

## Avneet Gujral - LEED Fellow and Sustainable Design Consultant | Transcript

Speaker 1 ([00:00](#)):

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

Hi everyone. Welcome to the next episode of the Green Building Matters Podcast. This week I've got another amazing green building professional with me, Avneet Gujral coming to us from the DC area, LEED Fellow and so much more. Avneet, how are you doing today?

Avneet ([01:14](#)):

Great, thanks Charlie, and thank you for inviting me to be on your show.

Charlie ([01:18](#)):

You're very welcome and I can't wait to learn a little more about you. And we've talked a little bit since Greenville and just excited to get to know your journey because everyone has a different journey on how they got into this green building movement and what they've done to really make progress. So I always like to start though and take us back. Where'd you grow up and where'd you go to school?

Avneet ([01:39](#)):

So I grew up in a city called Chandigarh in India. It was designed by Le Corbusier, a French architect in the 50s. He was often criticized for the city not having the soul because he was being unfairly compared with old cities of India. But I think he did an amazing job on the city, especially with the sustainability aspects that I'll talk about later as we get deeper into this. I went to school in Chandigarh and then the College of Architecture as well. Ironically, I grew up in a family of doctors and artists and so I was very, very inspired always by my sister who was very creative and yet very practical and I think that landed me up in architecture school because it was a blend of the left brain that I inherited from my father and the right brain from my mother. It was kind of interesting because no one had really gone to architecture school before that. So I guess somewhere along the line I imbibed that from somewhere.

Charlie ([02:37](#)):

Yeah, no, fantastic. Well, you've already gotten me hooked because I grew up in a small rural town in North Georgia and I live in it, and I don't know who was responsible for laying out our city here, but just the fact that it had influence on you, that early planner and how he laid out the city you grew up in, you've already got me hooked.

Avneet ([02:56](#)):

I was saying it was really interesting because everything that we talk about now, sustainability isn't as nascent in the movement as it is so much further along was done way back with the ideal neighborhood unit that was a 1200 meter by 800 meter block and it had an elementary school. It would have a place of worship, a bank or post office, you could walk a market street, you could walk to places. So that's kind of what I grew up with. I assume that some way had, some kind of a passive impact.

Charlie ([03:28](#)):

Yeah, no it definitely did. Well tell us about the early part of your career and I understand maybe some planning, even some landscape architecture. Tell us about the early part of your career.

Avneet ([03:39](#)):

So as soon as I got out of architecture school, my first design project, and just for the background, I am an architect. I'm a professionally trained, licensed architect and I have 16 years of hardcore design experience that started with my first experiment, which was my parents' home. And this was way back in about 1995 or so. And I started experimenting with sustainability very intuitively. I wasn't aware that I was doing this, intuitively all I wanted was the biophilic effect, now I can use these terms. I didn't know

those terms way back then, but I wanted a lot of glass, I wanted a lot of sunlight. And then of course with that comes a lot of heat when you're in a place that has summer temperatures that climbs up to 90 the high nineties and sometimes even over a hundred degrees Fahrenheit.

Avneet ([04:29](#)):

So I started experimenting with taking the blinds rather than the inside putting them on the outside and making them out of bamboo, very fine bamboo slats and they're called chicks like chicks in American. So that got all the heat gain while letting the light filter in. So I think my experimentation with sustainability began intuitively way back then as I moved through my career, I took a job with an architecture firm that was doing great work and the big project of my life, it was actually almost like 15 years of my life with working on other ones as well. And that was a 2,400 acre city for the Indian Navy down South in a place called Keralites. For those familiar with the geography of India it's on the little triangle bordering the Arabian Sea. It was a fascinating project, Charlie. It was virgin land too, it was backwaters to 250 meter high mark and it was absolutely virgin land of pallet to do as we wanted.

