

## Sensitivity to Place and the Environment with LEED Fellow Gary Gene Olf | Transcript

Announcer ([00:00:02](#)):

Welcome to Green Building Matters, the podcast that matters for green building professionals. Learn insight in green buildings as we interview today's experts in LEED and WELL. We'll learn from their career paths, war stories and all things green because green building matters and now our host and yes, he has every LEED and WELL credential. Here's Charlie Cichetti,

Announcer ([00:00:33](#)):

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Charlie ([00:00:58](#)):

Yes, everyone. Welcome to the next episode of the green building matters podcast. I'm your host Charlie Cichetti. We've got another green building professional and a LEED fellow with us, Gary Gene Olf old coming to us from Dallas, Texas. He's FAIA he's the president at GGO architects and I can't wait to get into his story. Gary, welcome to the podcast.

Gary ([00:01:18](#)):

Thank you Charlie.

Charlie ([00:01:20](#)):

You know, as we're recording this, we're in some strange times, but you and I have already been brainstorming a little bit about what happens when we get through this and come out of it. I think we all just need to be thinking right now. What does all this make possible? And that's where I want a little bit, ask you about some things coming around the corner. But Gary, with all my guests, I ask

Gary ([00:01:39](#)):

What's your origin story? So where'd you grow up and where'd you go to school? Grew up in Wisconsin near Milwaukee, so as a kid, you know, just the plain plains of Wisconsin. My grandparents lived in central Wisconsin, the other parents lived in Milwaukee. We pretty much were suburban. My dad, my dad had built a house in a suburb. My earliest memories were when I was living with my grandparents. That was the first child in cutaway, Wisconsin, which is very German, Polish neighborhood, Tavern on every corner. Social life was the Tavern. And I can remember being in the Tavern listening to live music and other kids and all that sort of thing. Then we moved out to the suburban house. We were about the third or fourth home in that subdivision and all around we were surrounded by just fields, hay fields.

Gary ([00:02:27](#)):

We so as a kid, you know, there were a lot of houses under construction and we were very adept at scavenging materials out of the scrap. I won't say we didn't have the occasional new two-by-six or two, but we would build incredible forts and we'd build incredible tree houses. And my dad says I was always the leader of the pack. I was the one who was kind of directing the construction. And I remember we

built some doozies, we built some, some great, great things, but that was a function I think of growing up in a, in an a subdivision that was brand new and we know we had all that access to. It played a lot of baseball. We kind of had our own Sandlot baseball field and we would dig a, there was a big bar ditch cross our house and cross the field where all the fields drain too.

Gary ([00:03:14](#)):

So in the wintertime it would ice over and we played, we'd sweep and play hockey. And then the other thing about it was it would get filled with snow by the middle of winter and we would dig these incredible snow forms in there. So that was pretty much the childhood dad that he was recruited. He worked for a company called Charter Wire in Milwaukee. Interesting company. They coil rolled and drew specially shaped wires. Dad was transferred to Philadelphia, Charter Wire bought a plant out there. Dad was sent out there to be a plant engineer and manager. Met his partner out there was a metallurgist and they relocated to Orville, Ohio my sophomore year and they built and developed their own skew mill until they both retired. About that time, I worked in the steel mill, learned how to use machine tools, lays torches, all those sorts of things.

Gary ([00:04:06](#)):

Went to college. When I went to college at the University of Cincinnati. Cincinnati is a co op program and you're required to have six quarters of apprenticeship and it can be one quarter, could be in like some specialty study program, but the other five you'd have to be either working construction or in a professional office. When my grandfather in central Wisconsin found out that I had to do this, he said, well, we'll teach you how to be an architect. My friend Norm Broad is a builder up here and I've been bragging you up to the North forever. He said, he'll hire you and teach you how to be a carpenter. My first quarter, so what I did, I went up there and I worked with Norman. It was an eye opening experience.

Gary ([00:04:51](#)):

A lot of fun. My first day on the job I had to nail down 1500 square feet, apply with some. I had my grandfather giving me a hammer at the end of the day I was wrapping gauze around my hand because it was so blistered up. It's terrible. Norman came over and grabs my hand and looks and he goes, Oh my God, let me see that hammer gets the hammer. And he looks at it and he goes, what a piece of beep and threw it out in the woods and he went out to his truck and gave me a brand new plum hammer and he showed me the difference. How a hammer needs to balance and the thing I remember most was he said, when you learn how to swing a good hammer, it's sings. And I've never forgotten that. And that's true. When you hear people, you know, tap, tap, tap, tap, it doesn't sing.

Gary ([00:05:35](#)):

Those framing carpenters and I can still do it to this day with a finish hammer or any hammer, and you make that when you're swinging that hammer, right? A balanced hammer. It does sing and those guys used to be able to drive a 16 penny nail with three strikes. Tap, set it, bam, last strike would set it and they were good and they would say, well, you know, nail guns have taken over and I'm certainly one to to tell you that I would rather use a nail gun for everything rather than pounding nails. But anyway that was a great experience working there. I wound up going back up there for two summers, actually double section. Norm wanted to keep me and his son out of trouble. His son had a drinking problem so he wanted to keep him out of trouble. So Norm gave us a lot, set us up with a credit line at a hardware supply building supply store and Dick and I were to build the house over the summer.

Gary ([00:06:28](#)):

At the end of the summer we sold it and then Dick and I split the profits. When we weren't working for Norm during the day on the weekends and evenings, we were building this house as mentor. It sounds like. Wow. Someone gave you an entrepreneurial opportunity early. For sure. What? exactly, you know, ordering materials, getting the materials delivered on time. You know, we would recruit other guys our age, teasing them with getting paid but also brought beer and tend to make the whole thing work. So not only the apparel aspect but also the scheduling all of that that goes with it and doing pretty much everything. And then selling it and getting a nice check at the end of the day. That was really good. Then of course I finished up the Universe of Cincinnati and stayed in Ohio for about five years working for a firm that I co op with on my other internships.

Gary ([00:07:24](#)):

I didn't want to stay in Ohio for a lot of reasons. When I was a co op student, I had an opportunity, with John Harris, who I worked with. He was a great guy and I came in the office one day, I think it was my second or third co op, and he had gotten a commission to design an addition to a country club. I had been out there with him to have lunch, didn't play golf then, but wish I would have because it is a beautiful course. But we went out there and then we came back to the office and he was working on the drawings and I looked at it in my mind, it looked like a Pizza Hut and this country club was a 1912 stone kind of Macintosh type building.

Gary ([00:08:07](#)):

It was absolutely beautiful. And it was one of the old country clubs where the young men actually lived upstairs. That's what the original golf clubs were like. The men would live upstairs and then they'd have the club and then they'd have the golf club. So we had to design this 19 hole, which was a big restaurant and then new locker rooms and all that. So I made the comment to John, I just kind of casually walked in his office, because he had a fellow draftsman doing this and I said, "John, are you happy with the design of that addition?" He said, "well, you know, it's okay" And I said, well, I don't like it at all. I mean, that's not my place, but I just don't like it at all.

