2020 Town Hall Series: TRUE
During the inaugural TRUE Town Hall, GBCI convened the green building community around waste elimination strategies by highlighting some of the leaders in the industry who are raising the bar and amplifying the triple bottom line benefits for their stakeholders.

Susan Westrup reflected on the evolution of TRUE and the incredible milestones the program has achieved thus far. Gautami Palanki shared how Arc is making performance measurement accessible for all and Mahesh Ramanujam stressed the importance of a zero-waste future for people, places and the economy.

**Program Highlights**

As the first zero waste certification program dedicated to measuring, improving, and recognizing zero waste performance, TRUE is helping facilities evaluate their operations and find ways to improve their progress toward zero waste. It is a whole systems approach aimed at changing how materials flow through society and encourage the redesign of resource life cycles so that all products are reused or reused – diverting all solid waste from landfills, incineration, and the environment.

From hosting in depth workshops in 7 countries, adding to the family of TRUE Advisors, and bringing the first projects to Vietnam, Greece, Colombia, and the United Kingdom, the TRUE program has made tremendous growth over the past year. From commercial breweries to automobile manufacturers to the apparel industry, TRUE has 220 registered and certified projects in 17 countries across the world showcasing their environmental leadership, increasing efficiency, reducing costs, and saving resources.

Industry giant Colgate-Palmolive is supporting circular and resilient economies with their dedication to the TRUE program. With 17 manufacturing facilities across 4 continents already TRUE Certified, Colgate-Palmolive has committed to 100% Zero Waste Facilities for their global operations. Soon, this achievement will be distinguished by the TRUE logo on products manufactured at their TRUE certified facilities.

At Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. the mission is to produce the highest quality beer while creating the lowest possible environmental impact. Since their establishment in 1980, reusing materials and reducing waste has always been front of mind. Their zero-waste philosophy reaches beyond just solid waste, creating a culture that focuses on employee education, upstream management, and source separation to achieve their goals. Both of their facilities have achieved TRUE Platinum certification. Their location in Chico, California has a 99.8% diversion rate and is home to the first HotRot in-vessel composting system in the country. This advanced technology creates nutrient rich compost from all food waste generated by the restaurant and break rooms that is then reused for onsite agriculture. At the Mills River, North Carolina site, Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. has been able to divert 98.9% of all waste. They are utilizing the rail system to bring malted barley to the brewery, recovering and reusing CO2 generated during fermentation, and continually working with packaging suppliers to cut waste in all steps of the process.
Greenbuild Brings Zero Waste to Events

Earlier this year, GBCI officially announced the newest step in TRUE’s evolution – TRUE For Events. TRUE For Events allows organizations to certify one-time or recurring events as zero waste. With TRUE for Events, organizations can ensure that their events stay dedicated to sustainability. While this certification is newly available to the public, events have been certifying under TRUE for several years. Notably, USGBC’s Greenbuild International Conference and Expo has certified as TRUE Platinum three years in a row in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

Since first launching in 2002, Greenbuild has quickly become the world’s largest conference and expo for the green building industry. The flagship U.S. show is produced annually by Informa, USGBC’s conference partner, and attracts tens of thousands of green building and sustainability professionals each year. The event consists of four days of education sessions, hundreds of exhibitors, multiple catered functions, a Celebration event, and thousands of hotel nights.

Greenbuild U.S. has the distinction of being one of the most sustainable events in the country, achieving TRUE for Events Platinum certification for three years in a row. During each of these events, Greenbuild successfully diverted over 90% of its waste from landfills. This was achieved both through several innovative strategies that go far beyond installing recycling and compost bins. For example, the carpet on the expo hall floor was cut in such a way that it could be reused for future events. Additionally, exhibitors donated more than 25,000 pounds of materials to local nonprofits, including cement blocks, flooring, carpet, floor tiles and wood, ensuring that they would have a second life. Another innovated method was to elicit sustainability pledges from attendees that committed them to sustainable actions. Attendees could pledge to engage in several waste-saving activities, including bring a reusable water bottle to the event and selecting local or organic food while in attendance. At the event, these pledges were shown through an interactive Sustainability Hub, culminating in 14,500 pledges and helping to educate attendees about best practices for waste reduction.

TRUE For Events represents a standardized and efficient process for certifying large events as low or zero waste. With TRUE For Events, companies can ensure that their events reflect their values, helping to limit waste and educate the public on the possibilities of a waste-free future.
Triple Threat: Orange Coast College Takes on Three GBCI Certifications

In 2019, Orange Coast College (OCC) Recycling Center reached a new milestone, becoming the first building to be certified under LEED, SITES and TRUE. Having achieved Gold certification in LEED and SITES and Platinum certification under TRUE, OCC Recycling Center has made its mark as one of the most successful green buildings in the nation.

OCC decided to revamp the 45-year-old recycling facility in 2014, fully engaging the surrounding community in their redevelopment project. Residents were polled and asked about what types of amenities they wanted the recycling center to include. Their answers have led to the adoption of a several new programs and on-site installations, such as public art created by OCC art students that is constructed from materials recycled at OCC. The surrounding landscape was also designed with the goal of fulfilling the survey results by becoming a living teaching tool for community members. The local community is invited to visit the center to learn about and access the many sustainable areas of the site, including composting and recycling areas, a bioswale that teaches visitors about stormwater quality and runoff, a recycled water and retention basin and an on-site food production garden where visitors can learn about farm-to-table gardening and food waste. As a leader in sustainability as well as community engagement, OCC Recycling Center is a comprehensive project that represents the future of green buildings.

