

## Creating Innovative Tools for the Green Building Movement with SIG's Kristina Bach | Transcript

Welcome ([00:00](#)):

Welcome to Green Building Matters, the podcast that matters for green building professionals. Learn insight in green buildings as we interview today's experts and 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](#)):

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

Hi everyone. Welcome to the next episode of the green building matters podcast. I'm your host Charlie Cichetti and today I've got one of my colleagues on here, so this is gonna be a special interview with Kristina Bach. She's up in the Twin Cities up in Minneapolis, St Paul area, just a true green building enthusiast and an expert, a great background in architecture. Even some time as a LEED reviewer. We'll talk about that as well as many building projects. Kristina, thanks for being on the podcast today.

Kristina ([01:30](#)):

Yeah, thanks for having me. Happy to be here.

Charlie ([01:31](#)):

We'll talk about some of the innovation work you're doing at our green building consulting firm in a little bit, but I, I always like to learn that origin story. So take us back, where'd you grow up and where'd you go to school?

Kristina ([01:44](#)):

Sure. So I grew up in sort of a semi-rural, fourth tier suburb outside of the Twin Cities in Minnesota, a 10 acre hobby farm. We didn't actually farm for a living, but I did grow up raising chickens, milking cows and all that sort of thing. It's very traditional rural stuff. So after high school I did both my undergrad and undergrad, a graduate degree at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee and lived over there for about six years or so. I was really fortunate that when I was in undergrad to find a job with a local firm that was really willing to accommodate my schedule and grad school aspirations. They worked with me to let me work full time while still juggling school. So did sort of my formative years over there in architecture.

Charlie ([02:27](#)):

Talk about your undergrad but then you were working some there and you went right in to go get that master's in architecture. So tell us what was going through your head at the time. Did you always know you'd go on straight into the master's or what was that like at the time?

Kristina ([02:40](#)):

I did know that solely because architecture, the way degrees are set up is either it's an accredited program or it's not, and you can have an accredited five-year undergrad program or an unaccredited bachelor program and then a two year accredited master. The University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, has an unaccredited bachelor. So I always knew I needed to go on to a master's degree. I had applied a few places around the US but just kind of couldn't give up the ability to work full time while doing school so I stayed in Milwaukee,

Charlie ([03:13](#)):

Milwaukee and then shortly after that ended up in DC doing some LEED reviews. So tell us, when were you first exposed to LEED? Was it in the curriculum there?

Kristina ([03:25](#)):

My first exposure to LEED was working back in 2008 maybe on what was one of the pilot projects for the LEED Neighborhood Development Program Projects. It was a project in sort of Northern Wisconsin a multi building, multi mixed use sort of redevelopment of an old airplane hangar manufacturing plant on Fox River. Just kind of working through those projects and the

parameters and how it gets set up was really interesting. I led a sort of LEED AP study group when I was at that firm when I was pursuing my first LEED AP and just really got into it then. My connection with sustainability and interest goes back all the way to when I first became interested in architecture. When I was in sixth grade or about 12, my family did a six month sabbatical where we lived in the Netherlands for awhile. Being able to travel all around Western Europe and see all these historic buildings that were still in use had been readapted and were still operating and functioning was just really eye opening in terms of what the building stock should be doing and what we should be doing. That idea of taking something and just continuing to readapt it to have a new purpose, it's kind of always stayed with me and my interests in the design room.

Charlie ([04:45](#)):

What a great kind of exposure to sustainability and way to go to your family and your parents were making that decision and doing that, it's really obviously influenced you and made you want to pursue sustainability That's amazing. Early in your career you went to GBCI and the US Green Building Council, and then you went to Cooper Carry. Let's talk about that. Who else had some influence on you there? Any, any kind of early mentors?

Kristina ([05:13](#)):

I had a big mentor at my first job, an architect, Kevin Donahue, who was both on my thesis and a coworker at the firm I was with. He was really instrumental in kind of helping to push this idea of re adaptation and adaptability and he worked as one of the historic preservation people at the firm I was with, but really focused on sort of the gem of a building that sits there without you touching it or just behind the glass box can't survive. There are people who are going to pay for enough of those to just sit there pristine. It really needs to be about what smart interventions can you make that maintain the historic integrity of the building but also still allow function. So that was it. That was a huge sort of influence on me.