Gary ([00:08:44](#)):

I think it's ridiculous. It doesn't relate to the structure at all. The existing building, which is beautiful. He said, well, what do you think we should do? And I said, well, you know, you mind if I take a crack at designing it. He said, so this was like a Friday afternoon. So I spent that Friday, Saturday, Sunday working three all nighters almost. He came in Monday and I had the drawings that I had done kind of taped around the conference room and he walked in and his only expression was, "Oh my God. He goes, you look terrible. This looks marvelous. Go home and get a shower. We're going to go over to the country club, present this at noon." So I got a shower dress, we went to the country club, presented it, they loved it. Ultimately the working drawings were completed and it was built and it won.

Gary ([00:09:23](#)):

And then submitted for state of Ohio, our AI design award, which it won. John had credited me as the design architect, even though I wasn't registered up the suit. So my relationship with his draftsman went in the basement because he was about seven years older than I was. He was, you know, very upset that I did this. And then when I went back to school my last two semesters, the professors, you know, they always looked askance at me because they didn't even get close to ever snipping a design award here I

won. So I went to work for John after that and did some great things. It was with John where I really start experimenting with a lot of the things I do today. I mean, at that time I was reading Missouri's Passive Solar Home. I visited Malcolm Wells, read all his stuff and I love his underground work and actually met him, drove out and met him. Gary, Wright out in California that was doing rammed earth, a visit with him.

Gary ([00:10:19](#)):

And so through a combination of those influences, I began to start to do that. John, to his credit, just let me go and I designed, I think for Passive Solar Homes during that period and they were strictly passive solar systems at that time were primarily water and they were hot water based for heating and he had to be a master plumber to maintain them. So we didn't make much progress in terms of promoting solar. But I really learned how to design what I call passive sustainability. That is designing the shell of a building the envelope to be as optimized as you can with the just as close as possible in the optimum model blazing, not too much insulation, just the right amount of insulation, leaving nature into the site, into the buildings, into these homes.

Gary ([00:11:11](#)):

And so that worked out very well. About the same time Texas was exploding down here and my name, because I had won that design award, had come up in a couple of things and I got a call from a head hunter and he said, we have a firm in Dallas actually he said, I have three firms in Dallas I would like to talk to you about moving to Texas. I said, sure. At that point I loved John, John offered to make me a partner and it was like, Oh John, I love you. I think this is a great, I love this office. I love working with you and the other guys. I hate Ohio. I can't stay here. I told him I had that opportunity. He goes, well go check it out, partnerships here you, make a decision.

Gary ([00:11:51](#)):

So I went down, came down here and all three firms offered me a job as a designer in their firms. Went back up to Ohio and told John I was leaving. I took about a seven month sabbatical and just traveled the country and saw a lot of architecture. I wanted to see, visit a lot of old hotels, stayed in national parks, and then at the end of the seven months, I came down here and went to work for one of those firms. Turned out very well. They ran out of work and when they were running out of work, the partner that hired me said, well, we don't have any work. We don't want to have you do working drawings and we'd like you to talk to a friend of ours. So I went there and it was GSA. Gordon Siebeck and Gordon's design studio was God.

Gary ([00:12:32](#)):

It was awful. It was just, it was awful. The work they were producing was so bad. They were losing clients, SieBeck heard about what I had done for \_\_\_plus Parker, and he hired me on the spot to be his design director at lunch. I worked for a GSA for about seven years and it was with GSA that I really began to bring what I had developed as a young architect into larger commercial work. We were doing a lot of work for Melvin Simon, Simon property and some other developers. Melvin would dismiss anything I talked about in terms of what I was doing until we were doing a huge mall project. I had my engineers and mechanical engineers run a calculation to tell me how many tons of air conditioning I could reduce the design they had if I took the roof insulation from a three eighths inch recovery board up to an R42 and we cut the mechanical systems by two thirds.

Gary ([00:13:30](#)):

And so I went to Mel and I said, Mel, okay, this, installation is going to cost X, we're going to reduce the mechanical systems by Y. This is going to reduce your capital investment by this. And his only response was, you know, and took a cigar out his mouth and he goes, what's not to like about this doing? And so we did that. And then I started doing other things liketile fryable, you know, cellulose ceiling tile in big projects like that. Banks, we were doing banks, we were doing shopping malls, we were doing big box stores. Ceiling tiles are a problem because of grossly kinds of other problems. And you're constantly taking them down, throwing them out.

Charlie ([00:14:07](#)):

Let me ask you a question. Yeah. Why do you think all these, you know, business leaders or these folks along your early career journey give you all these opportunities and what, what do you think they saw in you? Was it just the proactiveness, the, you know, you're going to see it all the way through. Is it just your enthusiasm? What did they see in you? You just told some great stories about how, frankly, ou were handed some great entrepreneur opportunities along the way. So what do you think it was at the time?

Gary ([00:14:52](#)):

I think some of a lot of it was enthusiasm. I heard there was a contract with the work of John quite a bit. Galen Oaks. Interesting guy as well. But his son and I became pretty good friends and his son told me one time I designed their Lake house and designed probably when I was with John, half a dozen office buildings, Warren and his son told me, he said, you know, I don't know what it was, but you're very enthusiastic. You've always been enthusiastic. You're just going to see a lot of success in your life. And I can't put my finger on other than you're very sharp. When I was working with Melvin Simon and enterprise development, I remember Bob James telling me one time, and these are just antidotes, I don't really share these with folks, but Bob told me one time, he said, you know, we're in these meetings sometimes they're contentious with tenants, with utilities, with whatever bankers. And he said, you never lose your cool and you never, you're always, you're just quick on your feet and you've got an answer and you've got an ability to bring people to a solution without being controversial. So I think it was just some of those aspects that are just were part of my innate personality, I guess.

Gary ([00:15:43](#)):

And I think it was a good bit of a good bit of confidence. When I look at what's the first thing I did was learn how to use a damn hammer and learn how to use a hammer. And what's the right size nail. It's kind of like Louis Kahn saying, you can't build with bricks until you understand the brick. And that's true. I mean I have young kids and young men, architects and women and they'll all look at a dimension on a drawing and I'll say, okay, you've got 16 feet, three and three eighths inches. That's not a brick dimension. And they're like, what do you mean? Well, the only way that works is you've got to cut a brick. And if he cut a brick, it's not the full dimension. Or you know, she deployments four by eight, two by four words, you know, inch and a half by three and a half. So things like that that I think I just always had an innate sense about.

