

Sustainable Design Collective

Thursday 19th May 2022 – Steelcase showroom

Core Team:

Harsha Kotak, WOD; Joanna Knight, WOD; Ella Fathi, Oktra;
Georgia Elliott-Smith, Element 4

Collective Members:

Angela Dapper, Grimshaw; Laura Wardrope, JLL; Asif Din, Perkins & Will;
Rhiannon Laurie, Gensler; May Fawzy, MF Studio / BIID;
Dicky Lewis, White Red Architects; Lucy Bagshaw, TP Bennett; Emily King, BDP;
Gurvinder Khurana, M Moser;
Natasha Hewlett, Peldon Rose; Ana Rita Martins, Woodalls Design;
Nigel Tresise, Align; Deepak Parmar, MCM; Fritha Selwyn-Jones, Sketch Studios;
Jennie GreenWalker, MAA Architects; Dom Pegram, Salt & Pegram;
Jennifer Russell, Bureau Group

Supporters: Shaw Contract; Steelcase; Sedus UK; Orluna LED; Workplace Insight

Purpose:

A 'think tank' group committed to acting as a collective within the workplace design community to identify developments and 'best practice' relating to sustainability.

This report highlights some of the points raised during the two hour discussion. We have also flagged some key potential outcomes for the future.

Meeting Three: Driving Circularity

This meeting was focussed on the Circular Economy and initiatives to promote greater reuse.

Steelcase colleagues also joined from the US!



“The circular economy is an evolution of the way the world produces and consumes both goods and services. The circular model redefines the economy around principles of designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use for as long as possible.

Equally vital are restoring the world’s wilderness, building regenerative agricultural systems, using renewable materials, and shifting to renewable energy sources.”
Chatham House – June 2021

The circular economy is based on three principles, driven by design:

- Eliminate waste and pollution
- Circulate products and materials (at their highest value)
- Regenerate nature

Ellen Macarthur Foundation – web site

The Three ‘P’s



Places:

“The pandemic has amplified client requests for reuse. They recognise that there is limited certainty about future requirements and what they will need from the workplace, furniture, furnishings and fitout.”

“This uncertainty means that clients are signing shorter leases. This isn’t necessarily leading to waste as they are saying “we’ll take what’s already there.””

“There major issues relating to installation. Techniques and materials used impact on whether fittings, such as flooring coverings, can be reused in the future.”

“We, as designers, need to be more mindful and stipulate how products and finishings are to be installed.”

“Economics mean that subcontractors want to be ‘in and out’ quickly and get onto the next job. This approach can limit consideration for future reuse.”

“We need to include precise specifications and instructions for installation requirements. It is potentially a major ‘power’ we have.”

“We need to educate clients about consideration of timescales – ‘fast’ can have a significant impact on the ability to source reuse products and installation techniques applied.”

“Specification of O&Ms needs to include disassembly instructions. Perhaps this needs to be built into the lease or even potentially building regulations?” “Perhaps we should have sustainable building control?”

“There needs to be cross sector education and training. Clients, Agents, Project Managers, QSs all affected parties.”

“We can also learn from other industries such as (ironically) the oil and gas sector. Decommissioning plans were part of the oil platform construction programme.”

“Many problems start with how landlords are structuring financial deals with incentives for new fitout. Lease structure also needs new thinking.”

“Landlords offer capital contributions to incoming tenants, which incentivises behaviour to purchase new each time a new lease is entered into. Leases could be restructured to spread that capital contribution across the term of the lease, through deductions to monthly sums/service charges, rather than one up-front payment, which would change the behaviour of how that money is utilised by tenants.”

“When a landlord creates a CatA+ building, there could be included, within a Lease, an obligation that the inbound tenant must retain the existing FF&E as a condition of the Lease.”

Products / Materials:

“Manufacturers supply assembly drawings so they should also be supplying disassembly instructions.”

“There’s an urgent requirement for a universal, open source registry for all products as a ‘passporting’ system. Current lack of easily identifiable product and material information can limit reuse.”

“Storytelling is important to acceptance of reuse. Staff can be proud that items have been reused.”

“Some manufacturers do take back products but generally don’t reuse. They are passed onto charities or recycled.”

“Some manufacturers are starting to appoint ‘licenced’ remanufacturers.”

“Product design approach must consider the ease and simplicity for future changes. Reupholstery of chairs, for example, without necessarily needing specialist contractors.”

“Foam in soft furnishings is a huge issue. Non petro-chemical materials without the chemical retardants will be a major big innovation but doesn’t account for all of the legacy product.”

“Tax breaks, accounting ‘write offs’ and fiscal structures in general are detrimental to reuse and the circular economy.”

“Should an eco-tax be applied to all virgin material products?”

“Changes in taxation could offer significant benefits across the sector.”

People:

“A universal carbon tax will force change and create new jobs and opportunities.”

“Currently sustainability is too often a marketing story – it needs to be genuinely a direction of travel.”



A Women in Office Design Initiative

FUTURE ACTIVITIES FOR SDC

At the end of the meeting, there was considerable enthusiasm for future activities for the Collective. It's so important that we can help educate and contribute to making positive changes.

The Collective will be seeking to identify how it can have the most influence, develop a clear strategy and 'road map' for future activities.

We will be looking to invite representatives from a number of associated sectors: quantity surveyors; project managers; developers and agents; clients.

We will be liaising with other organisations, such as LETI, for learning and collaboration.

FOOTNOTE:

The Sustainable Design Collective meets every two months. Each meeting addresses different initiatives designed to tackle the impact on our environment.

A summary document will be published after each meeting which will be hosted on the Sustainable Design Collective's web site – an example of knowledge sharing.

We welcome comment and contributions from the office design sector.

www.woduk.com/sdc