

ISTUDIO Architects

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Member since 2023

Winner of the 2020 District Sustainability Award

Reported Environmental Activities

✓ Environmental Policy/Sustainability Mission Statement

Founded in Washington DC, ISTUDIO Architects, led by Principal Rick Schneider, has over two decades of experience crafting purposeful and sustainable communities. We collaborate with public agencies and private organizations to shape the built environment, contributing to a more equitable and resilient future for the nation's capital.

ISTUDIO Architects, a proud Signatory of the AIA 2030 Commitment, leader in WELL practices, and an early member of USGBC and COTE. Our commitment to sustainability is exemplified by our advocacy for green building policy, our advocacy in front of DC City Council to initiate the first green building codes, and our recognition with the DC SEU award for sustainability.

Deeply embedded in every DC Ward, our team has played a crucial role in over 50 public projects, empowering communities through initiatives that foster wellness, build resilience, and generate employment opportunities. Notable projects include the DC Infrastructure Academy for green jobs training, community gardens and fitness areas along the Watts Branch Trail, and the rehabilitation of men's shelters.

Our engagement extends to designing green schools for DC Public Schools in multiple wards, featuring roof gardens and natural playgrounds. As part of our environmental responsibility, we actively advocate for LEED certifications and align our designs with DC's carbon net neutrality goal. Through our work, we aim to inspire and lead by example, showcasing that thoughtful, sustainable design can create vibrant and environmentally conscious communities.

✓ Environmental Management System

ISTUDIO Architects, in our role as project managers for initiatives spanning diverse scales, ranging from homeless shelter renovations to DC Public Schools (DCPS) projects, is committed to integrating environmental stewardship into every facet of our operations. Throughout the design and project lifecycle, our studio proactively incorporates LEED and sustainable design practices.

We advocate for carbon neutrality by promoting passive design strategies such as solar chimneys. These initiatives not only align with our commitment to sustainable architecture but

also contribute to the broader goal of environmental responsibility within the district. ISTUDIO Architects is dedicated to fostering environmentally conscious practices, ensuring that our projects prioritize sustainability and contribute to a greener, more resilient future for the community and the environment.

✓ **Environmental Team**

At ISTUDIO, our environmental team is an integral part of our small local practice, where every team member actively contributes to the integration of sustainability and environmental strategies across the firm. Throughout the year, ongoing discussions take place at both the project and firm levels, focusing on enhancing alignment with sustainable goals.

We prioritize continuous improvement by encouraging employees to broaden their understanding through support for training and certifications. This proactive approach not only empowers our team members but also ensures that ISTUDIO remains at the forefront of the latest sustainable strategies.

Our key goals center around advancing the environmental performance of both ISTUDIO and our client's projects. By consistently implementing cutting-edge strategies, we strive to contribute to a greener and more sustainable future while maintaining our commitment to excellence in design and environmental responsibility.

✓ **Annual Environmental Goals**

At ISTUDIO, our annual environmental goals align with DC's mayor's pledge to achieve a 100% reduction in greenhouse emissions by 2050. We are dedicated to designing projects that embody resilience, hold LEED building certifications, and are poised to be net zero ready.

Even in our small-scale projects, our architects prioritize sustainability by incorporating recyclable materials, low VOC paints, and water-efficient plumbing fixtures. We recognize that every project, regardless of size, plays a pivotal role in contributing to the reduction of greenhouse emissions. By consistently implementing these eco-conscious practices, ISTUDIO actively contributes to the broader commitment to environmental stewardship in our community and beyond.

✓ **Environmentally Preferable Purchasing**

At ISTUDIO, our commitment to environmentally friendly design and services is unwavering. In projects of all scales and functions, we go beyond standard green construction practices. Our approach involves integrating sustainable and resilient strategies, incorporating passive design principles. We believe in designing buildings that not only adhere to environmental standards but also serve as resilient hubs for the community, fostering a harmonious intersection of sustainability and communal spaces. Through this dedication to excellence, we aim to contribute to a greener, more resilient future for our clients and the communities we serve.

✓ **Commit to Environmental Restoration and Community Environmental Projects**

At ISTUDIO, our commitment to community is at the core of our approach. Collaborating closely with the DC government and local associations, including ANC's and neighborhood groups, we prioritize transparent and inclusive communication. Our engagement with the community spans multiple touchpoints throughout the design process, ensuring that each stakeholder fully understands and embraces the project's success.

