

H.E.  
António Guterres  
Secretary-General  
United Nations

New York  
NY 10017  
USA

Oslo, 7 November 2022

Dear Mr. Secretary-General

I am pleased to confirm that Snøhetta AS still supports the Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact on human rights, labor, environment, and anti-corruption. With this communication, we express our intent to keep implementing those principles. We are committed to making the UN Global Compact and its principles part of the strategy, culture, and day-to-day operations of our company, and to engaging in collaborative projects which advance the broader development goals of the United Nations, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals. Snøhetta AS will make a clear statement of this commitment to our stakeholders and the general public.

We recognize that a key requirement for participation in the UN Global Compact is the annual submission of a Communication on Progress (COP) that describes our company's efforts to implement the Ten Principles. We support public accountability and transparency, and therefore commit to report on progress according to the UN Global Compact COP policy.

This includes:

A statement signed by the chief executive expressing continued support for the UN Global Compact and renewing our ongoing commitment to the initiative and its principles. This is separate from our initial letter of commitment to join the UN Global Compact.

A description of practical actions (i.e., disclosure of any relevant policies, procedures, activities) that the company has taken (or plans to undertake) to implement the UN Global Compact principles in each of the four issue areas (human rights, labor, environment, anti-corruption).

A measurement of outcomes (i.e., the degree to which targets/performance indicators were met, or other qualitative or quantitative measurements of results).

Sincerely yours,

Isabella Alveberg  
CEO

Snøhetta AS

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# INTRODUCTION TO SNØHETTA

Founded in Oslo, Norway in 1989 as an architectural and landscape collective, built on the Brundtland Commission's EU report on sustainability, Our Common Future, released two years before. Since then, the practice has remained true to the approach that architecture and design can and should contribute to improving society and the environment, specifically exploring the human interaction and connection with our natural and built surroundings.

Today, Snøhetta is a transdisciplinary practice that includes architecture, landscape architecture, interior architecture, art, product design, graphic and digital design, often integrating a combination of disciplines across its projects. Snøhetta has over 350 employees from over 40 nationalities, with studios spanning from Oslo to New York, Innsbruck, Paris, Adelaide, Hong Kong and San Francisco.

In 2018, Snøhetta took a leading position in the industry through their partnership in the Centres for Environment-friendly Energy Research (FME) ZEB (Zero emission buildings) and ZEN (Zero emission neighbourhoods). The ongoing Research Center for zero-emission areas in smart cities works to develop solutions for future buildings and urban areas that contribute to the realization of the zero-emission society.

Snøhetta is also one of the initiators of the Powerhouse collaboration, an interdisciplinary industry collaboration dedicated to creating energy-positive buildings and is currently working on several plus house projects in Norway. Some of the completed projects include Powerhouse Kjørbo, Powerhouse Drøbak Montesorri Secondary School and Powerhouse Brattørkaia, the world's most energy-positive building with the entire life cycle of the buildings including inherent energy in the building materials, construction, operation and disposal. The projects also achieved the very highest BREEAM classification, Outstanding.

Snøhetta has completed a collaborative project with the Harvard Center for Green Buildings and Cities. The "House Zero" project has a "triple zero" ambition, which means zero purchased energy for either heating, cooling or ventilation, and the rehabilitated project was completed in the spring of 2019.

In 2018 and 2019, the company received support from the Norwegian Design-driven Innovation Program (DIP) for material research projects on plastic and clay respectively. The aim of these projects is to research how these materials can be used in a circular economic and sustainable context to create solutions that move towards the zero emissions target in the industry.

# SUSTAINABILITY AT SNØHETTA

The Snøhetta Sustainability Philosophy is built on the three fundamentals of social, environmental, and economic sustainability. Snøhetta is committed to conduct business in accordance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris agreement.

## SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Architecture, landscape architecture, interior architecture and design have no value if they do not lead to change. Snøhetta believes that an important part of its mission is to influence society in a positive way. The company is committed to promoting and sustaining human well-being in terms of physical environments, health promoting designs, providing psychological respite, gender equality, dignity, a sense of belonging, collective ownership and public space in its architecture and design.