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

After I left US GBCI, I went to Cooper Carry in New York. One of my coworkers is actually based out of DC, a woman named Catherine Peter Schmidt. She was a really good designer who really worked to integrate sustainability in all forms throughout our project and kind of just whatever

level so it wasn't one of those scenarios of pushing for the jewel project that's the one that gets sustainability and that's one where we focus on and do all of our efforts. But really the idea, let's meet every client where they are. Figure out what we can do to move the needle just a little bit for every client. We just kind of helped move the industry and keep pushing on that frontage as opposed to just the Juul projects that get all the resources thrown at them.

Charlie ([06:45](#)):

What great early influence there. Talk a little bit about when you were in Washington DC and with the US Green Building Council and GBCI, what was it like at the time? I think Rick Fedrizzi was still leading things and still some grassroots work happening. You're on the technical side and seeing probably a lot of different projects. For those listening to the podcast, can you give them a peek into what it's like to be a LEED reviewer?

Kristina ([07:12](#)):

Yeah. So I joined US GBC or GBCI in spring of 2010 as actually their very first internal in house review team member and I get to claim that. So fame only because they hired me into their customer service department. On my very first day my boss and the head of GBCI took me out to lunch and said well we know you just started but we actually have a job that we think you might like more and be better suited for that we just posted today. Would you like to move to that team instead? It's funny because I started and it was a good two or three months before anyone else joined me on that team. But it was great because it was right around when version 2.2 was closing out in 2009 was getting ramped up and just seeing kind of the progression of how the industry reacted to that change to then better prepare and position myself as we switched to version 4 and move on from there.

Kristina ([08:05](#)):

It was really interesting. It's interesting because a lot of things with LEED documentation, documentation can be varied consistent from project to project depending on what you're working on. The walking transit maps for example, there's not a lot of different ways to do that, but where it gets really interesting is how every project has to encounter something that is unique to their circumstances and the way that their building operates, their client operates. How do you make your operations and adjust and align to the

LEED practices, even if it's not the exact extreme letter of the law? What makes sense for you that also meets the sustainability requirements and that sort of complex nature of interfacing with projects and dealing with those challenges are something I really enjoyed and kind of what drove me to move more to a consulting role.

Charlie ([08:56](#)):

That's so cool to peek into that side of things in still somewhat the early days there. I know our first LEED projects were certified in the year 2000, but you were right there when big major changes LEED version three and LEED 2009 updates. LEED version four that we're still working on today. So that was a big move. Connect the dots, Kristina, then you go up the East coast, you go to the Big Apple. Tell us about your time at Cooper Carry.

Kristina ([09:25](#)):

I moved to New York because my husband, my now husband took a job that relocated us up there. And that was really interesting because I had always worn, I would never, you want to live in New York and then there we are. We ended up in New York in Manhattan and so it was great. I really enjoyed my time at Cooper Kerry. It was interesting the rep of a wide range of projects that we worked on. My time was actually split in half. Half of it was just doing sustainability consulting and sustainability support work for the larger firm as a whole. The other half was doing traditional sort of design practice and just seeing kind of where those opportunities to support a larger organization was. Cooper Carry ,at the time, had four offices, Atlanta being their headquarters, DC, New York, and then one out in California. The wide array of the different projects that each office worked on really gave me a good exposure to sustainability across all kinds of all the challenges that different industries and sectors face and how they differ. The realities of the hospitality projects are different than the challenges that are commercial office spaces, which is different than higher education building. Kind of getting that larger understanding of kind of how you best implement it in all those different locations.

Charlie ([10:43](#)):

Yeah. The word innovation comes up there when you're at Cooper Carry In a minute we'll talk about what you're doing here. At our company, but then the certification side, the consulting side, you started to shift towards that

move home. You and your husband ended up back in St Paul. Right? So tell us about that transition.

