

Jason Hainline, AIA, LEED Fellow of Dake Wells Architecture | Transcript

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

Welcome to Green Building Matters. The podcast that matters for green building professionals learn insites 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.

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

Be Sure to check out the green building matters community where you can have unlimited exam prep for any of the professional credential exams you're tackling next as well as putting your continuing education on autopilot, saving time with GPS reporting your hours on your behalf. Check it out. [Gbes.Com/Join](#). Now enjoy this episode of the green building matters podcast. Everyone. Welcome to the next episode of the green building matters podcast. I'm your host, Charlie Cichetti today. I've got another LEED Fellow coming to us from Springfield, Missouri. I've got Jason Hainline. He's an AIA, he's a LEED Fellow. Jason, how you doing today? I'm good, Charlie. How are you, man? We were talking earlier, we're still in the middle of the pandemic as we record this, but I think there's still a lot of opportunity that's been created. I'm an optimist. I'm feeling pretty good today. And I want to learn more about your background and that's kind of where I start. Tell us where'd you grow up and where'd you go to school?

Jason ([01:35](#)):

Yeah. So I'm originally from Des Moines, Iowa and grew up in, in the big city. It's relatively big city. When I was a kid, I spent probably a good chunk of my time down here in Southwest, Missouri with some of my family. So I'd spend the summers. That's kind of how I ended up here in Springfield. Missouri went to architecture school here in Springfield at Drury University. At the time it was Drury College, one of only two architecture schools in the state. It's a small liberal arts college. So I was pretty fortunate in landing there because I think that in some ways it went to the career path that I chose. What I mean by that is not just a traditional architectural path.

Jason ([02:19](#)):

It was a very Securitas path. Actually, when I was really young, I had a grandmother, we referred to her as granny and she lived in Northeast, Iowa in the woods and we would spend a lot of time up there and we would often go on what we affectionately refer to as granny nature walks. Not knowing it really at the time, it's not like those blocks or that experience had me focused on the environment or conservation. But I think looking back it had a significant influence on how eventually I gravitated to a strong interest in environmental sustainability. When I was in high school, I actually knew that I wanted to become an architect and went to work for an architect in high school. So I worked summers and after school some days, and then when I went to college, I had to work. I wanted to not just, cook pizzas, I found something that was related and ended up working for Bass Pro Shops, which is one of the largest outdoor sporting goods retail entities in the country. And not being in a Bass Pro, they're very experiential and as a company, very conservation minded. That's where I really had opportunities early in my career that kind of led me on that Securitas career path.

Charlie ([03:46](#)):

Yeah. Those early influences, they really do shape us or at least, give us that 1% turn towards what we're going to be down the road. I did want to ask you. How'd you know you wanted to be an architect. So it sounds like in high school, did you have a teacher that influenced you or just something else in your upbringing? How'd, you really know, I want to be an architect.

Jason ([04:06](#)):

That's an interesting question. So I've always been relatively good at art since a really young age. When I was young, I would, draw from comic books and sketch and all that kind of stuff. In elementary school, I always, I don't know if I was, I was the teacher's pet per se, but I always stood out to the art teachers and I remember receiving scholarships, summer scholarships for painting classes at the Art Institute in Des Moines and things like that. I always gravitated pretty heavily to art. So in high school it was the same, I was much more interested in art, but I also had, not that I was good at math or science or what have you, but I also didn't dismiss the importance of that.

Jason ([04:54](#)):

So in high school I was thinking about, well, what do I want to do? I didn't want to pursue being an artist because I didn't want to be the sort of, proverbial impoverished artist. I think it was a industrial tech teacher that introduced me to the idea of pursuing architecture. He was like, you need to pursue architecture. It's the marriage of art and technology and science. That's basically at that moment, the light bulb went off and that's what I did. That's what I was going to pursue.

Charlie ([05:27](#)):

I love it. I love it. I've got three boys and someone that I look up to as a mentor, they told me, with children, there's three A's there's arts, academics or athletics, pick one. And they're going to gravitate a little bit more towards that one. I found that interesting in each of my three boys, one's a musician and more of an artist and definitely a middle son is more of the academic loves school and then the youngest guy, man, Silas, he just loves sports. It just resonated with me when you said art. So any other mentors or just anyone that maybe you looked up to as you're building even your green building career?