Avneet ([05:36](#)):

And I was a part of the core design team and it started with designing different components. The project it was for the Navy. So it had the cadets accommodation and education and technical support systems and then housing and hospitals and markets. And I was fortunate enough to be a part of the early planning conceptualizing roads. And that's where I think I began to become more attune to and sensitive to the impacts on land. So for example, when you were looking at evaluating slopes, it was looking into the cause and the fill in, what are we doing with this virgin land. How many trees do we have to cut? What kind of fill do we have to put in that? I think I started becoming more aware of these things as I moved on from design to the land development, which was really interesting because I didn't have any formal landscape training.

Avneet ([06:29](#)):

And it's a part of what I would want to give to the young people who are listening to this podcast that, follow your passion. It's like I was very passionate about plants and that came from my mother who had, if one could have two green thumbs, she did. And so my boss at the time said to me Do you want to take a stab at the landscape? And I was, this is a 2,400 acre city, maybe I can't do this. She said sure you can and just do it three months, no questions if you want to walk away from it. And of course I took the challenge and of course I did it for the next four or five years. And that involved getting even more sensitive to the ecosystem and the fragility of it.

Avneet ([07:13](#)):

As I got into things like conceptualizing catch water drains, how to harness water, how to use gravity for irrigation, what plants to pick and how not to violate the land and how the soil there was laterite and it was able to stabilize at four in one slope. So it was how can we negotiate between two rows of housing if there's a 20 meter drop, how can we negotiate this through cutting and you know, doing our steps and our informal walkways rather than fillings. So those were the kinds of things. But I think the really big thing that shifted me towards getting so deeply entrenched in sustainability was the 2005 tsunami. Now when that happened, ironically I was working on the landscape and I was fighting to retain mangroves at the back waters because there's always, engineers have a different take at times and we do respect to all the engineers listening.

Avneet ([08:10](#)):

But there was sound reasons for it. They wanted the land, they wanted it for XYZ reason. But my point was, and as you know, less may know that mangroves are natural wave breakers and they can withstand salinity. And so when the tsunami happened there was conversation it didn't directly impact India at that time, but there was conversation of creating concrete walls and it's like look at the embodied

energy, forget the embodied energy, forget the cost, forget all of that. But it's concrete. It's going to shear at some point. It depends to what extent can you predict and anticipate the wrath of nature, right? Why would you not use something that's beautiful that gives you, as I said, I can use the right terms now 10, 15 years into doing this, the biophilic effect, the erosion, sedimentation and [inaudible] effect. And that's when I realized I need something more than just intuitive sustainability to lend my voice. That credibility to governments, to people who need to know. It's not just an architecting, Hey, let's retain these trees.

Charlie ([09:18](#)):

Right? It's amazing project 2,400 acres and you just spent so many years there managing teams. And did you have a mentor then? Who else has been an influence on you to kind of maybe teach you the way or I'm sure some of it's been self-discovery, but any mentors along the way?

Avneet ([09:34](#)):

Yeah. And so continuing on that theme, I decided to apply for a master's in sustainable design and Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh was the only architectural school that focused on a specific, you know, there were allied programs like climate responsive design and climate responsive engineering at MIT, but Carnegie Mellon was the only school that offered a program in the design school. And so that was literally the only place I applied to. And I got in and I will say that my professor who was chair of the course, Professor Stephen Lee, he now heads the school of architecture at Carnegie Mellon. He was everything. He was inspiration, a mentor. He taught me how to eat, read, sleep net-zero way back in 2006 when he was deep into it. And net-zero has now become sort of the agenda of jurisdictions as well as we are seeing a lot more of it, but I'm talking 2006 so we actually had a course that focused on net-zero energy and I will say that he was an incredible mentor. He taught me how to, you know, I already had that. I am very curious. I don't give up when I want to discover something, but he taught me how to take it to the next level. So I'm really grateful for that.

Charlie ([10:58](#)):

That's fantastic. Did you run into Vivian Loftus when you were there?

Avneet ([11:01](#)):

Absolutely. Yes. Vivian. And you know, woke up both of them, all of them. I will say everyone at Carnegie Mellon was an inspiration and that environment was actually one that isn't naturally, it basically propels you to be experimental and to push the envelope. And I was extremely grateful for having that opportunity to interact with such amazingly forward thinking professionals.