Internally, the company is committed to building a diverse and inclusive workplace. It actively pursues an environment where all ideas, perspectives and styles are valued, and a creative process which is built on transdisciplinary and inclusive principles.

Snøhetta AS champions aspiration, ambition, and achievement, and strives to lead by example on equality and diversity. We take distance against discrimination due to gender, pregnancy, maternity leave or adoption, care responsibilities, ethnicity, religion, philosophy of life, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression and any combinations of these basic rights.

Since Snøhetta's start in 1989, it has been firmly committed to treating all people equally and nurturing great talent, regardless of identity.

Management takes the lead on gender equality work. We continuously evaluate the impact of how well our plans and decisions promote equality and diversity by implementing firm and structured management and team meetings, systematic employee dialogues and annual employee engagement surveys. We strive to create a fair and productive working environment for employees from more than 40 different nationalities and we practice English as our daily language for the purpose of including all.

The work and initiatives for equality and diversity are global as well as some initiatives relates to local legislation.

The group in total had an average 198 FTE.

Snøhetta's complete Gender Equality report for 2021 can be viewed upon request

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The company's work on sustainability received international attention when our work on recycled E-waste tiles Common Sands won the Sustainable design of the year award from Dezeen and the Best Domestic Design in the Wallpaper Design Awards. The project has been run together with Studio Plastique and Fornace Brioni.

The company has limited direct effect on the environment from its operations. The company's work does however have a major impact on the external environment and is conscious of its responsibility and ability to positively impact the carbon footprint of the construction industry.

Snøhetta is building additional capabilities in calculating embodied carbon in our projects. This is today done for some of the projects, but not all. Environmental sustainability is a part of considerations in all parts of our processes, from selection of projects, designs, material choices, construction, and operations after completion. In addition, we are exploring how emissions can be reduced in our own operations.

Our Powerhouse projects, in cooperation with our partners Skanska, Asplan Viak, Zero and Entra, are among the most climate friendly buildings in the world. We are currently working on several Powerhouse projects.

Snøhetta studios made further steps towards a more sustainable approach to design and architecture in 2021 – both through their portfolio, their organization, and the commitment to introduce sustainability statements in all new projects.

The company does not pollute the external environment in any significant degree.

## ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY AND GOVERNANCE

Snøhetta is committed to providing a healthy workplace where employees can develop and thrive in an inclusive environment. The company's strategy is to run a fiscally sound business, built on good corporate governance focused on transparency, accountability, responsibility, and fairness. Snøhetta's aim is to reinvest any financial gains in equal measure to our people, our methodologies, our studios, and our owners.

The company's board consists of an external chairman with no financial interest in the company, four internal board members of which one is the majority shareholder and two employee representatives.

The managing directors in each studio report directly to the CEO. Snøhetta Oslo, Snøhetta Design and Snøhetta Overseas have a board which consists of the Snøhetta AS CEO and CFO.

Snøhetta AS and subsidiaries are covered by a Directors and Officers liability insurance. The insurance indemnifies directors and officers for defense costs and potential legal liability arising out of claims made against them while serving on a board of directors and or as an officer. The insurance renews annually.

# SNØHETTA – BUILDING THE FUTURE

## INTRODUCTION

Buildings and construction account for 39 % of global carbon emissions, according to the World Green Building Council. Of this, more than two thirds are generated in operating buildings during their lifespans (e.g. from heating, cooling and lighting). The remainder is related to embodied carbon emissions in the material production, transport and process of construction. As the world's population and the severity of the climate crisis continue to grow, the industry is being challenged to build more responsibly – creating high quality spaces for people while also reducing our environmental footprint.

For over a decade, Snøhetta has researched and experimented with energy positive structures that are net carbon neutral over their lifecycles, while at the same time serving as pleasant spaces for its occupants. A key focus area for us has been to design buildings that pay back their CO2 footprint over their lifetime by returning clean energy to society, offsetting the fossil energy that otherwise exists in the energy mix. We have proven that these structures can be built with existing technology, and we now aim to scale up this strategy into the rest of our portfolio and ultimately the rest of the construction industry.