Jason ([05:58](#)):

Definitely, but that was sort of after I really gravitated pretty heavily towards if I was going to pursue architecture is going to be architecture. That was environmentally sound. So this was in the early nineties. And when I was in architecture school, I think I was probably in my third year, I can't quite remember a friend introduced me to Malcolm Wells. So if you're not familiar with Malcolm Wells, a fairly conceptual and forward thinking architect that wrote, I think a quintessential book called General Architecture. His premise was that the work that we as architects are doing is detrimental to not just the environment, but when we dig a hole, we're disrupting nature and biology.

Jason ([06:56](#)):

And so his proposal was that, we need to continue to build, but let's put everything that we've just scraped off back. That means we're putting it back on top. So underground architecture was his big advocacy movement. Super incredible ideas guy and could draw like no tomorrow. And so, so that was a big influence on me. I just thought, yeah, everything needs to be underground and we need to be pretty extreme with this, if we're gonna do

things right. And I had actually reached out to him and at the time he was, he was pretty elderly, but he wrote back and I remember he didn't really give me a whole lot of advice, but he like bled all over my letter because of all the spelling and grammatical errors.

Jason ([07:44](#)):

Exactly who Malcolm Wells was. But I mean, so his work I think was pretty influential and me latching on to this notion of sustainability in the built environment. It just resonated with me for some reason. But the main mentor was somebody that I kind of discovered then I hired And then I went to work for, and that is Greg Franta, who was an architect in Colorado. Started a firm, small architectural slash consulting firm by the name of InSAR Group. He was probably one of the most significant influences on me, but what led me to him, somebody that most everybody knows is Bob Berkebile. When I was in school and one of my later years, I did an independent study. And what I was looking to do was document the state of sustainable architecture at the time, because there's just not a lot of information, in the early nineties about who is practicing that way and what resources were there.

Jason ([08:50](#)):

So I created this document of, the different engineering firms and consulting firms and architects that were emphasizing sustainability and Bob, obviously was one of the key people that came up at the time because of his work with establishing codes and I had a professor said, well, you need to talk about Bob Berkebile about but you won't be able to talk to him because he's too busy. And when I called, I got right through and I talked to Bob Berkebile. The irony there was when I was working for Bass Pro Shops in school. But then after I got out of school as a designer, I was given the charge because Bass Pro at that time was just starting to expand. They only had the main store here in Springfield. They were starting to build other stores in the US and knowing my interest in propensity for sustainability right out of college, I was given this charge of not only contributing to designing stores, but also helping them to figure out how to move towards sustainability with the expansion of these stores.

Jason ([10:00](#)):

And so I actually reached out and I hired Bob as a consultant to us to help us envision what a green Bass Pro Shops would look like and he brought as a team, Greg Franta and Nancy Clanton and Ron Perkins. And so for a couple of years, we spent time basically developing essentially prototypes for sustainable environmentally friendly bass pro shops. Out of that, then that relationship with Greg specifically resulted in what I felt like it was time for me to move on, me going to work for Greg. That's when I was really much more in grained or in the trenches of sustainable design consulting.

Charlie ([10:48](#)):

Okay. So that's when you really knew that's the path that's sustainability, that's green buildings. 2000 rolls around LEED, projects start happening and so would you say, LEED helped in those early two thousands as you were kind of getting more into green buildings? Or how did LEED start showing up on some of the work you were doing?

Jason ([11:11](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, it was fairly quintessential. I mean, partly because Greg was heavily involved in the US Green Building Council and its early formation, just because of the influence that he and Bob had in the industry. I remember while we were still working together, he as a consultant to us at Aspro, he had kind of introduced us to this idea of using LEED. At that point it was still in pilot as a way to measure the decisions that we might make that didn't stick very well at Bass Pro. But when I moved on to join ends, our group is when then LEED 1.0, basically came out and as, even though InSAR was a architecture firm, 99% of the work that we did was consulting. So we were consulting with the department of energy, national, renewable energy laboratories and various other clients. With that came the not only the overlay and the introduction to advocacy of LEED on our part, but then clients starting because it was starting to really take root with people trying to differentiate themselves or define their projects. It definitely became sort of a central role in the work that we were do.

Charlie ([12:35](#)):

Gotcha. That must have been great to be involved in LEED 1.0, I started getting involved with LEED about 2005. It Must've been some exciting times there, man. So take us through the rest of that kind of architecture career

path and then maybe fast forward to today and tell us about some of the work you're doing at Dake Wells.

