

# Living and Sustainability: An Environmental Critique of Design and Building Practices, Locally and Globally

**1. Paper / Proposal Title:**

Strategic Positioning for Communities of Sustainable Practice

**2. Format:**

Written paper

**3. Author(s) Name:**

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**5. Abstract (300 words):**

For more than a decade, professional bodies in the U.S. and Great Britain have emphasized the need to move beyond discrete professional and technical knowledge in order to develop trans-disciplinary means of addressing the complex, multidimensional, and unpredictable domains associated with environmental and community sustainability. This has played out in higher education curriculum, continuing professional development, and professional development planning in response to the emerging globalized knowledge economy. A new university level course, *Strategic Responses to Cyclical Environments*, focuses on capacity building among emerging professionals within a higher educational curriculum. The course has been offered for three consecutive semesters and longitudinal data address the efficacy of the course in

terms of fostering individuals' capacities to position themselves within communities of professional practice and their potential to contribute to sustainable communities and futures. This paper concludes that proactive engagement leads to improved outcomes for those who have taken the course, based upon students' profiling of the careers of mid-career professionals, understanding of the nature of past boom and bust cycles within the built environment, familiarity with formal and informal mentorship, acceptance for the need for professional positioning and development to be 'job one,' and the use of strategic planning techniques as applied to career competency within the architecture, engineering and construction sectors. Furthermore, these activities both encourage and model trans-disciplinary means of engaging with communities of practice in service of sustainable futures.

**6. Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Lester began her career leading marketing and business development at regional architecture firms. As Executive Director of DBIA's Mid-America Chapter, she coordinated the volunteer effort, advanced membership and program activities, and served as an advocate for design-build in a four-state region. DBIA-MAC was named Chapter of the Year during her tenure. As Vice President of Membership and Marketing for the Design-Build Institute of America in Washington, DC, she had direct fiscal responsibility for all aspects of the membership and marketing initiative. Following that, she worked with nationally recognized architecture, MEP, and structural engineering clientele, such as SmithGroup, Ellerbe Becket, Carter Burgess, HNTB, PBS&J, Dewberry, Studios Architecture, and others to proactively address their strategic business and hiring needs. She then joined the New School of Architecture and Design in San Diego as their Director of Career Services, and proceeded to develop and teach several courses. She is currently an Associate Professor at Stevens Institute of Technology (Hoboken, New Jersey) in Construction Management, where she teaches, conducts research, and advises students. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Journalism and a Master of Architecture from the University of Kansas, and hopes to enter a doctoral program within the next year.