Kristina ([11:02](#)):

Yeah, we ended up back in St Paul after we had our first kid and realized that living in a 650 square foot walk up in Manhattan was not a long term possibility for a family. I took a job with an engineering firm called Sebesta here in the Twin Cities on their sustainability team. They'd had a lot of folks working on existing buildings, certifications and supporting that and then I came in to also help them grow their consulting work in the design and construction realm for new projects. That was great because that really gave me a peek into the understanding of sort of these large commercial office buildings, how they operate, what sort of challenges they face on an ongoing operational basis. It was a really interesting time for me professionally just because a lot of architects don't get that sort of peek behind the curtain of kind of how buildings move on, how they actually operate, what challenges happen when the buildings have been around for 5, 10, 20 years.

Kristina ([12:02](#)):

So much of a designer's time is spent in developing the design, the initial theoretical idea of how the building will operate and then they hand the keys over and very few maintain that connection and or are able to sort of continue that interface even if the firm maintains it well. It's a select number of people at the firms. The regular typical architect doesn't get as much of that exposure since it was really interesting just being able to get into the large mechanical rooms and see them actually function and see some of the challenges that different buildings face. Even pest control issues that you don't really think about that much. I think when you're designing and then getting up from these giant spires of these tall towers and realizing, Oh, this is where the pigeons roost is the problem that they have to deal with was really eye opening, interesting experience with my time there.

Charlie ([12:57](#)):

I love it. The existing building side of things and it's just a different world operating and green and we'll talk a little more about healthy buildings, but just take us through the rest of that career journey and then fast forward to today and what you're doing at SIG.

Kristina ([13:12](#)):

Sure. After that engineering firm, I took a job with HGA, architects and engineers to really start to head up their certifications team. They're a large sort of roughly a thousand people, 10 office firm. I was in charge of managing the team that did kind of all of the management of their certifications for any project that was going for an official rating system or jurisdictional sustainability writing. That was really interesting. It was a lot of travel, a lot of time going to different locations to support different projects but really enjoyable because it just gave me, being in a large firm, it gave me an opportunity to work on a really wide variety of projects and that's one of the things that I've really found very enjoyable. I very much appreciate that my career is that a lot of architects get pigeonholed into this is what they do and this is what they do best.

Kristina ([14:06](#)):

And so Joe is our urban planning guy, so he's going to do all the urban planning. Jane is our spec writer. She's going to do all the specs just for higher ed. With being in sustainability and working for larger firms, I've had this great opportunity to work across projects and across sectors and that really I think is incredibly beneficial. Not only because it keeps my day to day really interesting, there's a lot of variety, a lot of new things and I get that opportunity to continue to learn. It's not, there's never a sense of growing stagnant in sort of what I'm exposed to or what I'm learning or growing with because there's always such new information and new challenges that I get to be presented with. I've worked there for almost four years and then had the opportunity to join us SIG and had known as SIG for a number of years and so gladly sort of jumped at it to sort of head up this innovation team.

Charlie ([14:59](#)):

Yeah, no it's fantastic. We'll talk more about what we're doing in a minute and just so happy you're here and leading our innovation team. We've known each other for a while and it's just great to have really grown the Minneapolis office you turn around and next thing that we've really grown in staff there, just a ton of fun. I have some ties to Opus and Minnetonka and that's taken several trips up there over the years and it's come full circle.



Let's look back though for a minute. So Kristina, what are some of your proudest achievements when you look back? What pops into your mind?

Kristina ([15:33](#)):

I have sort of a couple. One is a project I did fairly early on in my career at Amberg Anderson. It was a library project actually in Iowa that was looking at trying to do a LEED certification. It was the first one this public library system had ever pursued and they were setting a goal fairly low for the time and in some respects, I mean it was the very end of sort of version 2.2 phasing out, but still and being their first project, they wanted a silver level. It was good for them having never done it before and the contractor was really not familiar with the requirements and things like that and just being able to work with them, help guide them through the process, really pay attention and track everything and we actually ended up getting them gold without any additional add cost items that they needed to worry about, just by paying really close attention to it.

