I think where you analyze these problems, you consider the interconnected parts, how a decision in one place impacts another. I think that's a really critical part of understanding and approaching the challenges that the built environment faces and understanding the trade offs that might come with that and pushing that forward. Systems thinking is really critical.

**34:35**

Charlie

That's great. Do you have any good habits, routines, rituals that help you stay on point?

**34:40**

Breana

I'm an early morning person. I think that really helps. No, no. Knock on the night owls. I was also a night owl at one point, but. But I think getting up and setting my day to be intentional and thinking about what I want out of that day, what's going to happen is a. It is a good thing I'm a big proponent of taking 10 minutes, sit there and think about what you want to accomplish and then take a deep breath, put on a playlist that really is going to motivate you. I oscillate between trance music and like hard rock and other things that just kind of drive me. But I think that's a. It's a good starting place. Being an early morning person, I like the early morning.

**35:20**

Charlie

I was going to comment. I'm on the east coast, you're on the west coast. You had a lot of good energy early this morning for the interview. As we get to know each other more, I'm a fan of the bucket list. Not everybody has a bucket list. That's okay. Some it's adventure or travel, maybe read a book, but I don't know. What are a couple things maybe on your bucket list?

**35:40**

Breana

Well, I love traveling, absolutely love it. So top of the bucket list is visiting the Galapagos Islands. That's been on the list for a really long time. And having lived in Europe for a decade, I had other things going on and areas, so I haven't made it yet. But I'm hoping as my kid gets older, this will be one. And also returning to Botswana with my kid, I would love to show him. My wife and I took a trip there to the Okavango Delta and it is absolutely just one of the most stunning places on earth. So if you haven't gone and you're considering it, I absolutely, highly recommend it. But I think returning there with my kid is. It's a different thing.

**36:24**

Breana

Being able to share that with my child I think is kind of is something I really want to do. Not just for myself, but for him too.

**36:33**

Charlie

Oh, wow. Thank you for sharing. Those sound like amazing places to go visit and immerse yourself. It's kind of keep moving here. Books. Is there a recent book? It doesn't have to be about buildings you'd recommend to our listeners. If not a book, a podcast or documentary, what would you recommend?

**36:48**

Breana

I saw a guy named Peter Zahan speak in 2023 at a NAOP conference and he did this huge talk based on essentially the collapse of globalization. And I'm not sure I totally subscribe to everything that he said, but he wrote a book called the End of the World Is Just Beginning, Mapping the Collapse of Globalization. And it's basically what he sees as the complete rollback of the economic world that we've known since World War II. But most importantly for my generation, for our generation of professionals, it's the only world we've known. Globalization as an inevitable thing, whatever those consequences. And as someone who's been an international person most of my life, it's quite a prospect to consider what he sees as coming. So a little scary, but incredibly thought provoking around supply chains.

**37:45**

Breana

I think, like I said, I saw him in 2023 and kind of seeing what's been happening since then has been an interesting way. I just started getting into the book. It's not too far off actually what his talk was, but very thought provoking. And, and for those who are interested in economics, it's a great book to read.

**38:05**

Charlie

What a great recommendation. We'll put links in the podcast, shownotes to the book. Just a couple more things as you look back on your career, is there any advice you wish you would have received early in your career?

**38:15**

Breana

I think the first thing is to think holistically. I didn't know at the beginning of my career really how to put together a business case. I knew what I thought mattered as a professional. And how that drives. But I really didn't have the language to communicate that to decision makers. And it was a harder road than I think it needed to be. So for sustainability professionals like, I love it. We get into conversations, we start talking about CO2 emissions and kilowatts and like all these things that like finance people just glaze over and are just like, I don't know what that means, but if we can translate that into operational savings and other language that speaks to those decision makers all of a sudden it changes everything.

**39:01**

Breana

And so I wish I had known that a little bit earlier and I had been more thoughtful about learning outside of my discipline. Learn the language of finance in real estate, get to know how the money works, import as importantly. But learn to be multilingual, let's say, in that and how to build relationships, cross departmental relationships. That's a really critical piece. And I wish I had known that a little bit earlier. I would have probably had more success even earlier than I did.

**39:33**

Charlie

All right, so my closing question as we wind down, let's say someone

listening is just getting really inspired by your story. Maybe they've made a big move even from one country to another, but what if they're just now getting into this green building movement? Any words of encouragement for them?

**39:52**

Breana

Don't give up. Don't give up. This is the most dynamic and amazing professional community, I think, of any type. We are probably one of the most supportive and open of any type. If you find yourself not really sure what to do, reach out. We are really collaborative. My experience is that most professionals, even at different organizations that might be competing are willing to share. So join those organizations, join these groups, connect with other professionals in this way through ULI or NAOP or other organizations like that, to find that community and lean in together. We all learn together in this way and we've actually the focus of being, I don't know, learning from each other has been really helpful.

**40:49**

Breana

So when you're there, it's going to be a harder time as we're kind of the shift with real estate we're focusing now on value creation. You know, learn to speak that other language, but really lean into this community because we're a great bunch of people.

**41:05**

Charlie

We sure are. And I love that. Don't be shy, but don't give up. Just ask. You do get that instant sense of community so well. Thank you for telling us your story. I'm fired up. This is going to be an amazing day. I hope everyone listening really enjoyed this. Please connect on LinkedIn with Brianna. Check out version 7 coming later this year. And I just want to say thank you for spending time with us. This is amazing.

**41:27**

Breana

Thanks for the opportunity, Charlie. It's been fun.

**41:31**

Charlie

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