## OUR WORKING METHOD

A commitment to social and environmental sustainability lies at the heart of all of Snøhetta's work, shaping the built environment and design in the service of humanism. Snøhetta believes well-conceived design can help things run more efficiently, improve people's well-being and make life more enjoyable.

At the center of our working method is our transdisciplinary approach, which stems from a core belief that bringing people with different perspectives and competences together is a strong catalyst for innovation. From our own disciplines we integrate architecture, landscape architecture, interior architecture, product design, graphic design, digital design and art across our projects. In addition, we often invite others into our working processes. In practice, this typically entails including a broad variety of different people into a process – for example through workshops – and challenging them to release themselves from disciplinary conventions. In this way, we can foster a greater sense of possibility, free ourselves from habitual thinking, and build empathy for others involved in the process.

One can compare this approach to how some orchestras let their musicians rehearse on each other's instruments in order to better understand the challenges and possibilities of fellow musicians. Upon returning to one's own instrument, this new knowledge elevates the collective quality of the performance.

We have found that this type of *"transpositioning"* creates a universal way of communicating across cultures and disciplines. It promotes the benefits of moving out of one's comfort zone, defies narrow-minded thinking and encourages holistic approaches, which is what society needs in order to solve the climate crisis in an effective and meaningful way.

## ENERGY-POSITIVE POWERHOUSES

Together with property company Entra, the construction company Skanska, the environmental organization ZERO, the consulting company Asplan Viak, Snøhetta has established a research, design and engineering collaboration called Powerhouse, in order to develop energy-positive buildings.

The Powerhouse collaboration defines an energy-positive building as a building that will produce more clean and renewable energy throughout its lifespan than all the energy that it consumes in the production and transportation of building materials, construction, operation and demolition.

The first project realized by the partnership was **Powerhouse Kjørbo**, located in Sandvika outside Oslo, Norway. After the renovation, this retrofitted office space's energy needs would be met by local production of solar power. The solar panels at Powerhouse Kjørbo can supply over 250.000 kWh, or 41kWh/m<sup>2</sup> each year. This was the first energy-positive building in Norway, and to our knowledge the first retrofitted energy-positive building in the world. In our experience, retrofitting can be a better choice than constructing a building from scratch, from a sustainability standpoint – the most sustainable building is the one that already exists.

In August 2019, the world's northernmost energy-positive building, **Powerhouse Brattørkaia**, opened in Trondheim, Norway. On average, Powerhouse Brattørkaia produces more than twice as much electricity as it consumes per day, and it supplies renewable energy to itself, its neighboring buildings, electric buses, cars and boats through a local micro grid. Its slanted, pentagonal roof and the upper part of the façade is clad with almost 3 000 m<sup>2</sup> of solar panels, strategically placed to harvest as much solar energy as possible. Over a year, this amounts to a total of about 500 000 kWh with clean, renewable energy. In effect, the building dually functions as a small power plant in the middle of the city.

For its efforts, Powerhouse Brattørkaia has received the BREEAM Outstanding certification, the highest possible ranking by the world's leading sustainability assessment method for an asset's environmental, social and economic sustainability performance. Its solutions support the UNFCCC Paris Agreement that pursues efforts to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

In 2020, we saw the completion of **Powerhouse Telemark**, an office building in Porsgrunn, Norway, that serves as a sustainable model for the future of workspaces. Powerhouse Telemark sets a new standard for the construction of environmentally sustainable buildings by reducing its yearly net energy consumption by 70 % compared to similar new-construction offices.

The south-east facing façade and roof of Powerhouse Telemark will generate 256 000 kWh each year – approximately twenty times the annual energy use of an average Norwegian household, and surplus energy will be sold back to the energy grid. Powerhouse Telemark has obtained the BREEAM Excellent certification for its strong sustainability performance.

*“Energy-positive buildings are the buildings of the future. The mantra of the design industry should not be ‘form follows function’ but ‘form follows environment’. This means that the design thinking of today should focus on environmental considerations and reducing our footprint first, and have the design follow this premise.”*

Snøhetta Founding Partner, Kjetil Trædal Thorsen

Other net-zero and energy-positive buildings by Snøhetta include Harvard HouseZero, ZEB Pilot House and Powerhouse Drøbak Montessori Secondary School. Several others are in the works or under construction.