Jason ([12:56](#)):

Yeah. So pretty quickly the work at Insar group pretty much completely focused on sustainable design consulting for a variety of clients resulted in us being hired by an organization by the name of EMSI, Environmental market solutions incorporated. They were looking to basically take green building to China and they were not architects. They were not engineers, but they had started with this idea of trying to bridge environmentally friendly or sustainable products and get them into the Chinese market in order to have an influence on what was starting to happen in China in the early two thousands, which was significant investment in development. And the way in for NSar was through green building consulting. They sought to introduce LEEDs specifically, as one of the only real rating systems to Chinese developers as, than a way to pull through the potential of these, products and little did they know that that didn't actually work, but what did work was there was a whole lot of interest in LEED.

Jason ([14:09](#)):

And so they having not really been familiar with LEED and or how to navigate it, they hired us as a LEED consultant to them to be a LEED consultant, to a high rise in Beijing. And that led to, very quickly several projects. And next thing I knew because I was managing those projects on behalf of Insar I really fell in love with trying to have an influence abroad. And so I ended up joining EMSI as their director of sustainability. And so for about 10 years, really kind of commuted between Springfield and China. After a while, a lot of that work ended up resulting in us being hired by multinationals that were building Colgate, building a factory in China or, or Caterpillar building a new facility in China or offices. And then they took us to other parts of, of the world that they were doing work in

Jason ([15:06](#)):

Because they thought if we could assist them with their energy performance goals and achieving LEED certification in China, then we could help them do it in places like India and Eastern Europe. So that that's, in some ways that transition to EMSI was also a transition back to Southwest Missouri, where a lot of my family's family was, and it was just kind of a ripe place to move. I

ended up then at, late stage, I'd always planned on going back to architecture, taking all of this that I had experienced and what I was learning with regard to sustainability, but then practicing in much more traditional way and, and bringing that into more traditional practice because as a consultant, as you probably know, I mean, you're in engagement with the architect or the engineer is relatively limited. You can't necessarily control ultimately the decisions all you can do is give them the recommendations and the reasons for it. And I felt like, practicing as an architect, then I would have, a lot more influence and control from start to finish to engaging, the performance objectives or sustainability goals that were ripe for a project. Absolutely.

Charlie ([16:24](#)):

Yeah, no, I love you connecting the dots there and came home and get family, and it sounds like you definitely set up shop and teaching, I got to ask about going back to Drury University there, it sounds like you've been adjunct there for a long time. What kind of classes do you teach there?

Jason ([16:42](#)):

Yeah, so usually as lecture courses that are focused on sustainable design. So I've always tried to incorporate some aspect of technical capability with then just more lecture based and research based coursework. Trying to introduce really early or high level energy or daylighting analysis to students, so that it's not just about trying to help them, justify for themselves the, the importance, moral, ethical, whatever of sustainable design, but also giving them some skills and tools to apply it to when they are out in the world and practicing. So they're usually lecture courses. In fact, it looks like I'm going to be teaching again. It's been a handful of years since I've taught this fall. A course that is very much about quantitative tools or architects, which will focus on, a lot of the analytical tools at a early sort of conceptual and schematic design phase, I think will be good and important for students as they continue through their education. And then, make them honestly much more marketable and knowledgeable when they get out of the profession.

Charlie ([18:00](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. I don't know if you know this statistic, Jason, 40% of all of those that are signed up to take the LEED green associate exam are either in high

school or college. So it's pretty inspiring. Excited to hear that. Alright. So let's look back on the highlight reel. I'm a fan of looking back on the highlight reel and what are some of your proudest to accomplish?

Jason ([18:20](#)):

Yeah, so that's a great question, obviously. Well, I think that there's a project or two that I've been fortunate to work on that I still kind of think about, and they're pretty important. I think for me anyway, just to, to have been a part of them. And one of them was early when I was at InSAR, we were working with a large team, but it was for a new campus for the American University in New Cairo. So Cairo, and then new Kairos, essentially a suburb of Cairo, much more, newer development. And so the American University was building a campus there and from scratch. And we were involved in some really, I guess, technical and analytical analysis of a concept that Egyptian architect that was spearheading the project came up with that was utilizing very sort of traditional natural middle Eastern systems to develop a new sort of campus model.

Jason ([19:22](#)):

And I still look back at that and it was just really fascinating to be a part of it because I have an architecture degree, but I also have a degree in art history and being able to kind of look back at, very traditional ways of building that used natural systems to provide cooling and shading and heating and light in a modern, udesign and construction context was, was just, is a lot of fun. So that, and then I think probably much more significantly, which is in some ways defined a lot of my past career was all the work that we did in China. So for all intents and purposes in EMSI really did establish LEED in China. So before that, there hadn't been any successful LEED rated or LEED certified projects. There have been one or two demonstration projects that even tried to look at sustainability or renewable energy systems, but EMSI really did kind of populate the pursuit of LEED certification throughout China. And there's still, uan entity there that is providing green building LEED and commissioning consulting services on projects throughout China.