Charlie ([00:16:29](#)):

I'd be curious to follow up and how do you teach that without getting someone hands on and really showing them in the field and learning from a craftsman. But I was really smiling ear to ear when you

talked about the hammer. My dad was a journeyman carpenter and he really showed me an East wing and just a framing hammer and just the other hammer as you mentioned. So I was smiling when he told that story, but we got to talk about sustainability. So you had all that influence early on and you study several different techniques and you went out and saw those that were early adopters of these different techniques. I definitely want to talk more passive design in a minute, but how did you know you want to do more sustainability? Is it just something that you gravitated towards? You want to make sure, Hey, every design you do going forward, you're going to make sure at least has some, some sustainability in it. I mean,

Gary ([00:17:15](#)):

You know, I think early, to be honest, it's something I just gravitated toward. And I just recalled when I was a kid on a farm, we had a farm, well as a steel mill that had steel. Nobody else had a farm. And I remember our farm lane was always, people would drive up and down that farmland and throw their trash out, the garbage bags right out alongside. And this was a beautiful beach forest drive through and beach drinks we ever seen them. They're just majestic. And so one day I got my brother and we hooked up the tractor and the trailer. We went down the lane and we picked all those trash bags. We loaded them into the trailer, took them to the house. Dad came home and he blew a cork and said, well, what am I gonna do? I'm gonna take the dope, pay us for tipping fees.

Gary ([00:17:52](#)):

And I said, well, you know, yeah. Anyway, he for grudgingly paid to the dump, all that. But then, then about a week later, he said, you know, it's a real pleasure to drive down that lane and not see any trash. I'm glad you did that. And so that was just kinda there. Spent a lot of time outdoors. I had a biology teacher when I was a sophomore who was really, I can't, I can't remember his name and I tried to find him, but he did our, our biology class was all about he, he hosted a I, we spent the entire semester to host a natural pick. It was going to be no trash generated, everything we were going to harvest, everything naturally is to the greatest degree possible or get it from local farmers. And so we had this picnic we made, we made homemade root beer, we made sunflower seed ice cream, all kinds of things we did that were just, it was just really, really, really cool.

Gary ([00:18:42](#)):

And, and I just sort of fed, fed my, you know, natural interests. No. When I got to school and I started finding just gravitating people like those early pioneers like Malcolm Wells, Gary Rice Mazarra who was writing the passive solar book, reading about, you know, reading Frank Lloyd Wright's writings, which are, boy, they're tough to read, writes Victorian tans and the way he writes. And word choice and the length of his sentences and how the sentences are structured. It's very difficult to read Frank Lloyd Wright's writing, but in every Ben of his work and he talked about organic architecture and the fusing the boundaries between the inside and outside and all of those kinds of things. Organic materials, you know, kind of the organic placement mimicking buildings to you know, work with the site is early Prairie style was horizontal because Prairie, he understood shading, he understood passive solar, he didn't call it that, but he just understood how to size overhang. So you got sun in the winter, his radiant floors, the natural colors and that was a big influence on me as well. And I think from that moment something just gel and then it's just always been in an interest of mine to to do just that, to weave nature into this structure

Charlie ([00:19:58](#)):

Building. I love in your write up when you talk about your firm, about environmental responsiveness and you don't want to talk more about your company in a minute, but just look back on the highlight reel. I want to give you permission. I give all my guests permission. Hey, what's on the highlight reel? Gary, you're a lead fellow. That's incredible. Congratulations. For example, you know, what else stands out as you look back over

Gary ([00:20:19](#)):

Your career here? You know, I think, boy, yeah, you know I'm often not very reflective. I think that opportunity with the country club design certainly was fundamental. I say it but I think work with norm broad. I mean the man could swear better than anybody I knew, but he never swore at you. He was swearing it what you just screwed up. But working with him was incredible. I had the opportunity to, you know, another story again, a highlight. When you think about those learning opportunities, if you recognize that you've got something to learn from everyone. There was a 56 year old master carpenter I worked with and he, we were putting this really beautiful Cedar, it's like inch and a quarter Cedar roughs on Cedar assigning on this gabled end of a house. And so we were putting the Cedar up and when we were done, we were about four board shore from finishing it.

Gary ([00:21:14](#)):

And the carpenter comes up on his pickup truck and he said, why isn't that done? And I said, well, random material, how'd your on the material? I said, I dunno, we just, Dick was cutting. I was giving him dimensions. Turns out he had, he had what she would have given me the little notebooks sketch. He had figured out every board and where every cutoff could be used. We would've had a board left over and he goes, your material is in that scrap paper raided me. And he said, you realize that is beautiful material and now all you're going to do is burn it because we can't use it anywhere else. And I've got to order more material now, which is more cost. So that was a highlight. I think that was a lesson. And then I think that opportunity that John, as I said, the country club when I got to Dallas, worked for Harper camp plots and they gave me the assignment to to design Dallas was building the new magnet school skyline magnet school and they needed a master plan to study five sites.

Gary ([00:22:09](#)):

So I got this, I got, didn't know Dallas from anywhere. So I really jumped in and developed a master plan, visited all five sites, analyzed all five sites, had the two to really dig down transportation, connections, neighborhoods, contacts, designed all five of those. Got to present that to the city. Just before left school, I worked for a firm in Milwaukee. They had a, it was a subsidized section eight housing project that was right below passports. You drive it to site, smelled like bread and Smitty hired them there, their contractors that the place was terrible. It had been destroyed and I won't get an all the problems, but I really spent a lot of time doing a feasibility study and recommending solutions to the problems. Got to present that to the city of Milwaukee to the mayor and city council. Got a lot of accolades from that.

Gary ([00:23:02](#)):

They actually built part of it. And then I left. And then, you know, of course that happened with, with ultimately getting down here. And then when I got down here, you know, I had that opportunity to be director of design and then director of marketing. And then I started my own firm. And when I did that, you know, some of those highlights were where I had an opportunity to meet. I met a wonderful man out in East Texas Harold Knicks. He had an old cotton warehouse, beautiful building, but it had been so abused and it was in such terrible shape. And Harold was from Dangerfield and he wanted that building,

renovated for his offices. So we did that. Our high did that with a, I hired an intern and we are, we renovated that building and it turned out just beautiful and that one on the board.

Gary ([00:23:44](#)):

Then the courthouse next door to it. What was the courthouse that Harold remember as a child and he renovated, we renovated that courthouse. And so then I worked on the, on the Texas Mainstreet program. Going to a number of small cities on a volunteer basis and looking at these old historic, you know, Victorian town squares, city squares, where the retail's on four sides and the courthouses in the middle. And you know, that was just the richness of that and learning how Victorian Texas towns really operated. So there were just, just so many highlights from that. And then after that, then, then a number of other things started to happen. I, I designed, well, I designed my own home and following that we there was, there's a fellow here in Dallas called Howard Garrett and Howard has a show called the dirt dock and he's an organic organic landscape expert.

Gary ([00:24:36](#)):

And Howard and I are still friends, very good friends. And he started an organic show just, you know, like a garden show in the convention center. And he asked me if I would build a little sustainable demonstration building, kind of a cutaway kind of thing. And so I partnered with a builder here who had been doing some really good work, you know, in terms of energy efficiency and that kind of thing. And so I designed this thing and we use sip panels and was the first time we really exhibited tankless hot water and all of the principles will pass solar and nontoxic paints and all those sort of things. And it was a hit. It was the most visited exhibit in the entire conference. Out of that, we were challenged to design a home for a young woman. Her name was Heather and it was under 2000 square feet at the same time that that lead was looking at, USBC was looking at developing a writing system for homes.