The aim of a Powerhouse building is threefold; to maximize the amount of clean energy produced by the building, to minimize the energy required to run it, and to serve as a pleasant space for its tenants and the general public.

Although every project that Snøhetta designs is truly context-specific, some initiatives are recurring throughout the Powerhouse projects to reach the optimal balance between low energy consumption and clean energy production over the building's lifecycle. These include, but are not limited to:

- Clean energy production through PV-panels at the (often slanted) roof and parts of the façade, strategically placed to harvest as much solar energy as possible
- A microgrid system to allow excess energy to be used in neighboring facilities
- A set of technologies to radically reduce energy use for the building's daily operations, both high-tech and low-tech, such as:
  - Insulating the building for maximum efficiency
  - Installing intelligent solutions for ventilation and heating, such as:
    - Technical installations for air supply that regulate ventilation. Example: a system where air is let out close to the floor at low speed, while the extraction takes place centrally by suppression in the stair shafts
    - Structural systems consisting of exposed, thermal mass (such as low-emission concrete) that absorbs and retains heat and cold and helps regulate the temperature in the building without using electricity
    - Heat recovery solutions for ventilating air and from greywater
    - Using seawater for heating and cooling
    - Sensor technologies that track and respond to changing conditions
  - Implementing only energy efficient electrical appliances
  - Optimizing daylight conditions and minimizing the need for artificial lighting through the strategic choice of the building site and in the design of the building

Other strategies that makes the building more pleasant for its tenants and neighbors, and/or lowers its carbon footprint:

- Solar radiation protection
- Glare protection
- Natural façade shading
- Efficient waste management
- Rainwater management
- Reduction of light pollution
- Smart home technologies
- Use of local materials
- A flexible layout that can be easily adapted to changing needs, for example precipitating the ongoing global pandemic, without creating unnecessary waste
- Environmentally conscious interior solutions, focusing on durable and sustainable material palettes, quality, timelessness and standardization to reduce unnecessary waste as new tenants move into the building
- Wayfinding systems that can be easily modified without creating unnecessary waste that may be generated when brand specific signage is removed or produced



Many other initiatives are still in the works and may be optimized better as the industry matures and technology develops. Some issues that we and others are still working on solving include:

- Energy storage options that allow the building to store surplus energy in the summer months, to then use it in the winter months when daylight is at a minimum
- The political will, particularly in Norway, to allow for the use of micro grid energy solutions that are not connected to the state grid

We frequently receive questions about why we have built these ambitious, solar powered structures so far north. To that we say – because that is part of the challenge! If you can build an energy-positive building in Trondheim, Norway, 63° north of the Earth's equator, where sunlight varies greatly between the seasons, you can essentially build it anywhere. Remember: every place on earth has the same amount of daylight during a year. It is just distributed differently through the seasons as we move further north or south of equator.

Efficient solar energy production will be much easier to achieve closer to the equator, where the angle of the roof does not need to be as steep to maximize the sun exposure of the PV panels, and where there's little or no need for energy storage over larger time intervals. Still, at these locations the need for heat management through air conditioning might be contributing negatively to the energy equation and subsequent carbon footprint. Each project is therefore unique, and must find its own, contextual adaption in order to achieve the goal of creating net zero emission buildings.

## MATERIAL CHOICE IS KEY

An important aspect that we are focusing our efforts on, is the conscious choice of materials. In order to build a Powerhouse, by its very definition, the embedded CO2 footprint of the materials, including production and transportation, needs to be added into the equation. We have found that the carbon footprint of materials may account for as much as 30 % of a building's CO2 footprint over its lifespan. This calls for many different considerations, including tradeoffs between choosing materials for their longevity vs. their inherent CO2 footprint.

Is it for example better to use cladding with a low inherent CO2 footprint, such as wood, but that might have a shorter lifespan (depending on the treatment), which results in the need for frequent replacement? Or should we use something that has a longer lifespan, but a higher CO2 footprint from the start? Ideally, we would have options available that are both long lasting *and* have a low CO2 footprint. Yet local conditions, such as humidity, heating and light considerations, might dictate the need for particular material properties. The material choices of a built project are usually also a question of availability, cost and quality.