Charlie ([20:44](#)):

That legacy there too, man. I've got to ask a LEED fellow. What did that high honor mean to you?

Jason ([20:51](#)):

It was very meaningful. I mean, yeah, I don't like to tend to not be the person who really looks for accolades and doesn't like a lot of, hubbub about myself. And so trying to pursue fellowship was really difficult because you have to really celebrate your own accomplishments. And that's just not really the type of person I am. I mean, I like recognition like anybody else, but at the same time, I don't like recognition. So the process was challenging, but achieving LEED fellowship was obviously very meaningful because I think it substantiates, it validates all of the work that one has done and maybe even more so the decisions that that one has made about where they've emphasized their efforts and, I've always kind of battled with, well, I went to architecture school to be an architect and I love architecture, but I spent, 15 years still involved in architecture, but not directing how architecture, necessarily the design aspects we have influence.

Jason ([21:56](#)):

But, and so I'd always kind of struggled with that, but, getting achieving LEED fellowship, I think just helps to substantiate like, okay, spending 15 years in a consulting role was, was the right thing to do because it says that you've had an impact. So I think the other thing for me as a side is that the class that I was inducted with was also the class that Greg Franta, who had previously passed away. One of my mentors was also inducted in post famously. So it had a lot of mean, meaning from that perspective,

Charlie ([22:34](#)):

That is a very meaningful, thank you for sharing that, Jason. My next question is one of my favorite to ask someone like you, a green building professional what's around the corner. What should we be reading up on now?

Jason ([22:48](#)):

Well, I'm sure as I mean, carbon seems to be the new denominator if it wasn't so whatever, I mean, even probably eight years ago, or at least wasn't so sort of front and center, but it seems like that is really the, the denominator, the, the measuring stick that we need to be trying to make decisions upon. And I, I actually, I like having a, I guess a goal, but something that we're trying to drive for because it, it helps to substantiate

the decisions it's something to measure against. At least for me having a way to measure success is purposeful and meaningful. And so I think that's clearly, we all need to be, become much more knowledgeable about carbon offsets, carbon accounting. And what does that mean for the decisions that we make? How does it influence how we design and how we operate the built environment and yeah.

Charlie ([23:46](#)):

And the carbon, I we're shifting from just operational carbon, right. To embodied carbon and materials and you're right. It's ramping up.

Jason ([23:55](#)):

I was going to say, I would say at the same time, it's important for us all to not lose sight of very sort of traditional ways of assessing environmental impacts. And, for me, that's kind of looking back at some of the early pioneers in the late sixties and early seventies and how they, the tools that they use to measure daylighting design or energy efficiency. And so not losing sight of some of those, which we are, it's, it's almost like drawing in the architecture profession. I mean, nobody draws anymore. Right? Everything's done on a computer. So I suppose you could argue you are drawing, but I grew up, I came up at a time when we still hand hand drew. And so I looked back at that and I'm fortunate that I learned how to hand draw a set of documents. And so likewise, I think understanding some of the sort of early fundamentals of how we analyze and measure sustainable impact or environmental impact, I think is something that we want to make sure we don't lose sight of.

Charlie ([24:57](#)):

It's good. It's good nugget there for everyone listening that wants to get into the design side. Well, let's go through some rapid fire questions here. Jason, what's your specialty or gift? What are you best at?

Jason ([25:08](#)):

That's a good question, Charlie. I don't know somebody else needs to tell me, I think it was your peers. Well, I think I've always prided myself as the right word, but I've always been, been out of the fact that I feel like I can, I can talk to most anybody. So I form good relationships with our clients, with the consultants that we work with with the contractors that we work with.

And, to me, a lot of this is about relationships and in the truest and most transparent and honest way. And so that's much more valuable than for me then, winning accolades or design awards. And so I've always just been really good at, I guess you could say communication, but developing those, those relationships through the process because, as you and most listeners know, I mean, architecture and construction is very difficult and it can be very challenging in terms of how people interact with each other.

Charlie ([26:06](#)):

Yeah, no, you're absolutely right. Well, that's great that you're a great communicator, bring people together. I mean, I think that's really, really important, right? So I'm a fan of the bucket list. What are one or two things on your bucket list?