Kristina ([16:29](#)):

Really a proud moment for me. My first project that I certified. Another one that I think was a big achievement that I'm really happy with was I was working with a commercial building in DC that was brand new class, a office building that was looking at how they structured, really promote their tenants to get certification. They developed this really in depth and detailed tenant resource and designing construction manual that included a lot of guidance, a lot of recommendations about, "Hey, here's some products even we've screened that will help you meet requirements. Here are you're walking pas and your documentation" and just getting that set up such that they had a really easy time getting all of their projects to certification.

Charlie ([17:13](#)):

That's a great project. Since you've got a lot of credentials, I'd like to talk about that for a minute. WELL AP, fit one ambassador lots of LEED credentials after your name, I think all of them. You're also a licensed architect. So if you could just for a minute, Kristina speak about credentials and why you've pursued several and how that's helped you. If you could speak to that for a minute.

Kristina ([17:38](#)):



Sure. Yeah. I'm a credential junkie. I have all of the LEED ones now. Pretty much if I can find it semi applicable, I start to think about pursuing it. It's interesting because I didn't start out that way. I started out with the idea of, well, I'll go for the LEED ones because I was working at USBC and so therefore it was really directly related to my day to day professional life. I had free access to all the training materials, the exams are reimbursed, so it's like an easy, I'll take these, these are interesting. But since then, and even just keeping them up, as Charlie, with you also having all of the LEEDs, there's a lot of continuing ed that goes into it. I find it really interesting just and I think credentials are a great way to get the exposure to the initial system to really show that you've spent the time digging into it, starting to understand the requirements, but then more than even just the initial first exam.

Kristina ([18:35](#)):

I think the continuing ed and those requirements, even though they can be tough to meet, I'll admit right now I struggle with the homes and the neighborhoods development every two years, so plug to USGBC letting me get some more sessions on that greenbuild. It's a great way to just keep abreast of what's going on with the industry. It's so easy to fall behind with all the things that are coming up and the changes that come out to the rating system and things like that, that the requirement to continue to go back to those credentials and go back to some of that education is just a great way to make sure you stay abreast of what's going on. The new developments.

Charlie ([19:12](#)):

Yeah, no, thank you. I totally agree with lots of continuing, I don't know, 54 hours on the LEED side then some WELL hours, some of them they're reciprocal. But Hey, luckily we have a good partnership with our online education company here. So let's talk a little more about what you're doing now in this role as vice president of innovation and really making sure that there's even some real time monitoring in place for these buildings. You had kind of hinted at that handoff, right, Kristina from maybe a designer, Tesla of a building, but then it's not really run well. So how do you have a better handoff? What kind of things are you working on today?

Kristina ([19:50](#)):

Yeah, so right now I'm working on primarily trying to figure out ways to level up the industry as a whole in terms of how to provide some of these services and what ways to make that interface happen a little bit more supposedly. So one project that we're working on is looking at a lot of indoor air quality and sort of what alternatives or software or tools are out there in the industry that we can help leverage to provide more service to our projects, but then also allow them to operate better and have a better handle on kind of what's going on in their space. I think it is really, really helpful, particularly in the changing current pandemic climate going on. Additionally, you're working with a couple large corporations that sort of their portfolio level of saying, okay, how do we really address and incorporate wellness and healthy buildings into our general design and operation standpoint to make sure that they're providing the best environment they can to retain and attract employees, while also operating in kind of a sustainable and good stewardship sort of role for us.

Charlie ([21:01](#)):

We could talk about the COVID-19 for a minute and the pandemic. I mean these are some initiatives you'd already been working on, just really vetting right? For clients, whether it's new developers, buildings, on the ground or existing buildings. But it's safe to say, right Kristina, that with the pandemic here, I mean this is really speeding up.

Kristina ([21:20](#)):

Oh, absolutely. Yeah, it was something that we've always been kind of been looking at and we're debating and sort of trying to figure out how to work into it and I think it's going to be really interesting as we see buildings and facilities come back online and as they start to pro plan for future additions, renovations, new spaces, what those are going to look like and how this experience will impact those. I think the future of space planning and office design, it's going to be pretty dramatically impacted related to this experience. And so figuring out all the different tools and softwares and ways to leverage the known best practices is a huge benefit, I think to our clients.