Charlie ([11:31](#)):

That's so good. Vivian was on the podcast episode number 38 for those listening that want to go hear more about the Carnegie Mellon programs. So walk me through that leap of faith because earlier you mentioned we need to follow our passions and here you are, you come to the States to get your master's there through Carnegie Mellon and I'm sure LEED 2006 had been around for a handful of years. But just walk us through that leap of faith and what it meant. What were you afraid of and did it work out right away or still a lot of work because I want to make sure our podcast listeners realize what it's like to take that big of a leap of faith.

New Speaker ([12:08](#)):

My leap of faith was, you know, I was well centered in my profession. I was happy working on these incredible projects in India, but I pretty much had to, once I decided I needed more to lend my voice both to get to know more. I always believe in working with the foundations and I'll elaborate a little bit more about that in a minute here. But it was basically getting back to school after 16 years in an entirely different country. And I was up for the education that wasn't, you know, that of course that is, that was more like a sabbatical. But once I finished and I decided to stay and I was urged by, again, Steve Lee, my

professor at the time. But you know, why don't you get some training? And I was like, okay, I have a career that I can go back to, but not so much is happening with the active sustainability.

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

You know, there's a lot with indigenous sustainability in India that is really incredible. And at some point, and I've always been working towards synthesizing that vocabulary. But the leap of faith for me was after finishing school and deciding to really virtually start at scratch sure, I brought immense experience in the design world and having gone through construction, but I had to map it to a totally different climb to different regulations and adapting to a different way of construction whether we were talking, it's very massive, it's mostly brick and concrete where I had worked and now I was talking about stick framing and so on and so forth. So there was a lot of adaptation in that process and there had to be that greed for really getting my foundations strong with the practical as opposed to just the theoretical or academic knowledge that sort of kept me going and was a leap of faith because I didn't know how it would pan out. This was new territory, but I knew I couldn't funnel my brain back. So it was like jump or sink.

Charlie ([14:12](#)):

Thank you for walking us through that. Really a career in India and then a career here and in the middle was having to go back. It's a great story. Really appreciate you sharing that. So now tell us more about the last 12 plus years with programs say like LEED and I know you work in other programs and then maybe we can talk about some special project you worked on, but what has LEED, a green building program like that meant to you and your career?

Avneet ([14:37](#)):

So, that's a really great question. Because, ironically when I went into my program at Carnegie Mellon, we had a course about LEED and I was somewhat skeptical and I think my skepticism came out of people sort of not using it as a tool, or either using it as a checklist or not using it as a tool or to create the framework for sustainability. But it wasn't something that should dictate design or form or function or what someone needs. And I think that was why I was skeptical. So when I took the elective at school, I told Steve, I said, you know what? I don't want to, I don't really subscribe to a rigid program. But as I started interacting with it and as I started working on projects, I realized that people need a framework.

Avneet ([15:30](#)):

They need like a metric. Otherwise it's all in the air. And he does a really good job of it. I think the challenge is to remember to be sort of aspirational in your goals and to keep that vision above like prescriptive criteria at times and that was probably what I had perceived from the outside and what made me skeptical. So the way that I look at LEED specifically, and as you mentioned, I do a lot of other programs as well, but the way that I look at LEED is it is a great tool to have everyone on the same page, and it sets the bar basically. And it's ideal when you use it preconstruction through design, through construction to harness the best out of the project of the site and of the team. So that's how I use LEED and that's what it's done for me.

Charlie ([16:24](#)):

That's such a good way to put it. Tell us a little bit about some projects, some of your proudest, not just projects, but just this amazing career you've had. What stands out on the highlight reel?