Jason ([26:17](#)):

Great question. I've been thinking a lot about this idea of, I'll just say taking a sabbatical in order to really think so. I feel like, it's a lot of do do do, and you always have, some sort of deadline I'd love just taking a dedicated amount of time to maybe think maybe right. And so, I've thought a lot about, taking an extended period time in the outskirts of Florence and just, being and enjoying and thinking,

Charlie ([26:49](#)):

Yeah, man, you got to, we don't give ourselves enough time to even think, day to day we stop. Thank you. Gotta, you gotta block out that time, but yeah, take that sabbatical. I think that'd be amazing. And that's a good segue to another question. Is, do you have any other good habits or routines or rituals that help you stay productive?

Jason ([27:08](#)):

Yeah, I, I tend to be a morning person. I always have, even when I was in college, I, I could work really late and get up early and just a much more productive in the morning. It's a time that I, I'll spend in the Bible and I'll pray a little bit, but I also that's when I'm exercising, which I'm, I just feel better at, exercising in the morning and then trying to kind of do more of my most productive work also in the morning as well. So

Charlie ([27:40](#)):

Yeah, tackle that morning. I don't know if you've heard of a miracle morning how L rod, but it's just good to really have that time in the morning to, to have some silence and affirmations and just visualize your day and then you get a little exercise, maybe you read and you're right. So it sounds like all those things, first thing in the morning, great man, there a certain place that you'd like to do that. I know a lot of us right now work from home, some are going back to offices, but, uwe're spending so much time maybe in our home office, is there a place you gotta go to? So you have a different mindset when you have that morning ritual.

Jason ([28:17](#)):

Well, not really. I mean, most everybody in my house is still asleep and so it's not hard for me to, kind of find a quiet place in the house to do that. I mean, when weather's great, I love to do that outside as much as I can around here, even when the weather's great. It's also not so great. It's incredibly humid as I'm sure it is in Atlanta, but so that can be kind of difficult, but yeah,

Charlie ([28:41](#)):

Yeah man, get outside, but it is humid here in the summer. I was talking about books. Is there a book you'd recommend?

Jason ([28:48](#)):

Yeah, it's actually one that I'm currently reading. I'm about to finish up that I've found pretty fascinating. I'm a big fan of Thomas Friedman's work, hot, flat and crowded and like, and so he co wrote a book with Michael Mandelbaum called that used to be us. And it really, it was written in 2010, 2011, right after the great recession. And it was really about what led to the great recession. But what I find incredibly fascinating is fast forwarding 10 years later. And if you fold in what we're all dealing with now, in terms of the pandemic, there's a lot of what they're reflecting on resulted in the recession and not just from an economic standpoint, but also from an environmental standpoint and the decisions that we have been on, a decades long trajectory of making that is going to make it even rougher.

Jason ([29:43](#)):

If we don't change our ways. And the irony is, like I said, fast forward 10 years later, and what we're dealing with, what they were talking about then is directly applicable now. And we could almost look back and nothing's

changed, right? We haven't changed that trajectory that maybe it's even kind of gotten a little bit worse and that's not to be a downer, but I just, I find it fascinating and sort of reaffirming about the work that we're trying to do from an environmental standpoint that it's imperative. It's not just project by project, but we've got to somehow change mindsets.

Charlie ([30:16](#)):

We're going to put a link to the book in the podcast show notes so they can check that out. Jason, as we come to a close, just any, anything you wish you'd known earlier in your career. Uh, and then any just words of encouragement for someone jumping into the green building movement right now.

Jason ([30:26](#)):

Yeah. I wish somebody would've told me to take and have taken some mechanical engineering courses so that I could be a little wiser and a little smarter when dealing with systems. So, a lot of times we can control the architecture and it needs to start with the architecture. But the fact of the matter is, is we're gonna always have mechanical electrical systems in our buildings. And so being smarter about that would be really helpful as an architect and even as a consultant. And then, I would extend that to somebody else. That's just looking to get into the green building movement. But furthermore, I would say that because we're in a data driven society and data has good application for driving decision making that people need to learn as much as they can about metrics and not just metrics, but how to correctly interpret them and how to convey them, garbage in garbage out, right. Go learn, uh p into this green building movement and, uh, gon this career path.

Charlie ([31:34](#)):

Jason, I really enjoyed our conversation. To everyone, check out the book, Jason recommended maybe connect with him on LinkedIn. And uhust want to say man, thanks for being on the podcast.

Jason ([31:46](#)):

Hey, thank you, man. I appreciate talking to you and getting to know you a little bit. Fantastic.

Charlie ([31:53](#)):

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 to 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.

Charlie ([32:18](#)):

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