OCC Recycling Center’s triple certification also helps to demonstrate the complimentary nature of different GBCI certifications. USGBC and GBCI encourage project teams to work towards certifying under multiple systems. By following the example of OCC Recycling Center, we can approach green building more holistically and ensure that our buildings have a truly positive impact on all fronts.

Moving Towards Zero

Zero waste is not an easy accomplishment. As a relatively new concept in facility management, zero waste initiatives are often unfamiliar to many project teams and may require time to adjust to and implement. Therefore, TRUE is developing a precertification process that organizations can follow to get themselves certified. Precertification is available to all projects regardless of the level of diversion performance that has been achieved. It is part of an optional, incremental pathway to formal certification that prioritizes the core actions essential to getting a successful start: auditing, analyzing, and aspiring to zero waste. As precertification is an optional step and is not required for TRUE certification, project teams may choose to skip precertification and pursue TRUE certification directly, if they are ready. More information on precertification can be found at true.gbcì.org.
Larger facilities or campuses that want to certify under TRUE also have the option of first certifying their component parts. This is the strategy that UC Berkeley has been following since 2016. At the time, there were no academic buildings in the United States that were TRUE Platinum Certified. UC Berkeley hopes to one day certify their entire campus, but without an example to follow, they had to innovate. In December 2018, the University broke down this barrier, achieving a TRUE Platinum certification for Kevin and Connie Chou Hall, making it one of the country’s greenest academic buildings. The certification’s success was a result of big picture thinking that reduced waste across several functions in the building, including food services and maintenance. The following year, UC Berkeley released a comprehensive report that details strategies and goals for bringing the entire campus to zero waste by the end of 2020. Chou Hall’s TRUE certification has presented the University with the experience and know-how to pursue this impressive goal.

Certifying any project can be a daunting task, and that’s why GBCI wants to support and simplify your transition to zero waste. Whether it be opting into precertification or certifying component parts of a larger space, there are several different strategies that can help you achieve the TRUE certification that you desire.

TRUE Professionals

Across the world, hundreds of TRUE Advisors are working to promote zero waste strategies in their companies and communities. It is these innovators who are helping to turn policy into practice, drastically reducing waste facilities produce and dispose of. GBCI acknowledges and appreciates the work of zero waste pioneers worldwide as they strive to reduce pollution, improve health, and lead the transition to a circular economy. For this reason, we would like to highlight the efforts of two of our members who have helped to successfully bring TRUE to their communities.

A dedicated member of the zero waste movement, Denise Braun is a LEED and WELL accredited professional as well as a TRUE Advisor. She has conducted waste assessments and audits for an impressive 30 million square feet of commercial buildings. Denise has been a leader with TRUE by mentoring college students and hosting zero waste educational webinars and workshops. Her portfolio encompasses more than 1.5 million square feet of TRUE certified space, including the first TRUE certified high-rise building: Kilroy/Salesforce. Additionally, Denise is the founder and Principal of All About Waste, an international sustainability consulting and project management firm. With All About Waste, Denise has developed and analyzed technical waste management solutions for a wide array of building types, including residential, offices, warehouses, stadiums, hospitals, and hotels. Denise’s work demonstrates the key role that waste reduction strategies play in green building. Today, Denise serves on the Board of Directors for USGBC-Los Angeles and is continuing to dedicate herself to a greener tomorrow.

Nearly 3,000 miles away, TRUE Advisor Allyson Tombesi is pioneering zero waste strategies in her home state of Florida. For the past two years, Allyson has served as an environmental engineer with materials provider and manufacturer Titan Florida, LLC. Recently, Allyson led the initiative to upgrade Titan’s largest cement plant, the Pennusco Cement Complex, to TRUE Platinum. To achieve this, Allyson trained over 100 employees on zero waste strategies, educating them on topics including proper waste disposal, environmentally preferred purchasing, and waste audit analysis. Allyson has served as the recruitment chair for the Tampa Bay Branch of USGBC Florida and continues to educate and inspire
employees about sustainable waste strategies.

From the emerging professionals to the seasoned leaders, TRUE would not be as successful without the help of all the dedicated professionals that implement zero waste strategies in buildings, communities, and events around the world.

Responding to Now

In recent months, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected nearly every aspect of our daily lives. The impact of COVID-19 will be felt for years to come—on the economy, on people and on our way of life. Remaining resilient will require every industry and individual to adapt at a pace we might never have thought possible. In response to COVID-19, USGBC and GBCI have outlined a series of actions and priorities to support the global recovery effort and leverage the power of our community to shape a healthier future for all.

The TRUE rating system inherently provides avenues to address the COVID-19 crisis. TRUE contains built-in strategies that benefit occupants and communities in times of need, including increased support of local businesses, supporting food donation programs, and growing food on-site for greater resilience and security. Strategies like these ensure that TRUE certified facilities can keep their occupants safe while supporting the economies of their local communities.

TRUE also reduces infection risk through a prevention of unneeded waste. This minimizes the need for janitorial staff and waste management workers to come into direct contact with potentially contaminated materials. In addition, generating little to no excess materials means reduced dependency on haulers and other outside agencies, leading to a greater ability to weather changes in the marketplace.

We understand that reaching certification during this new and challenging time may be difficult for many project teams. For this reason, GBCI has adapted the certification process to provide project teams flexibility, help them update their certification work plans and extend timelines. Where needed, GBCI is postponing or suspending the on-site assessment phase for TRUE certification and implementing remote audit and assessment procedures. As featured in the online Town Hall, GBCI is also releasing a TRUE Safety-First Pilot Credit to promote best practices that support the health and safety of custodial and waste management workers. Please go to gbc.org for more information on TRUE’s COVID-19 response, and visit this link for more resources on how to implement waste prevention and reuse tactics in response to the pandemic.
Speakers

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