Avneet ([16:34](#)):

So I think for me sustainability has always been sort of on several levels. So, it's aspirational of course, because you want to set precedent, you want to push the envelope. So there's that aspirational aspect of sustainability and we need to have these projects that can really go above and beyond. But at the same time, what I think is important and what I've always tried is to allow for everyone to move along with the movement because everyone is not at the same base, not at the same level. And at times it's

just financial constraints when we come into jurisdiction or organizational constraints. So starting with the aspirational precedent, one of my absolute favorite projects and something that I'm extremely proud of is Dunbar Senior High School in Washington D.C. I don't know if you've had a chance to visit the school, but it was a great team, great design and working to spearhead sustainability.

Avneet ([17:36](#)):

And the LEED certification meant closely working with the team, closely working with the department of general services to actually pilot their first 482 kilowatt photovoltaic array. And this was done through a power purchase agreement. It was the first for the district. And so it was huge. It contributed more than almost 20% of the school's energy. And when we were working through LEED and it was LEED Platinum and when we came out with our initial reviews and we were already well into Platinum, but we, the team and all of us worked together to get it to 91 and that was a score. I don't believe in point chasing, I don't care about scores. But what that score did was we wanted 91, it broke the global record and to date in 2019 I haven't looked now, but in 2019 it was still the highest sort of point score.

Avneet ([18:33](#)):

And for me what that meant was if we can do this in 2015 schools that come up in 16, 17, 18, 20 need to look back and say, why can't we do this? What keeps us from doing this and begin to identify is it financial constraints, is it design constraints? So that's the kind of aspirational sort of standard setting that I'm very, very sort of proud of. And then on the other hand, I did a lot of work with schools in addition to communities and so for schools, a great example is Frederick County Public Schools. So with FCPS I've done them into the fifth or the sixth school and it's really interesting because working with them on policies like just green teaming and integrated pest management and then working with their version of demand response to bring them up to being comfortable with doing things was as proud an achievement because we want everyone, it's not going to work with just a couple of projects.

Avneet ([19:33](#)):

We want everyone to be able to be a part of the movement. And with Frederick County Public Schools and a really interesting example, was they're doing a version for school right now, Urbana Elementary. And I started talking with the facilities deans about demand response. They don't have a demand response program, but they're actually getting a third party utility to monitor their utilities and then take that information and then use it for load shedding and so on. So they've evolved into doing their own version of load shedding or demand response in a way they've gotten treated with it. And that is such a high to see that kind of sort of progress from the first step of some sort of pushback to change their green cleaning policies to now trying to get creative with using demand response.

Avneet ([20:28](#)):

So that's the kind of thing that really makes me proud. And then of course the absolute star of baby of apple of my eye project is the Wharf in D.C. I've been working on it since 2008 and so, and the first, I don't know if you've had a chance, but I would recommend everyone goes in. It is such an amazing example of revitalizing, underperforming economic development, revitalizing a neighborhood, 3.2 million square feet, \$2 billion project. We've delivered phase one. And that was really exciting because I was working with the lead neighborhood as the owner's representative. And this project went into a huge project with several parcels that goes from a master planning design into a design built kind of a process. And so there's the master site planning sustainability, the holistic framework right at the top. And then it's working with Zach Construction and [inaudible] Hoffman was the developer there. And then working with Zach Construction for the master site overall sort of construction aspects and then working with the individual architectural teams for their individual building LEED's, sustainability, and then seeing them through their certificates of occupancy and how they've begun to want to put it into their retail spaces. It's just been really wonderful.

Charlie ([21:52](#)):

No, I need to go spend more time there. So I appreciate you pointing that out to the audience. So when you're in D.C. next, check out this project, go by and see the USGBC headquarters and so much more. Well talk a little more about your company, Sustainable Design Consulting and what you do. So what's keeping you busy today?