Gary ([00:25:35](#)):

So Heather's home was entered into the pilot. And so I helped write the pilot with several other people. One, just myself and Heather zone was one of the homes in the pilot. Ultimately that home was awarded a LEED platinum certification person, the United States, first in Texas. And and that's an incredible home. And that led, that was a highlight because it led to a lot of different really exciting residential commissions. Just prior to that to Heather's home, when I was doing my home, we were, you know, the, the Dallas chapter of U S GBC was, was underway, which was a highlight working with the chapter and, and you know, I served on the Texas chapter for a long time, seven years a board member, then chair, then co-chair the culture chair, then the next year, and then went to the regional committee and then ultimately to the national, the national committee.

Speaker 6 ([00:26:31](#)):

Yeah. I want to talk about that because I see the volunteer work you've done with the U S GBC and with AIA. And so can you speak to those that maybe, you know, what, what would you say, I mean, again, got to get involved and not just get on a committee but go into it. I mean, you've been serving for years and years, so what has that meant, maybe your career between USBC and AIA?

Gary ([00:26:51](#)):

Well, it's very important and I think, and I've also done a lot of civic volunteer work and I would encourage any young professional get involved at whatever level, wherever you can. Because, first of all, I think it's important that we give back. And as architects, if you've got a sustainability focus and you



understand how important it is to re envision, if you will, our cities in a sustainable profile and think about all those things that impact it. Oh, it's important. So you know, early on I had started, I volunteered to be on an advisory committee for white rock Lake, which is near my home here. And I served on seven advisory committees, reforestation plan management plan. We work to stop to convince the city to stop mowing the grass around white rock. And I convinced them because I showed them that, you know, look, you could save this labor, you could save all this machinery maintenance, you could save gas, you could save, you know, look at the pollutants and we ran numbers and how many, what the pollutant load would be if they stopped mowing it.

Gary ([00:27:50](#)):

And let's let most of this go back to natural grass. Well now that's, I consider that one of the most important things I did civically because people now rave about all the wild flowers and native grasses. In the bird population. That's a white rock Lake. So that's just a set that was just from a simple volunteer effort and there's probably two dozen more things like that that I've done in the city on different kinds of advisory. The Arboretum here in Dallas, so on it's on Northwest highway. And I got a call where they wanted me to participate because they were going to build a 12 foot high wall all the way down Garland road so that you couldn't see into the Arboretum to screen. It got involved with that. We convinced them that that was, that was kind of garish and it was offsetting and we ultimately worked with their landscape architect to design these beautiful stone columns with flowering, with bowls of flop bold planters with flowers on top, put a chain link fence in between and planted that with the bushes, a shrubbery.

Gary ([00:28:51](#)):

And then we put, we lined the street with burrow treats, so now you've got a green barrier that does everything that they wanted in terms of privacy, sound reduction, those kinds of things. But it's not this giant masonry wall, you know, like a prison wall. And again, that was just participation. There was, we had a, there's a bridge here in Dallas that well it was just a road that that was on the Northern part of the city. It's in my neighborhood. Every time it would rain, it would flood. The water would get the five, 16 deep emergency vehicles, couldn't get through it. People couldn't move from one side to the other. So the state came in, state of Texas tech stock, Texas department of transportation, and they proposed this bridge that looked like, you know, it was just a concrete thing and awful.

Gary ([00:29:35](#)):

And so we pushed them to, I pushed them because I wanted to lift it so we could have a contiguous corridor so that wildlife could move from way up North North of Frisco all the way down white rock Creek under that bridge and get into white rock life and to do something other than just a concrete, you know, what you see here. And that turned out that we got a lot of the neighborhood behind it and now it's a beautiful bridge, beautiful stone bridge. It's got really, really just the detailing is nice. It's, it's just wonderful. And it really sets the tone for white rock Lake and everybody loves that bridge and it's a long, it's a long bridge. And and then we, you know, bike pass have gone in down there. So all of those little things, you know, someone can get involved in, in their city.

Gary ([00:30:20](#)):

Maybe it's just a, you know, they're, they're planning a new bike trail or, or there's a part that's really run down. Well take charge, get out there and look at the park draw plan, you know, redesign it, put some plants on it, take it to parks and rec, see if you can, you know, enlist some excitement and

enthusiasm and get the city behind it. And you know, your local neighbors get them excited and, and, and do it. But I think sometimes, you know, it's something as small as that. My boys, you know, you mentioned you had three boys. Most of my boys were in scouting and their elementary school, which is across the street from where I live. Yeah. No trees on the campus. None because it was cotton field one time. So I started growing volunteer trees, collecting acorns from Oak trees and potting them up.

Gary ([00:31:07](#)):

The boys that helped me, I had the Cub scout, the Cub scout pack to that, and by the time they hit boy Scouts, these trees were, you know, six, seven, eight feet tall. So my son Ryan and my son Ian both did Eagle scout projects, planning those trees on that campus. And now it's incredible. I mean, all the teachers sit under that. They need that and the tables under the shade of those trees, playgrounds, full of trees and, and it's just turned out to be a wonderful volunteer effort. And I always told the boys, all the boys that worked in those projects, I said, look, you're planting a tree today. I'll be dead. I want you to come back here when you're 60 years old. And I want you to sit under this tree and enjoy the shade and realize you planted that tree because it's the wise man who plants a tree, who shade you will never sit on.

Charlie ([00:31:54](#)):

How many so many good nuggets in there. Gary, you're given us. So well, Hey tell me just about one or two projects your company in your firms working on now. You mentioned you had a couple projects kind of hot and heavy right now, so just paint a picture. What kind of projects are you working on right now?

Gary ([00:32:11](#)):

Well, I'll give you one. We finished recently and then I'll, I'll get in a couple of new ones. We we finished the Plano, the city of Plano, their environmental learning center, demonstration building. It has living roof net zero. We have solar panels, we have a shaded outdoor education area, which is the solar panels. All a painting is permeable. It was a Creek that runs beside it. It's the last open waterway in the city of Plano. We engaged the city and now that Creek been restored to a natural repairing habitat. So the kids, and it's got education displays and, and so the landscaping is all indigenous landscaping. As I said, the building is net zero uses virtually no energy, generates more power than it needs, which we cycle the excess to a Chris Plano warehouse next door. Beautiful building it a, it's won a number of awards.

Gary ([00:33:01](#)):

Then we per se, so a couple of current projects. We have the, again this for city of Plano, it's their high point tennis center and they've got an existing clubhouse on the tennis courts there. And so we're, we reoriented the tennis courts, getting him a term accord and we're designing a brand new building for them. The first floor is sort of the approach shop and when the restrooms are and all that sort of thing and pro storage. And then the second floor is, is all tournament gatherings, observation deck wraps all around speed and look at the tournament courts and it's still under construction, but it's turning out to be really spectacular because again, the fellow that he's since retired and we, because we started the project several years ago, his goal was this was going to be the last building he was going to be involved with with the city for retire.

