

The following is a brief write up of the breakout session after the formal presentations addressing climate change, buildings, & the challenge before the building industry to reduce CO2 emissions. Breakout session members were mostly on the development side or consultant support, although we had one person from the furniture industry.

The following are the three main issues & points the group identified:

1. CO2 data in building products: while it is changing, CO2 data (embedded/embodied) in building materials (concrete, PVC, steel, insulation, wood, glass, plaster board, etc.), fixtures (HVAC, plumbing, electrical, etc), and furniture is not readily available. Therefore, it is difficult for the building industry to evaluate and compare products/materials from the CO2 standpoint. Changes are occurring and manufacturers are incorporating CO2 values in their products. Ideally, CO2 should be included in a spec sheet similar to other product specifications. The building industry can put pressure on manufacturers to add CO2 data to their specification sheets.
2. How to incorporate CO2 into Building Industry practices: Once CO2 information is available, how can it become part of the decision-making process? Will vary depending on where the practitioner is in the building life cycle continuum (e.g., developer, financier, architect/designer, contractor, manager/owner, etc.). Each area might have different incentives & motivation to consider CO2. Without regulatory requirements to minimize CO2 emissions, motivation must also come from other sources such as industry pressure and standards (building codes, LEED, Net Zero, etc), or market signals (energy costs, competitive advantage by minimizing CO2 emissions, etc.).
3. Can the market alone reduce CO2 emissions in the building industry? The market can provide signals that can lead to behavior change, but it is incapable alone of transforming the industry. There need to be a combination of non-market instruments such as regulations, industry and public pressure, etc.