Avneet ([22:12](#)):

Sustainable Design Consulting is a boutique firm and one of the pioneers in cutting edge sort of sustainability technical consulting and principles when they initiated the firm were involved and the managing principal. And now of course one of them who's left. So our principal, I'll correct that. Our principal, a lot of the company staff have been really actively involved with the USGBC, including myself in terms of feedback for rating systems. I currently also serve on the market leadership transformation advisory board and I cochair that board. So it really helps in taking projects and bringing community and project work together and trying to impact market change. But what we really do is provide the gamut of green building technical consulting services, which means getting involved with your project predesigned through construction. It could be advisory, it could be green trainings, it's really LEED or any of the green rating systems. And it's more than just the green systems. It's ensuring that we can help you with your visioning and then for it to implement that vision through the process and make sure it percolates down to every team member through every little knotting board of design and construction. And for those interested there's a host of services that are on the website, [sustaindesign.net](http://sustaindesign.net).

Charlie ([23:40](#)):

Oh that's great. It sounds like you have a full service and just a long history there. A lot of expertise and in some your time on what's next, which is, it's segue to one of my favorite questions to ask green building professionals like you, which is where should we be reading up? Where do you think sustainability and the green building movement is going to be shifting next?

Avneet ([24:01](#)):

Right. And just backing up for a quick minute because I know you asked me about the cool projects and it's really exciting. I just wanted to mention that that there is such a, D.C. Is a very interesting city and it has grown and evolved like by neighborhood. And so the Wharf did it for the Southwest waterfront area and now we see that happening in NoMa. So I have a lot of very exciting residential projects, mixed use projects really coming up in that area including [inaudible] and something for Gallaudet University and then Echington Yards as well. So these are really they are leaders in the development world who really want to do the right thing and it's exciting to be a part of that. And then Johns Hopkins has just acquired the museum building to house that for schools and so I'm working with them and Smith's group on that.

Avneet ([24:54](#)):

So that's really exciting. Moving on to your question, where do I see sustainability heading? Shifting next? And I think I like to answer that with where I think it's heading and what else I would like to see added to that. And I think that's a really big push on net-zero energy, which is a great conversation. I love the fact that we're seeing more of it. We are hearing more of it. It's very imperative. It's topical, it's exigent, all of those good objectives. What I think I would like to see addressed more is I don't have the answer so you know, I throw it out to all the professionals is how do we address the existing building stock? Because a lot of the conversations are about offsetting existing building stock offsite and that's not the solution. So that's the really big challenge.

Avneet ([25:46](#)):

An area or jurisdiction doesn't become net-zero if you're putting PV in a field somewhere 500 kilometers away. It's great to do that also. But we really need to find solutions for the existing stock in addition to building new net-zero. The other things that I see coming up more is resilience, the conversation of



resilience, and that again is really important given in the wake of all natural calamities, whether it's Puerto Rico or whether it's Harvey or so many of the other things, the fires and so on. I think we really need to address resilience. And also along with that my favorite is wellness, which I think is, there's so many of these rating systems that don't speak to each other. And my hope is that we can begin to make them speak to each other.

Avneet ([26:43](#)):

Because this needs to be an integrated effort. It doesn't need to be all these systems are separate and they are it's an add on. So if a client is going after LEED, it's an additional cost, we need to figure out how do we get resilient, how do we get wellness into the conversation? Because it is such an important aspect and it has such a wider sort of cascade effect. Whether you talk about mental health or any of the current events that are happening in schools and we need to create buildings and work with the people who inhabit them at the same time and not as an afterthought or one proceeding the other. I do see a lot of focus on carbon management and embodied sort of carbon and embodied energy has always sort of been, following in a, it has always been a concern. But carbon management I think is going to take a lot of emphasis. And the last thing that I would really like to see is more happening on the transportation front. Because when we talk about any of what I've talked about, whether it's sort of in an indirect way, whether it's energy, whether it's carbon, all of these tie into being able to improve our transportation system. So those are the solutions that we need to seek, not in isolation but sort of together.

Charlie ([28:01](#)):

Wow. Then I hit on some very, very important ones there. I only need to keep an eye on that, that's for sure. Now, do you get to spend some of your time there? I mean, is it research internally? Is it just making sure you're tapped into the right organizations committees? Is it peers? How do you learn and track some of these changes or to your point where we really should be spending more time getting these programs, talking to each other, where do you learn best?