Gary ([00:33:51](#)):

He wanted it to be a work of architecture and he wanted it to be, which is why I was selected. He wanted it to be the most sustainable building Plano ever built. And it really is. I mean we're going that direction now. They didn't want to, they didn't want to pursue lead certification because they've got some people in the city who they still don't quite get it, but it would be lead certified in a staff. They just, and the response to me was, well we know we're going to leave building from you. We just don't need the damn plaque. Well yes and no. I mean you need to acknowledge the kind of building it is. But it is an extraordinary building and the building we're currently working on is a headquarters for the rolling Plains coil research center here in Texas. We've got a real problem with losing our quaint upper recoil.

Gary ([00:34:39](#)):

So this is a research ed course has a lab. It has an educational contingent classrooms. It has a bunk house. They bring in, I think it's like 16 bets for a 90 day period. And these veterans are taught wildlife management, coil management, ranch land management, and they stay on site. And then there's a kind of a funder's cabin, which is a really cool little cabin back in the trees for that has two or three bedrooms in it. Well this building is also pretty interesting because we're doing things that we have tried but have not been able to do. We've got part of it has a living roof. It's burb entire North side of the building is burned and it's all oriented for passive solar. The mechanical systems are so small to heat and cool it that it's, it was kind of the contract can't even believe that minimal.

Gary ([00:35:28](#)):

The units are all natural materials where we're making it. When I talk about weaving something into the the nature of the place and weaving nature into the, this building is going to look like it simply hasn't grown out of the Prairie. Wow. It's that, it's that low profile and all the daylighting and the way we've oriented the building is the buildings aren't straight. They kind of job to mimic kind of a Ridge behind it. We're doing rusted the corrugated siding on the outside. So again, the point about this building, which they had when they came to me, one of the board members knew me, knew my work. The board was, was had already gotten a proposal from a contract and he was going to be able to find little buildings. Each little building was kind of a little wood building with Hardy board. Each one had a roof and a porch and and all this paving and I started to break it down and said, okay, let's, let's look about this w what's your mission?

Gary ([00:36:23](#)):

Well, our mission is to research what's going wrong with the quail, preserve quail and enhance the regeneration of the of the quail. I said, well, don't you think the building should speak to that top and five of these little, you know, buildings doesn't make any sense and why do we have to have all those roads and why couldn't we just just have a decomp granite road that comes up to it? And then. Then I talked to them about firming it and using the building as a demonstration vehicle for what their mission is and they were all mesmerized and it's going to cost a little more than what they originally thought. When we started talking about rainwater harvesting, we're going to do PV solar on it. As I said, just the passive sustainability of the building has reduced the mechanical load substantially and then when I said you're not even going to know this building is here until you drive up to it and walk around the front of it where the glazing is facing South, you're going to see the one, the one North light scoop that brings North light in the classroom from, from the parking area, but that's all you're going to see.

Gary ([00:37:27](#)):

Everything else, the Prairie is going to come right up and tuck this building into it. And I said, that's your message. And if you begin to talk about this building and how it relates to Prairie preservation restoration, where the building really becomes part of the landscape and all of this is restorative, I think that's, it's only going to bring more attention and notoriety to your mission. And that's where doing what an amazing project man. It really lit up with that. Well, I'd love to ask you this next question. Sustainability, the green building movement, you know, what should we be reading up on Gary? What do you is coming around the corner or maybe already trending? Well, you know, you've got, you got a couple of things. I think in our urban centers there's actually two parts part of it, well three parts I think sprawl sprawls just continuing to go on and on and on, you know, and you've got those subdivisions and you realize, you know, sometimes I get a little depressed.

Gary ([00:38:23](#)):

Okay. So I designed two or three net zero S, you know, basically environmental zero, zero ecological footprint as best as I can get to it. But then I realized I do two or three of those a year. And in the metroplex, 30,000 homes a year are built and they're all the same tract homes. And you look out as you drive in the interstates here and you look out and you see a subdivision with 350 homes and they all have easy bake oven roofs, black shingles, high pitches, more volume under the roof than in the house. The streets are rabbit Warren, none of them are facing, you know, the proper orientation. So I think that's a challenge. How do we get to the point where we begin to replan those neighborhoods to be more responsive to regional, to what the appropriate regional environmental response is. Not saying all of reus have to have solar panels, but there is a place for solar.

Gary ([00:39:13](#)):

But you first got to design these houses different and you've gotta design these neighborhoods differently. And I think, you know, when you've got issues, like everyone has a backyard, everyone has a driveway ever. And, and you know, and then they're using chemical fertilizers, pesticides on the lawns, and you've got all the lawn services. And you've got all offenses. I think the biggest chairman was there, and I think it's going to happen. I think you're going to see more of rights thinking, which is more of an organic approach to planning and structuring these own. Then you've got urban centers that really were built without recognition of the human response. Now in Dallas fortune that that's changing. We're seeing a lot of, a lot more green space happens. So in other words, where buildings had big parking lots next to them, well the parking lots are being dug up.

Gary ([00:39:59](#)):

They're putting underground parking garages and creating parks and now we're starting to link those parks so that a squirrel could basically jump all through downtown Dallas without ever having a touching a tree or touching your own tree to tree. So I think what's coming around the corners. I think a lot of young people, new professionals are really starting to think about this integrated design, holistic design so that when we start designing a building, well how can we link this building perhaps with some green space that we can use to capture runoff that we can design a parks of the people who were in the building and come outside, spend more time outdoors. How does that park link to another park? How does our transportation network become more efficient so that we don't have as much Hitler traffic in our cities. So I think that's really what's around the corner is isn't making our, our urban centers much more human scale, much more welcoming.

Gary ([00:40:49](#)):

The natural element into our, into our urban centers. You know, just like designing our streets differently so that it isn't hard pavement. And then you put trees in a little four by four concrete tree. Well and the tree lives about seven, eight years and then dies and then you got to replace it. Or you can design the street itself to capture and absorb that storm water. And so the trees then can send their roots out under the roadways and things like that and be there for a couple of hundred. New Orleans is starting to think differently about their urban center where they, they have begun to realize trying to wall out and dam. The water doesn't work. They need to rethink the city planning so it'll absorb the water. So when they do get us flood surge, it'll come in and some of these parkways become waterways. So the water, some seats.