Charlie ([22:02](#)):

Absolutely. Let's talk about some tools, right? Because I think you were talking about how you've been in this industry a while, it's something you

and I really share passion for is like, Hey, how can we not just make our life easier and our team that our consultants and all these projects and engineers on all these projects, but how can we make some tools for the industry? So no, there are one or two more things that you just want to kind of give a peek to what you're going to be working on coming up.

Kristina ([22:29](#)):

Sure. So one thing we're looking at trying to develop or looking at is some sort of a software platform to help with early feasibility studies and sort of just the feasibility of what does the certification look like? Where might I be scoring based on my project, type in my location, what are some pinch points that I need to be aware of that I'm going to struggle with? Really it just comes from that sort of larger industry knowledge and exposure of, so for example, what does the medical clinic struggle with? It's different from a commercial office versus the shopping center for example, and all of those even in the same location will score very differently and have a very different impact. Some kind of where the struggles are going to be based on the nature of what their interior tends to look like and how they tend to operate and some sort of a tool that will help project teams work through that in a faster way to just kind of get that good initial sense. So also then helping as an industry free up consultant time to spend their time dedicated on, okay, these are where I have the biggest impact versus this item is going to be really challenging for me in reality. Even if I can solve it, there's not a huge ROI or benefit in that now. So I can focus my efforts and energy elsewhere to improve the project.

Charlie ([23:51](#)):

Let's pretend we had a crystal ball. Kristina, , you and I both have been in this green building movement a while. We just talked a little bit about healthy buildings, but maybe even set that aside. What else is coming up? What else do you see coming around the corner we need to be reading up on now?

Kristina ([24:07](#)):

Oh, I don't, I don't know that we can set it aside.

Charlie ([24:12](#)):

Healthy buildings. What else gets you excited about maybe healthy buildings?

Kristina ([24:15](#)):

I think it's going to be the biggest shift coming in sort of the next wave is going to be really that idea of how buildings or companies rightsize in terms of their office space and how that shifts from, do they really need as much office floor as they have? Do they start seeing clients shrinking their office space of where people work from home and that focus more on the operational and health and wellness benefits to folks. Interestingly enough, there's an inherent contradiction in that if you move to shared spaces, you're then also requiring people to be more comfortable being in that shared desk environment or the hot desk and that's what that cleanliness and sort of cleaning policies would end up looking like. How do you reassure your staff that the desk that someone else used is clean enough for you to use the next day for example.

Kristina ([25:09](#)):

I think in design we'll have some shifts, but I think also building operation and management is going to have some pretty significant changes from a sustainability standpoint and it will be interesting to see what sort of longer term sustainability and healthy materials and healthy cleaning protocols can get implemented. Not just healthy in terms of virus mitigation and sickness health, but also the material qualities themselves and what sort of chemicals and things like that because that's also been the shift that people are moving towards dramatically in terms of even if people don't necessarily understand what the California prop 65 warning label means, regular consumers are paying attention to that. I went online today to buy a set of funnels off of Amazon and was looking at one that was fairly lower in price, but I wanted to see some of their views. First 10 reviews were all people complaining about the fact that it's labeled as having chemicals that cause cancer. Why was this not on the packaging before I bought it? I'm returning it, I'm not using this and just that interesting. They might not understand what goes into that prop 65 warning, but people are paying attention to that and that transparency and disclosure of materials is, I think we need to swing even farther as we move forward.

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

Wow. No, you're right. I mean it's in front of us. LEED has pushed us towards more transparency with those building product manufacturers, not just creating supply chains, but to your point, just the healthy material side of it. There's still so much work to do there. How about just the fact that we spend 90% of our lives indoors and we're seeing a spike in WELL, FitWELL and we need this information. You're right, that is the next chapter of the green building movement. Separately we could talk about carbon laws and other targets, maybe net positive buildings and regenerative design, but what's hitting us right now and we're going to be in it for awhile. I think you're saying the healthy building movement. Absolutely right. Alright. Let's talk a little more about you and your career here. Kristina, just some kind of rapid fire questions. What do you think you're best at? What's your gift?