Avneet ([28:27](#)):

Yeah, that's a great question Charlie. And I think that's a really useful one for everyone. For me personally, I try and keep abreast of new systems that are coming in. So, for things like rely or some of the others I will, you know, it's plus not research but for things like the WELL building standard I've been involved, pre 2014 been involved with the education, being on panels so that I can understand and begin to help define what we want to see in our professionals, for example, who are going to lead the way, who we accredit. And that's true for LEED as well. So I also try and engage with community, both in voluntary capacities such as being a part of the local USGBC NCR chapter, being on the board, beginning to understand what people want and try to put out the right sort of information and learn along the way.

Avneet ([29:25](#)):

So for me it's a part of here in jurisdictions. So I spend a lot of time sometimes, you know, because of the expertise I'm invited to comment on. For example, with, WELL a peer review, then version two before it was released with several jurisdictions, when they have incentives or you know, when they're adding in criteria, it's really take a look at this and sure, I'd love to do that. So again, it's not a process in isolation, but it's a County is putting this out based on community feedback and how do we begin to bring that into our projects and so yeah, it's some of that.

Charlie ([30:00](#)):

Thank you. No, thank you for sharing those pro tips. That's just something I'm curious about what do you think you're best at? What's your specialty, your gift?

Avneet ([30:09](#)):

I think my forte lies in my communication and being able to put my finger on the pulse of the different stakeholder entities and so I can begin to bridge those communication gaps. I have had the good fortune of being on all sides of the table by just the way that my career has sort of evolved. And I think that being able to put yourself in the shoes of let's say an owner versus a designer. So I understand what aesthetic means, but I also understand what the bottom line is for an owner and what a county, let's say, or a jurisdictional entity is trying to design. I think communication and being able to connect the dots between the perspectives of different stakeholders is really my strength. I wish I exploit to the maximum. I hope I do.

Charlie ([31:03](#)):

That's fantastic. This has been a lot of fun. Well, give us some best practices, some rituals. Is there anything you have part of your regular routine that helps you stay successful?

Avneet ([31:17](#)):

So you have great questions. I must say this is because, and I loved them because they help me, they're very thought provoking and they help me introspect as well. And I would say that in terms of a routine, I think it's really the one thing that I do do is a lot of yoga, which helps, it's a point where you can begin to break that cycle of thought, we collaborate and then you begin again at the outset and you look into what you started doing. But more than that, I think it's not just either it's bringing together your professional goals, your personal life. So for me it's integrity, commitment and passion to whatever I do, whether it's a job or whether it's my lifestyle. I have begun to incorporate call sharing, bike sharing sort of lifestyle where I practice what I preach so that I begin to see is there a real challenge.

Avneet ([32:13](#)):

And that liberates me from the trappings of let's say, spending one hour to find parking as opposed to walking and contributing to everything that I tend to do. You know? So I have actually begun to implement everything that I talk about in sustainability charettes into my lifestyle. So it's almost like living on scorecard. It's almost like thinking before I go up the elevator, it's a small thing. Do I need to have this elevator go up five floors for just me? Or can I walk up the stairs? And I will do that. And it's not to say that one elevator lesson more is going to make a dent, but it's a mindset. And if all of us can move towards that mindset, I think it's super helpful.

Charlie ([32:56](#)):

Yeah, no, that's amazing. Well talk to me a little bit about bucket list. There are one or two things you can share, is there some adventure, some travel, a certain book you want to write one day, I don't know what's on the bucket list?

Avneet ([33:09](#)):

So my bucket list is definitely a lot more travel. And it kind of ties into my passion and my dream of really being able to synthesize a global vocabulary for sustainable practices. I am a big fan of just looking at what people do naturally without the ad ons, without the money. And how did you know, whether it's like the Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy who built amazing Adobe architecture or Laurie Baker and Karen Lau who built breathable architecture, so I want to integrate my travel. There's Gaudi's work in Spain, so I want to visit beautiful places and then take from, how did people do this several years ago without all the technology and all the props that we have learned from that and where can we go from there? I want travel inspired by my dreams that if you know me as is all dream places in terms of sustainability. So that's a big bucket one on my bucket list. I haven't done enough.