Gary ([00:41:35](#)):

So you've got episode [inaudible] wetlands we have in the urban what's happening and what's around the corner with urban centers is how do we begin to welcome the natural response, integrate the natural response into our urban centers. And I think the only around the corner are existing buildings. I mean the building I office and we renovated, it was a 76,000 square feet. We carved a big hole in the middle. What a courtyard in a, it was a warehouse, it was windowless. We put windows in and it's going to be lead platinum. It's going to get a well certification as well. And this building was scheduled for demolition instead, you know, the, the fellows I worked with bought it for a song and we bid this really cool kind of rustic, rough renovation to it and everybody loves it and it's got, it has really everybody kind of responds to when they come in there, they comment on this building just, it just feels different. It just feels nice in here. And the whole first floor is a coworking space and part of their success is that the users really enjoy that space down there because from virtually every space you can view the courtyard we put in 11 lofts, small lofts. So you know, looking at buildings rather than tearing them down, there's a real opportunity to, to renovate them. And in terms of what's around the Porter, I think that's a real opportunity because truly sustainable building is the one that's already built.

Charlie ([00:42:55](#)):

Totally agree. And you know, even if we look at some carbon pushes, right? 2030 trying to move towards net zero and our new construction by 2050, we really need to have retrofitted our existing buildings to hit our carbon goals. So, and all of that lines up so well, just a few more questions for you. Let's talk more about you Gary, and you know, what do you think you're best at? What's your gift? What am I best at? Yeah. If you were to ask your colleagues, what would they say? Hey man, Carrie's best at this.

Gary ([00:43:24](#)):

It's, it's really, Oh wow. It's combination things. I think they would respond that I'm a global thinker, so I think more holistically than most. But at the same time I can dial down into a small detail, but I'm effective in term. Again, I learned how to use a hammer. One of the first things I ever did. So, so I know the craft and I think I'm a good, I believe I'm a good craftsman in that when we design our buildings there, the details are crafted well and you know, there's, there the inherent talents. I mean, I, I've got a good sketch hand and, and you know, my design work is also very strong, so it's kind of like a Renaissance man. You know, in terms of architecture, I can look in a detail and understand how it's gonna fit together or it's not going to fit together. I can embrace situations in the field where something wasn't done the way it was supposed to be, but how do we resolve it so that it's that it is a successful resolution. So there's good people skills there and yeah, so it really is, you know, kind of Jack of all trades.

Charlie ([00:44:24](#)):

Love it man. Now it's really fun conversation now. Well let's talk about best practices, routines, rituals, you know, Gary, do you have any

Gary ([00:44:32](#)):

Best practices that help you stay a successful, stay on point you good habits, good habits are, we really worked hard here in the office to have a system that works. In other words, when we start a project and we start, we start with the preliminary design and the sketches and we start working through that. From that moment we start putting the building together and we always, we, we sort of track that we've got a frost in the office where we track that to make sure that original intentions and program programming is carrying all the way through the building. And we've really enjoyed of late is we're working we've but able to convince our clients to bring the contractor on board early. Let's make a decision, a contractor based on qualifications. They see the appropriate size for this project, get that contractor on board right at the schematic design phase so that we're going back and forth through the entire process.

Gary ([00:45:24](#)):

And I think that's probably one of the best practices we have because when we have them under contract, but we're relying on them to look at the documents, we're preparing from the eyes of the builder, what's missing? What do you see? Anything that doesn't work, do you have any recommendations for a different way to do it? And so there's always that two way conversation going on between all three. We really the owners involved in that process well. So we have this ongoing communication between contractor, our office and our owner. And of course our office includes what I recommend our consultants and we work towards that end. So in my office we're still big fans of of a face to face standing, you know, standing over our, we've got a big table in the middle of the office and the drawings are out there and it's a daily exchange about thanks and and all my, I require all of my staff to have a notebook and it's pretty funny.

Gary ([00:46:19](#)):

A lot of the young people don't like to take notes. They want to use Evernote. Evernote's great. You can use Evernote and I want a notebook because I want to see in your sketchbook. I want to see where you've noted this. We've talked about it. I want to see you sketch something. Why don't you draw it by hand? Cause then I know you can see it because you can't, you can't see it on the computer. But if you'd draw it, you'd have to see it in your mind in order to draw. That's where you're going to be able to track what you're doing and make sure it aligns with what we're up to. That's one of our best practices here is getting people to use a sketchbook carry with you all the time. They still build rough models. I mean it's great you can, you can do great things on the computer.

Gary ([00:46:58](#)):

I'm not saying you should, but what I've encouraged my guys to do here is I've even gotten some of them to, you know, pick up a watercolor set colored pencils. There's something about that, you know, just just do me a sketch and throw some water Colorado because I think what that does in terms of best practices, I think it shifts your mind from basically an orthogonal exercise on the computer. Some more mind hand, that cognitive process that goes on then and then when you integrate those, I think that's where you use that sort of cognizant process and you integrate it with you know, programs and conversations about budget materials, integration details and then back to the computer. And I think

that's probably one of the things that we do best. Are there best practices are, you know, we all, I require everyone to do their own red lines before they give it to me.

Gary ([00:47:49](#)):

And then I do a red line and I go through it in detail and they all know that I'm happiest when I have to put very few red marks on a set of drawings. And part of that's training, you know, so it's mentoring. I guess one of our best practices is mentoring. I'm always mentoring. It's a con. It's every hour in the office. It's, I don't just say do this, we try to work to where, okay, this is why we're doing this. Do you see it? Can you understand it? So there's a lot of mentoring that goes on here. Mentoring them, much shop drawings, mentoring them about, you know, it's sad to say, but people like, right, nearly mid century guys and have to worry about this. We do. And it's called liability exposure. Here's an emission. You know, so I'm, I'm constantly beating them up on that. No, you don't say that to a contract. No, you don't put that on the shop drawings. You know, there's, you have, and so teaching them what are the boundaries of responsibilities through the construction process. So mentoring's a big deal. And a lot of firms don't get that. I mean, I've had young people come to work for me and they'll tell me it's the first time anyone's ever had a conversation with them like that. They're just told what to do or hand it up and it's something and yeah,

Charlie ([00:48:58](#)):

Such a missing out those companies that don't do that. You know what you just told me that Gary is that you, you know the DNA of your company and that's, that's amazing. So you know, really what, what makes makes up affirm that you want to see and kind of a legacy there. You, you know what you like and I bet if you ask any of your team members, they can recite everything you just shared with us that that's what your company's about. So thank you for sharing. I hope that made other things about what's really the DNA of the company. They're at those best practices. So, well, my next question, just a couple more here. I'm a fan of a bucket list. So Gary what's on the bucket list? What are one or two things on your bucket list?

Gary ([00:49:37](#)):

Well, my next home, the next house I'm going to build.

Charlie ([00:49:43](#)):

You already sketched it out a little bit or what?

Gary ([00:49:45](#)):

Oh yeah. Oh yeah. It's going to be built. It's going to come off the side of a Hill and when I stand out on the edge of the balcony, it's going to be about a 60 to 120 foot drop. And I really want it to be kind of just, just, you know, and just using everything that I know. I mean, the house I'm in now is of course, incredible and it was not LEED certified because of the 40, but it still has in the metroplex the highest rating ever built. And so, so that's on my bucket list to build the next one. You know, the question isn't, is, you know, where is it? Is it going to be in California? Is it going to be an Arizona where it's going to be a, which is sort of my bucket list. I want to, I really want to open a branch office.