As a rule of thumb, we can say that the order of priorities for material use, when the goal is to minimize the carbon footprint, typically are:

1. **Material reduction:** Finding ways to design efficient and pleasant spaces, while at the same time having a critical eye on where materials could be excluded altogether
2. **Reuse of existing materials:** Preferably without additional treatment and modification. This is also an argument for designing materials and building components with reuse in mind, e.g. by using more mechanical composition methods that are easy to reverse. An example of this could be the use of screws instead of glue, or designing building components with a sort of "LEGO" mindset

3. **Upcycling of existing materials:** By slightly modifying already existing materials. E.g. using stone bricks from a demolished building as sand, turning waste from fish nets into a chair, putting existing concrete blocks into a new concrete mix, etc.
4. **Recycling of existing materials:** In order to calculate the actual carbon footprint of recycling, one needs to consider the whole value chain related to the recycling process. This includes transportation systems, recycling processes, waste levels, the quality of the recycled products, and the opportunity cost of incineration for energy/heat use. Sometimes this equation will not add up from a holistic perspective, so we should not rely blindly on this
5. **Production of new materials:** This is the last resort but is often needed. The focus should be on innovation relating to the choice of materials, their treatment, and the climate footprint of the production, transportation and handling of new materials, including their prospects for reuse and recycling

The use of locally produced/harvested materials will typically trump materials that need to be transported across long distances, from a carbon footprint standpoint. This could in turn alter the order of priority above, depending on the specific context.

To be able to make the right tradeoffs across the above considerations, the industry will need to consistently conduct life cycle analyses of its buildings and construction materials, and thereby make better informed decisions from a holistic sustainability perspective.

## FURTHER INITIATIVES

At Snøhetta, we have for the past few years conducted research into materials such as plastic, clay, wood, and different kinds of low carbon concrete. In this work, we are collaborating with several different industry and research institutions, and we strive to share our findings with the broader industry as the results come in.

Other initiatives that we are currently working on are:

- Moving from a focus on net zero buildings to net zero neighborhoods
- Ensuring biodiversity by designing landscapes, buildings and products with a consideration for other-than-human species
- Reducing the need for toxic chemicals in the construction process, e.g. hazardous impregnation chemicals typically used for wooden materials
- Research into the social and environmental effects of the built structures that we have designed

## A CYCLE OF INNOVATION

At Snøhetta, we like to say that we need to be in a “continuous state of reinvention” in everything that we do and strive to achieve.

In working with these projects for over a decade, we have learned that every time you do something genius, something truly innovative at the time, it does not have any significant value for society unless you share your knowledge and inspire others to do the same.

We should never be fully satisfied with our work. Only when yesterday’s innovations become the standards of tomorrow have we achieved something.

*“First, we need to make what seems impossible possible. Then we can make it ordinary all while we innovate and push industry standards further. It’s a cycle of innovation.”*

Snøhetta Founding Partner, Kjetil Trædal Thorsen

Although the construction industry is slowly maturing, while technological advancements are developing rapidly, sometimes we must still accept that several of our solutions might not be perfect with the available means that we have today. To this, we would like to quote the French writer Voltaire, and say; “Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good.”

## BUILDING FOR TOMORROW

For humans to continue to live and thrive on this planet – and in the buildings we inhabit and spend most of our lives in – these need to be constructed with as much consideration for natural preservation and energy efficiency as for the comfort of the people inside them.

With our global presence, with offices spanning from Oslo, Paris, and Innsbruck, to New York, Hong Kong, Adelaide and San Francisco, we have the ability – and not least the responsibility – to learn from the best, to incorporate what we learn into our projects, and to share our knowledge in order to push the global construction industry forward.

We fully acknowledge that we may have ambitious and sometimes seemingly unrealistic goals, yet we have proven that many significant things can be achieved through demonstrated solutions and existing technology.

We strive every day to experiment, research, learn, test and improve, in order to understand how we can responsibly construct our homes and office spaces for the future, and we welcome any new ideas that might bring our work and industry forward.

