

## **AIA Materials Matter Beyond Transparency – Materials Disclosure & Practice Session 5 write-up, by Louisa Gaylord**

The AIA Seattle's continuing education series Materials Matters has focused on outlining the context and urgency for the building industry to responsibly react to our rapidly changing world. The fifth and final session concentrated on taking the individual actions from the previous sessions and implementing them as the industry norm. Although a huge shift in accepted practices can be daunting, there is good news: a single action can inspire a chain reaction. The Earth's ecosystems elements are codependent and function together; similarly, a building's architects, engineers, owners, tenants, manufacturers and others must collaborate towards the same long-term sustainability goals. It's more than just collecting certification requirements: "'How many LEED points can we get?' is the wrong approach," says Nadav Malin, president and CEO of Building Green.

As awareness for choosing responsible building materials grows, the industry may experience concerns that were previously not an issue, such as how to measure risk and transparency from a legal perspective. Nicole DeNamur, an attorney at Pacific Law Group, cautions building professionals against using vague or ambiguous wording on binding agreements. "Healthy is a loaded term, be mindful when using it," Nicole says. It's also important to manage the expectations associated with your firm's branding, especially when using phrases like "green" that can mean something different to everyone.

Like the previous Materials session, there was a panel composed of six industry professionals to take audience questions and lead discussion. Jacob Boyer from PROSOCO addressed several questions about requesting manufacturers to provide health product declarations (HPDs) for their building materials. Don't be afraid that manufacturers will see you as a nuisance if you continue to ask them to provide HPDs, "We don't see a lot of these optional standards as such, but as mandatory," Jacob says. "We're not the only buyers from our raw materials suppliers. If we're the only one asking for HPDs, they wouldn't do it. But as demand increases, so does transparency."

When asked to give one action for the session participants, the panel had some great advice to share. Tien Peng, Vice President of Sustainability at the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association, recommended that companies should reward or incentivize the manufacturers that provide HPDs for their products to demonstrate the need and value of material transparency. Keith Lindemulder of the steel-producing Nucor Corporation advised to elevate the importance of the environmental impacts earlier in the building planning process. Ian Hanna at Forest Stewardship Council International suggested that participants build their collective knowledge by questioning and collaborating with teachers and peers, and continue to learn as materials knowledge continues to evolve.