Charlie ([34:15](#)):

Well don't beat yourself up. There's time and just gotta be intentional about it. It's a thank you for sharing. Let's talk about books and learning. I'm not sure if you'd like to listen to books. Audible, pick up a good book in your hands. Is there a book you'd recommend to the listeners?



Avneet ([34:30](#)):

So I am not a fan of Kindle, I know it's really helpful when you're traveling, but I love to see in paper when I'm reading and I don't read as much as I should, but when I do, I think the one book that I will, it's not new, but it's one that I go back to every time. It's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* by Jane Jacobs. And I just really love going back to that book because the first time that I read it, there is so much that it kind of goes back to what I said earlier about what people were doing right, naturally people had different demographics and communities, they had eyes on the street and when cities began failing when we started pulling these different things apart when we started sort of compartmentalizing people by segregating by age or income.

Avneet ([35:23](#)):

Also many other factors. I'm oversimplifying this, so I would really recommend that book. And then the other one, the most recent thing that I read was *Modern Man* by Anthony Flint and it was on the life of Le Corbusier. And it was really interesting because he was way ahead of his time. So it gave me insight, especially growing in a city growing up in a city designed by him, why he did some of the things. So that was an interesting read for sure. Another one that I would really recommend is Laurie Baker, and that's a book I got in Bhatia and people could just go back onto the site because Laurie Baker was such an inspirational architect. He was a British Quaker and he moved to Kerala. He built amazingly sustainable architecture in the 50s that was treatable, that was climate responsive, that responded to affordability. And I think there are some great lessons for people to take there, needed it beautifully. So those are the ones that I've recommended.

Charlie ([36:25](#)):

Thank you. We'll put links in the podcast show notes. Those are great. Well as we start to come to a close, I said a two part question. One is Is there anything you wish you'd known a little earlier in your career?

Avneet ([36:35](#)):

I think for me, I wish that I had taken some risks earlier. I was doing great work and I was really happy and I think things like the tsunami moved me deeper to sustainability, but I wish that if I had moved towards it a little earlier, I would have been able to give back more. But as you said, there's still time. And that's the one thing that I would tell the younger generation that if you really believe in something, take that risk. Even when I secured my admission to the masters in sustainable design program at Carnegie Mellon, I was looking for a scholarship, as you know, many of us would, and I got an \$8,000 stipend and I said at the time to my sister, I said, I can't do this. And she could see much further along than I could She was more of a risk taker. She said, sure you can. And I am always so grateful for that advice because I did and it just changed my life. So I would say if you're passionate about something, like just make it work. It's again the leap of faith thing that I said earlier. Take that jump sooner than later.

Charlie ([37:45](#)):

That's fantastic. Well, and then just any other words of encouragement for our listeners because some listening, I've been doing this a long time in the green building movement, and some might be just now jumping in, but any other words of encouragement?

Avneet ([38:00](#)):

Always communicate with fire and follow your passion. Because you know, sometimes we get into, we want to do this. And even if you're passionate about let's say sustainability, there are so many ways to do this. This is a line where you have to be really passionate to not just survive, but to actually begin to move the needle. And if you are not, it's just not going to come out, it's just not so communicate deep, passionate, get into it and really communicate that fire that you feel within you. I do.

Charlie ([38:32](#)):

That's fantastic. Clearly you do. You've energized me and I just want to say congrats on LEED Fellow, all your amazing projects and just keep up the good work. I want to encourage everyone to connect with Avneet on LinkedIn and if you're in DC make sure you go check out some of these projects, but thank you for being on the podcast today. It's fantastic.

Avneet ([38:50](#)):

Thank you so much again, Charlie. It was a pleasure speaking with you.

Charlie ([38:57](#)):

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.

Charlie ([39:22](#)):

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