Gary ([00:50:24](#)):

Probably not in California, probably Arizona. I built a few projects, California. It's very difficult to build out there. But so that's on the bucket list. I think my, what's also my bucket list is, is at some point I

would like to be able to string together longer time off so I can do some, you know, a little bit more travel and sketching and, and writing, which, you know, when you're, you're actively designing projects and managing, managing those, the construction of those projects as you can. Well imagine it's very time consuming and, and so I don't get out of here as often as I like, so I'd like to do a little more of that. The branch office, like I said, I'd love to have a branch office. Very cool. I don't have any aspirations to teach or anything like that. I mean I'm, I'm bugged by that all. I'm, I'm pestered all the time, my friends of mine who are in academia, in fact, I'm teaching, I'm going to be teaching a course about a four class session for a friend of mine down in Houston, their school of architecture. That's kind of fun.

Charlie ([00:51:27](#)):

You're mentoring internally and you know, your guest lecturing. I mean, Hey man, just a, you're putting out some great projects and doing your thing. Well it's talking about books though. They say everybody has a book, you know, maybe one day write a book, but how about books that you'd recommend? Or is there one or two? It doesn't even have to be sustainability related, but one or two books you'd recommend.

Gary ([00:51:46](#)):

Oh wow, that's a good question. Oh, I'll go back to bucket list. One of the thing I'm going to do is I really feel like we're, we're actually starting a development company where we can begin to influence the built environment in a stronger way because rather than having to deal with a client and convince, we're already there. So fortunately, you know, we have this, I have the skills. And so that's, that's on the bucket list. Getting our development company off the ground. Works. Oh boy. You know, I read, I read all the time. The well this is a silly book but it's pretty fun and it's a, the devil in the white city. And the reason it's, it's a good book is, you know, it's written about the serial killer that was there. But when you learn the story, and I really never even knew this story in college, the story of the Chicago Colombian exhibition of 1893 and there are a couple of good, I've since looked at a couple of good photographic folios of it.

Gary ([00:52:43](#)):

This thing was incredible, but they built this thing in about a year and a half first first use of electric lighting. First they pioneered, they pioneered spray painting. Frederick law Olmsted designed the landscape and if you look at the folios, the construction photos that the Ferris wheel, the first Ferris wheel was built there talks about how Ferris, the guy who invented the Ferris wheel, he designed, engineered, fabricated and erected this thing without any tests. And the day they threw the last bolt in it, they fired it up and started taking people out. And the cars were Pullman cars, 60 people in a car. They have 2200 people on that. And they did that without a test. It just, they fired it up. So the story's incredible. And, and, and the sad part of that story is it burned down two years later because it was basically just a lightweight iron skeleton. Lot of wood, plaster. But the images are just, just incredible. That's a great book to read. I think it'll really kind of bring a lot of interest to a lot of people. You know, write biography. I guess this is a biography or Frank Lloyd Wright architecture. I don't recall the exact title.

Charlie ([00:53:56](#)):

Yeah, I'll look in the show notes both of these books. But maybe it's a biography. Yeah,

Gary ([00:54:01](#)):



I think it is the biography, but it's, it's, my copy is so dog-eared underlined, noted that one is was one of the first books that I read about. Right. And it resonates. That's why I keep going back to it. I still read it today. It's just an incredible book.

Charlie ([00:54:21](#)):

Definitely a link to that too. And you know, as, as we come to a close here, I, there's two part question I like to close on Gary. First, you know, what advice do you wish you'd known a little earlier in your career?

Gary ([00:54:35](#)):

That's a tough question because the alternate, I'll turn it around. I was basically steering my own course. No one talked about sustainability when I was getting started. No one, there was no mentor there for me. I had to find it in, you know, in books and those sorts of things. So, you know, the advice was, I guess that's hard to say. You know, I think the only other thing that I would mention is that, you know, is it small firm or is it big firm? Is it, you know, whatever, you know, I think that, I think it's a good idea for young architects to work in a small firm where they can do everything. I had opportunities to go to work for Skidmore, Owings and Maryland, Chicago helmet. Yawn wanted me to come to his studio back in the day. When I was, well I was just before Greg, one of my last co-ops, he wanted me to come and instead that's when I took that project in Milwaukee, which was great. So I think, I dunno, you know, that's a,

Charlie ([00:55:29](#)):

You hit on some of them when you were talking about what you do in your firm with those best practices we talked about earlier, cause I'm sure you know, you either had a little exposure to that and you're making sure that that still happens as part of the training and the mentorship. But now, man, thanks. Because you know, the, the thing I always close on is just art. Let's pretend someone's jumping in right now. They're listening to this podcast, they're jumping in the green building movement. What words of encouragement do you have for them?

Gary ([00:55:55](#)):

I would say find a firm that's actually, it's part of their DNA. Hmm. A lot of firms skate the water, but it's not deeply embedded in their DNA. And if you've got, if you've got a real passion for it, because I S I still think we're, we're still in leading edge. There's so much further we can go that I think you need to, to really start to, Oh, Janine Benyus biomimicry. That's another great book. I really think it's the best advice I can give and really spend the time if I did anything that I would like to do differently. The firms I worked for, I sort of followed opportunities have presented themselves. Yeah. But I didn't pursue firms or didn't pursue job opportunities early on that that may have been more supportive. So instead of the firm, well, John's firm was supportive, but I think there were, I probably could have, someone could've said, you know, that firm's okay, you're going to have some opportunities there, but you know, maybe you need to go to work for somebody who, who's so much stronger than you are and that you could learn more.

Charlie ([00:57:09](#)):

The listeners a little practical advice. So peel back the onion one more layer. So, you know, it's, how do I find out if it's sustainability is really in the DNA of affirm. I mean, is it, I see how many lead projects they have. I really look at the different designs. I look at what they do on non lead buildings. I mean, how do I know, you know, if it's someone I'm interviewing with or I'm researching or maybe I am asking peers that know of them, how would I know it's in their DNA, any advice there? Go visit their buildings. Okay.

Gary ([00:57:40](#)):

Walk their buildings, you know, and, and then certainly walking their buildings and I think visit the office, visit the office and, and, and just, you know, just, just talk. I mean, if they're willing to take the time to talk to you, I think that's,

Charlie ([00:57:52](#)):

It's so simple, but that really does make sense. Right? Sometimes we we might forget to really go and give it, you know, if this is somewhere you're going to make a career at, yeah. You got to go, Hey, if I'm the employer and I hear a candidate say, Hey, can you give me access to your last five or six projects, I'm already going to be impressed, you know, so, right,

Gary ([00:58:13](#)):

Right. And then go out and look at them or, you know, I mean, there's, there's projects published all the time and all this, all the slips and, you know, go out and look at those. I mean, even, even now, I mean, even with my career, I still visit a lot of buildings and I've visited a lot of Frank Lloyd Wright buildings. I've visited a lot of, you know, loiterers buildings, Schindler's buildings. It was in Los Angeles, recently saw some of Schindler's work. And and I, you know, it's, it's still, I, I'm never surprised that I'm overwhelmed at the experience of seeing something in a building, even a, you know, even where I'm at with my career that's just stunning and inspiring. Yeah. So I think that's the biggest thing is, and I always, I've always done that. I mean, I, you know, I used to visit when I was in Ohio, I drove around on weekends and, and go and visit, you know, I'd see these dilapidated, old Dutch and German Barnes and I, I would Marvel and I'd sketch the joints, how they put these things together with, you know, just with pegs and Morrison tendon and things like that.