Kristina ([27:19](#)):

Okay, so my gift is, as has been described to me is I have a really weird encyclopedic knowledge and way of thinking. I don't know how it's different, but I've been told by multiple people that my way of processing and retaining information is different. So I'm going to lean into it. I have just for my exposure and sort of project experience, I have a unique or uncanny ability to recall project details and really nitty gritty details at the drop of the hat without needing to look back or referencing or lookup. It's been incredibly beneficial when we work in the certification systems. Entirely detailed oriented. It's interesting, I've had a few different colleagues describe me as well, "Kristina is going to know the answer. It's going to be the right answer. She's going to be able to give it to me. If anyone has to nag a project about getting something, if Kristina is still nagging, it means it really does need to be done."

Charlie ([28:21](#)):

Well. Very, very smart. You're well-read on all this material too and you got the credentials and it's like you got a lot of confidence Kristina, it's what I've got to know about you. It's like, you've done this for awhile and you really know it inside and out but you can also be patient with clients and different team members. It's exciting. Let's talk about any best practices, good habits, any rituals to help you stay on point.

Kristina ([28:45](#)):

So I'm a big fan of daily or weekly written plans for whatever reason I connect better with things being handwritten as opposed to typed out. I will actively take sort of handwritten notes when I am studying for different exams and things. Even the process of rewriting it was helpful for me to get it sort of get that retainage but so I'm related to that. I use a planner, device system a written, physical planner that actually sets the idea it sets a habit or an intention or goal for 30 days and your idea is that you'll focus on that for 30 days and make sure you're tracking and repeating and doing that. I found that process of just saying, okay, for the next month my focus is "x" and I'm going to take these steps to sort of make sure I do it and help move it along and pay attention to it has been incredibly helpful, too.

Kristina ([29:41](#)):

Not only just kind of get the habit done, but help establish best practices that I kind of carry through and carry on. That's a big one for me is kind of these 30 day blocks of focusing on something. The other big one is, I get to use a lot in my career if I can find a way to automate it with an Excel, the spreadsheet that will do something for me, I will get it done and I will have it in an Excel format. So I have a lot of different tools like that. That actually comes out of a funny story of where we were working as the MEP team and energy modeling team on a project where there's a different company serving as the consultants and they couldn't keep their LEED checklists up to date in terms of points or credits and things like that.

Kristina ([30:24](#)):

And at the very end, right before they went to submit for their final review and they were telling the client that they were, "Oh yeah, we're going in with 60 points, we're going to be gold, everything's fine. Provided the energy modeling actually gets approved at where we're at." We could turn around and say, no, you have a mat there. You're only at 59 points max. Even if we get all the points we want, you are not adding up. And it's really just those linkages that they had a detailed sheet and a one page sheet and they weren't talking to each other. So that idea of if, if you have to have information replicated, let's make the updates once, that just automatically carries through. So you don't have that, that sort of headache coming back to bite you.

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

Absolutely. Gosh, I hope they found one more point. Maybe buy some green power offsets or something. Hope they got there. Let's talk about a bucket list. What are one or two things maybe on your bucket list?

Kristina ([31:15](#)):

As I mentioned, sort of the beginning of the call, I had the opportunity to live abroad in Europe for six months when I was in middle school and then my family lived in Australia for five months when I was in high school. I love that and I would love to find in some way the opportunity to live abroad for an extended period. My family as I raised them. I don't know that my husband and I have the jobs that would accommodate that necessarily. My father working for university doing a research sabbatical was much easier, but some sort of ability to live abroad, even if it's in retirement for a period of time is really, really a long term bucket list. Related to that is the other big thing is learning another language. I took, well I took German in high school. My father was actually born in Germany. I felt like I had to take German based on what my high school offered. I didn't take it enough to be fluent in it, nor did I retain most of it. I think it'd be really interesting to both live somewhere and learn a language enough that I feel comfortable walking around and getting around with it.

Charlie ([32:23](#)):

Yeah, really get immersed in it. Just for the record, I'm open to have those talks. Let's talk books. I'm not sure if you like to listen to audible or you like to pick up a good book in your hands, but Kristina, is there a book or two you'd recommend?

