

Establish priorities.



How might you introduce Material Health strategies to the project team and establish what's most important? Having a clear plan from the onset of a project will help the team navigate potential obstacles and help you present the case for material health to stakeholders.

Define your priorities:

- + Will you prioritize ingredient transparency? Avoiding toxics such as added formaldehyde or phthalates? Designing for young, elderly or low-income users? Designing for occupants with allergies or sensitivities? Or all of the above?
- + Communicate the priorities with all stakeholders.



Establish your design scope



Which areas can you impact within this project?

Identify your project typology:

- + Is your project residential, commercial, a competition?
- + Is it a renovation or a new construction?
- + Identify areas or surfaces of impact. Which materials will be in high volume or touched most often? These will present the highest level of exposure to the occupants.

Analyze the project's context.



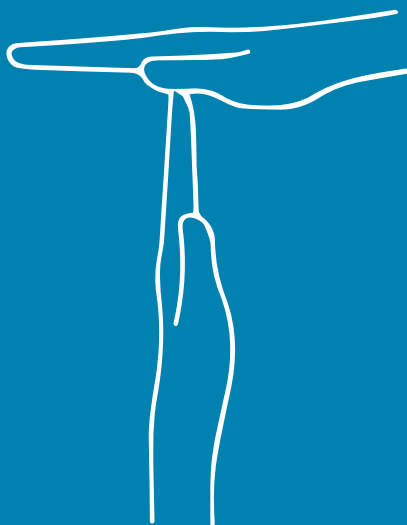
What is the relationship between your project and the neighborhood's cultural ecosystem?

Research the site context:

- + Get to know the neighborhood + surrounding community.
- + Include stakeholders/community organizations in initial conversations and understand their concerns & needs. Follow up with them frequently.



Activity: Conduct a project team design charrette



Design charrettes include all stakeholders in the project (owner, building managers, architects, contractors, developers, engineers, end-users and maintenance workers, etc.). They are a vital feature of integrated design, providing an opportunity to unify the team and gather input from all participants who are working towards a common goal. During the charrette, you can also establish a timeline that will facilitate the procurement of healthier materials.

Set healthier goals with your client.



Timeline, budget, code requirements, and architectural expression are parameters in every project. Schematic design is an opportunity to introduce health, environment, and ethics into the equation.

Create consensus:

- + Be true to the priorities you set. Make a case for designing a healthier environment for people and planet.
- + Set realistic goals. Encourage tackling at least one health goal per project. Make realistic promises given your sphere of influence.
- + Beware of demonizing conventional (potentially “unhealthy”) practices and alienating stakeholders.



Get familiar with third party ratings.



Is a certification helpful? Whether or not you are striving for a plaque, goals developed for certifications can provide an initial framework toward healthier projects. It’s important to note, however, that human health is not a significant aspect of many certifications.

Get familiar with third party ratings:

- + Check out these four certifications: LBC, WELL, LEED and EGCC.
- + For a deeper dive, investigate other rating systems.
- + Evaluate if these frameworks align with the established goals of the project. Borrow approaches to create your own rating system or stakeholder handbook.

Piggy-back on other's work.



Which resources can be a shortcut for you? Product evaluation tools + case studies are helpful in any healthier design project. Disclosure platforms and product databases have done the heavy lifting by vetting products against strict criteria. Case studies provide real-life examples that can spark ideas for including healthier material strategies.

Get familiar with product evaluation tools:

- + Check out these disclosure platforms: HPDC, Mindful Materials, and GSPI Six Classes.
- + Check out these [vetted] product databases: HML Material Collections, Red2Green, and ILFI Red List.
- + Feel free to borrow shamelessly to create your own internal tools and guides
- + Check out www.sixclasses.org



Specify healthier.



Specify, specify, specify. This is the phase where material health becomes embedded into your design. You'll need to set clear expectations in order to ensure success. Be as explicit as possible about product health requirements - leave nothing open to interpretation.

Take command of construction details:

- + Correspond with product manufacturers to get the information needed to make your product specifications even more detailed.
- + Create your design documents with product life cycles in mind. Use mechanical fasteners over adhesives, design out unnecessary & harmful finishes, design for disassembly and embrace natural patinas.

Hire good collaborators.



Look for contractors who will become collaborators. Are they onboard with your material health priorities? Are they open to learning?

Create consensus:

- + Explain the why, provide space for training in the aspects of the healthier project plan.
- + Let your contractor know that this project may not be "business as usual." Discuss flexible procurement and turnaround deadlines in order to stay true to goals during punch list times.
- + Without demonizing conventional practices, nudge to embrace the change in practice together



Remain vigilant.



Appoint a gate-keeper to uphold goals and requirements. Construction administration will require an authority figure to remind everyone of the project's health standards.

Uphold standards:

- + Ensure products match your specifications onsite
- + Define substitution criteria to avoid regrettable substitutions for when your first choice product isn't available.

Look to the future.



How will maintenance uphold the healthier project plan?

Set up conditions for success:

- + Develop a post-occupancy plan to ensure the long term healthier profile of the finished design
- + Include cleaning protocols, and ongoing maintenance plans.
- + Recommend healthier FF+E



How did you do?



Now is also the time to evaluate successes, lessons learned and areas of improvement. By sharing your results you'll be helping future designers develop their own healthy materials method.

How did you do?

- + Establish a method for evaluating successes, lessons learned and areas of improvement.
- + Be sure to conduct post-occupancy evaluations.
- + Share your results.