Gary ([00:59:16](#)):

I had the option to go to Denmark and I went out and just went to Rose, Gilda and visited the the long ships there in low Rose, Gilda where they're building it. But just the craftsmanship that went into those. And funny story there, I, there was a wall of tools on the wall and I noticed that they had ads and the ads, you know, that's where like a pic, you know, they used to shape the beams and pieces and you chop it. And I noticed that all the tools that they must have had probably 90 ads, each one, each one was like about a degree and a half steeper than the next one. And then they had all kinds of augers and rakes and you know, kind of, it's like create the shapes thing, ground that into a piece of steel. And then they would drag that they'd scraped, they were scrapers.

Gary ([01:00:04](#)):

So I asked one of the kids there, I said, well, you know, where'd you get all these tools? You know? And I said, I get it. You know, that if they needed a 30 degree, they, they would use three different ads to cut the beam until the last one was just the same ergonomic straight stroke would cut a perfect 33 and he goes, yeah, nobody's ever mentioned that to us before. He goes, well, we found these. They found out, they found us a biking ship sunk out in the Harbor and there was a toolbox in it. And so all, all these tools, there are new tools, but we copied, we cast, we made molds of all those tools in the toolbox and reproduced. And you know, that was enlightening to me that it was the tools that created the expression of those beautiful bolts, those weaknesses, those beautiful boats.

Gary ([01:00:48](#)):

So that's why I think, you know, again, I think the more you can see, visit, touch, feel, smell as someone who's going to be in sustainability, I think that's important. I also think, I also think that if someone's really into sustainability, you've got to live it. You know, you've got to make, if you're truly into it, you've got to live it. I mean, I've got chickens in my backyard and they're organic chickens and they free range and you know, I, we have eggs and I give eggs to friends and you know, there's no pesticide, chemical pesticides or fertilizers that have ever been used on my property. And I've got amazing wildlife. I've got, there's an owl living on my Creek now. I think it's to a house and we saw, saw one of the chicks standing up in the nest. So, you know, you really have to live with what, you know, when you're walking across the parking lot. Do you walk by that crush cocaine? Where did you pick it up?

Charlie ([01:01:40](#)):

No, you have to live it. And you know, it's kinda like a, I'll use a quick anecdote as we wrap up. For anyone dating right now, a good friend of mine said, Hey, I used to drive a Jeep and a, you know, manual windows. If you're on a date, you know, and you unlock the driver, the passenger side and you know, the girlfriend gets in, does she own lock your side, you know, or something like that. So are you doing your part there? But you know, Gary, I want to close with some encouragement for over on the slip thing. We're going to launch this podcast during this coronavirus crisis and you know, business is going to be different as we get out of it. But you know, this pass, I don't know if we've ever experienced anything like this, you know, I'm glad a lot of businesses can still continue business as usual. It's hard and we definitely feel for anyone that's been impacted, of course, if they're sick, but definitely those hourly workers, those restaurants, anyone that is impacted. So I don't know any, any final thoughts on that? Any words of encouragement, some will be listening to this during the crisis we're in right now.

Gary ([01:02:35](#)):

Well I think what it speaks to is that, you know, we truly are a global species now. You know, it used to be tribal, the location centric and that led to, you know, world war or led to conflicts led to brutality. But now we're a global society. So I, what I would hope comes out of this crisis is that we realize that, you know, what's that saying about a butterfly and Connecticut flaps its wings and a hurricane hits Florida, whatever that is. I think it's the same. I think that's the perfect analogy for a day is that we need to begin to realize that we are Lobel says, I don't want us make that sound like we need to break down all the barriers and we need to become a, you know, racially uniform. I think we can celebrate our ethnicity and we can celebrate what's unique about our cultures of where we live.

Gary ([01:03:24](#)):

But I also think we need to recognize as we are the human species on this planet. And the great equalizer is something like a pandemic, like a virus that runs out of control. And I think it's going to help us think differently about everything. Like you said, we're going to work differently. I think bricks and mortar, you know, and it's becoming more and more, you know, Amazon has changed the world. And what's really funny is Sears had bricks and mortar all over this country. Any company was in a position to do what Amazon did. It was seer because they had all the catalogs, they had all the lines and supply, they had delivery, they have fabrication, they had, they had the entire organizational structure. All they had to do was go to internet and change it to an internet business. Amazon comes in as an upstart.

Gary ([01:04:08](#)):

It takes out the biggest retailer on the go, you know? So I think it's that kind of shift in our thinking where, you know, maybe middle row all have to be fixed to physical construction so that we can, now

we can begin to think differently about that. Detroit's a good example where they're tearing buildings down, creating open space because their population decline has left the city. What's less popular than it used to be? And the interesting thing about that was biologists have found a species of ring neck pheasant in the Detroit city limits that was extinct everywhere else in the state of Michigan. But then the, here it is, here it is in the urban center of the Troy because you've got all these places, parking lots empty lots where buildings have been taken down and they've gone back to the natural. It's just the natural ecosystem.

Charlie ([01:04:58](#)):

Thank you for sharing that. And I just, you know, it's kind of what we opened up with. What does all this make possible? So make sure, but he's thinking that and listening to this, just you know, just stay encouraged. I, I gotta be honest. This was one of the absolute best because you're an excellent storyteller and you know, I laughed a lot, so I hope everybody

Gary ([01:05:19](#)):

Laughed a little bit during this one. Gary two other books you can put on the list. Yeah, Mike Michael Poland's book, the botany of desire is a great book on architecture books, but they feed into architecture and the other one is a Jared diamonds, guns, germs and steel. That one is very appropriate to our time right now.

Charlie ([01:05:40](#)):

Okay, well I'll put a link in the podcast show notes. Well Gary man, thank you. Congrats on all your successes and I can't wait to visit your office when we stop social distance and Gary, thanks so much

Gary ([01:05:52](#)):

March or I'd love to see it. Welcome to visit anytime.

Charlie ([01:05:57](#)):

I just want to say thank you to our loyal listeners. We actually are celebrating over one year here on the green building matters podcast. Me and the entire team were stoked and just so glad you continue to listen every Wednesday morning to a new interview with a green building professional here in this industry, or just some pro tips that we want to make sure that you are getting straight from us. Straight to you. Thank you for listening to this episode of the green building matters projects@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 or 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 yes, 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 in next week's episode.