Kristina ([32:39](#)):

I Love to read. I do not have a ton of time to read. I have three little kids, so I don't have a ton of time to read. But some good ones that I have read in the past is one from a professional standpoint is a book called *Managing to Change the World*. It's written by a woman named Alison Green and Jerry Hauser. Alison actually writes a workplace advice column that she puts out multiple sort of columns every single day. Those are a little more achievable for me to fit into my reading schedule at the moment. The book is just full of tips for sort of how to effectively set up your team, how to get results, what sort of things are the best way to really motivate people and sort of avoiding some of those common pitfalls micro-managing or checking in when it's not



necessary. I found that really helpful a few years ago when I read that, which was great. I also like to read a lot of fiction, so usually if I'm reading it, it's more in that variety. The sort of escape realm is I think more enjoyable for me.

Charlie ([33:45](#)):

I'll put some links in the podcast show notes. Those are great. My wife loves fiction and I'm more into nonfiction and it's good that you can go back and forth. As we come to a close to just two more questions. One, is there anything you wish you had known a little earlier in your career?

Kristina ([34:02](#)):

I think the idea of meeting clients where they are, and I think this is maybe the struggle or challenge that comes out of a lot of university education stuff at the moment where if you're working on a project, you're doing your thesis towards the sustainability certification focus, it becomes this idea of you're going to build the most advanced, most sustainable net zero, zero energies, zero water building possible. You're doing a fully red list everything project. No one really sees in a lot of cases they don't get dialed back to sort of what's more realistic or feasible. I remember that being big, sort of a realization, as I started working in terms of this idea that, well obviously people don't have unlimited funds and unlimited resources, so there's always going to be this trade off. The idea of recognizing where you can meet people, where they are with the sort of pragmatic solutions or how they can better refine and re-replace and redo their operations and their sustainable attribution to make sure they're doing things that make sense.

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

LEED gets a lot of flack and in a lot of cases I think deservedly so, for like the bike racks that are in this rural facility that no one is ever biking to, but they've got all these bike racks out front and they're getting the points for the bike rack credit. And I get it, you don't, and I never have ever wanted to be this sort of consultant that says, well let's just do that because it gets us the easy points if it doesn't make sense for your facility, it's not something that I'm going to be actively recommending that you do. So I think that's a big one that I think just sort of that realization and sort of is a big one I'd recommend it for people.

Charlie ([35:49](#)):

I like it. Some listeners have been doing this for a while in this green building movement now they are pivoting doing more healthy buildings. But Kristina, some listening to the podcast are just now jumping in to the green building movement, so actually some of our young colleagues come out of college and new hires at our company for example, but what words of encouragement would you have to someone jumping in right now?

Kristina ([36:11](#)):

It's a great time to jump in as I think there's a better understanding in the larger industry, in terms of just kind of what sustainability can mean. I would like to think there's not quite as much pushback as there maybe was 20 years ago doing sustainable related things. I think it's also important to know that you don't need to have all the answers. While I referenced earlier that sort of gift of encyclopedic knowledge, I know the nitty gritty requirements, but if it makes sense for an individual project or how that might work for our MEP system or things like that, those are not things that I'm necessarily going to know offhand and I'm fully confident in being able to say, well, we're going to have to look at this or let's talk to this engineer. Let's have some more discussions about it. I think that's important is there's this pressure to this idea that everything is the consultant and the reality is that you are one person, you can't know everything about how a building is designed and operates and then also how to improve the sustainability. It's much more about the kind of give and take. How do you set yourself up to learn and expand as you can?

Charlie ([37:21](#)):

That's so cool. Well, I'm excited for Kristina. This has been great. I even learned a little bit, but just for everyone to know and connect with Kristina on LinkedIn, but this has been Kristina Bach and her green building journey. She's vice president of innovation at our green building consulting firm, SIG out of our Minnesota office. Kristina, thanks so much.

Kristina ([37:40](#)):

Absolutely. It was a pleasure.

Charlie ([37:44](#)):

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 are 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.

Speaker 6 ([38:09](#)):

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 for any notes and links that we mentioned in today's episode and you can actually see the other episodes that have already been recorded with our amazing 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 on next week's episode.