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# SNØHETTA SUSTAINABILITY AMBITIONS

The aim of this document is to build a condensed platform for describing Snøhetta's long term sustainability ambitions, short term activities to attain these and how we measure our progress through corporate governance.

Snøhetta has built their purpose on a broad understanding of sustainability, and these are embodied in how we work:

- As a global practice, we play a central role in creating cultural, societal, and economic value for our clients and for society at large.
- We create architectural and design solutions with lasting functional, technical, sustainable, and aesthetic qualities that meet today's needs, whilst also contributing to the long-term cultural quality of the built environment.
- The buildings and landscapes we design now will have long lasting impacts in the future because of their long lifespans.

## Snøhetta Sustainability fundamentals

The Snøhetta Sustainability Philosophy is built on the three fundamentals of sustainability as per the United Nations Brundtland Commission report of 1987. We have updated the third axis and combined financial sustainability and governance to encompass an understanding for company ownership.

Our ambition



## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

We are committed to conduct our business in accordance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris agreement.

Our ambition is to reduce our carbon emissions by 50% within 2029 as well as strengthen our position worldwide within sustainable architecture and design.

Through extensive transdisciplinary collaboration and research projects, we constantly strive to find new ways of doing business to reach UNs global warming goal of 1,5 C. Our ambition is to contribute to a sustainable circular economy model, based on the reuse of building components, sustainable material usage and renewable energy.

In 2029, our ambition is that all projects in the design phase shall be carbon neutral. By 2039, our ambition is that our collective portfolio shall be carbon neutral.

### **Key corporate environmental sustainability activities in 2021**

1. Snøhetta foundation or equivalent to promote research in environmental sustainability
  - By Dec 31, 2021, set up autonomous foundation or company.
2. Sustainability ambition statement in all new projects in all studios
  - Description of sustainability ambition in MOMENT for 100% of all new projects
3. Competency plan to increase sustainability knowledge for all employees
  - Managing Director to set qualitative and quantitative goals for individuals and teams.
4. Reduce carbon footprint through reducing work related travel
  - To be determined in 2022

## SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Snøhetta is committed to promoting and sustaining human well-being in terms of physical environments, health promoting designs, providing psychological respite, gender equality, dignity, a sense of belonging, collective ownership and public space in our architecture and design.

In our internal operations, we are committed to building a diverse and inclusive workplace. We actively pursue an environment where all ideas, perspectives and styles are valued, and a creative process which is built on transdisciplinary and inclusive principles.

Snøhetta is founded on humanistic values which permeate our company from design, operations to company culture. Social responsibility, integrity and ethical behavior are the core of our business and behavior.

## Key corporate social sustainability activities and KPIs

### 1. Our employees

- Equal employment opportunities
  - i. Ensure educational diversity – tbd with HR and MD or CEO and MD
  - ii. Maintain healthy diversity to mirror the markets we operate in –
    - 1. 50/50 gender overall gender balance
    - 2. 50% gender balance in 2&3 level management
- Employee health
  - i. Added insurance, in addition to government regulated insurance (Life, pension, maternity / paternity leave of absence)
  - ii. Sports, Bike, Public transportation benefits
- Safe and healthy workplace
  - i. Contracted work agreements defining working hours and overtime
  - ii. Employee representatives in all studios to assist in work, health, and safety issues
  - iii. Established conflict management and whistleblowing policies

### 2. Our Projects

- Design with broad social inclusivity at core Our financial and governance ambition.

We are committed to providing healthy workplaces where our employees can develop and thrive in an inclusive environment.

We will run a fiscally sound business, built on good corporate governance focused on transparency, accountability, responsibility, and fairness. Our aim is to reinvest any financial gains in equal measure to our people, our methodologies, our studios, and our owners.

## KEY FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE SUSTAINABILITY ACTIVITIES

1. Fiscal KPIs
  - Group earnings before tax average goal 10%
  - Annual dividends to shareholders
2. Governance
  - Employee representation at board level
  - Internal stock market available for all employees after one-year employment
3. Transparency
  - Transparent annual report with sustainability progress documentation
  - Transparent annual results and report sharing with employees
  - Transparent results from companywide pulse survey