This iterative dialogue allows us to tailor each project to the specific needs and desires of the community. We recognize that this not only fosters a fruitful exchange of ideas but also cultivates an active commitment from community members, making them stewards for the project long after the general contractor and architects have completed their work. At ISTUDIO, we believe that a strong partnership with the community is fundamental to the enduring success and positive impact of our projects.

✓ **Equity Considerations in all Activities**

In a field predominantly characterized by its lack of diversity, ISTUDIO is dedicated to challenging the status quo and actively promoting equity considerations. Recognizing the significance of representation, ISTUDIO is proud to have a team where 71% of its members are female, and 42% are from minority backgrounds.

Under the leadership of Principal Rick Schneider, ISTUDIO fosters a culture of mentorship and professional development. Weekly meetings are conducted to provide guidance and mentorship to junior staff members, ensuring their growth and success within the organization.

Equity is further championed through financial support for employees seeking professional certifications, such as licensure, LEED, and WELL accreditation. ISTUDIO encourages all staff to pursue industry-led training opportunities, and several team members have had the opportunity to share their expertise at local, regional, and national industry conferences, particularly focusing on sustainability and resilience.

ISTUDIO is committed to creating an inclusive and supportive environment, actively addressing the industry's historical disparities, and providing opportunities for all team members to thrive, contribute, and excel.

✓ **Solid Waste Reduction and Reuse**

At ISTUDIO, our dedication to reducing solid waste is integral to our daily operations. We diligently recycle paper, plastic, metal, and glass products, covering both personal and business materials. Additionally, we actively participate in the building's recycling program.

Recognizing the environmental impact of traditional design processes, we've implemented substantial changes to reduce our paper and ink usage. The studio is now paperless. A significant portion of our collaboration now takes place through digital means, minimizing our reliance on physical materials. Through these measures, ISTUDIO strives to not only recycle responsibly but also to continuously innovate our design processes to contribute to a more sustainable future.

✓ **Water Conservation**

At ISTUDIO Architects, our commitment to water conservation extends throughout our office space and the architectural services we provide. Within our workspace, all appliances are meticulously selected for their energy efficiency, carrying Energy Star performance ratings. The water fixtures in our office are designed to be low-flow and highly efficient. Moreover, our studio operates within a larger office building with LEED certification, underscoring our commitment to sustainable practices on a broader scale.

In our architectural services, we integrate water efficiency into the core of each program. This involves incorporating low-flow plumbing fixtures, implementing smart building monitoring systems that allow clients to assess and optimize water usage, and, where feasible, integrating rainwater collection systems. Through these initiatives, ISTUDIO Architects not only strives to reduce our own water footprint but also actively contributes to the creation of water-efficient, sustainable spaces for our clients and within our larger community.

✓ **Stormwater Management**

At ISTUDIO Architects, our approach to smart stormwater management is guided by a threefold philosophy: Do, Celebrate, Teach. In every project, we actively DO by capturing stormwater on-site, employing innovative solutions to manage it efficiently within the constraints of tight urban spaces in Washington DC.

Our commitment to CELEBRATE stormwater is evident in our designs, where we integrate aesthetically pleasing elements like rain chains created from scuppers at outdoor teaching kitchens in DC Public Schools' elementary schools. These features not only highlight the stormwater collection process but also contribute to the visual appeal of the space.

TEACHing is an integral part of our strategy. We leverage our designs to educate elementary school students about the cycles of nature, emphasizing the pivotal role water plays in the environment and its connection to food sources. Beyond aesthetics, our collaboration with consultants ensures that stormwater is managed efficiently.

To achieve this, we incorporate permeable surfaces such as permeable pavers and landscaping. These surfaces not only meet our clients' functional needs but also play a crucial role in capturing and retaining stormwater on-site. Through our holistic and innovative approach, ISTUDIO Architects aims not only to address stormwater management practically but also to engage and educate communities about the importance of water in the environment.

✓ **Energy Efficiency**

At ISTUDIO Architects, our core mission revolves around the creation of artful and sustainable buildings that embody both hard (energy efficiency) and soft (community building) resiliencies. This commitment is evident in every project undertaken by our studio, exemplifying our dedication to innovative and environmentally conscious design.

One noteworthy example is the Arboretum Recreation Center, where ISTUDIO Architects introduced the use of mass timber in its construction. By embracing this sustainable building material for the gymnasium, the project achieved a significant reduction in greenhouse emissions, equivalent to taking 28 cars off the road. This demonstrates our proactive approach to minimizing environmental impact and contributing to a greener future.

In the design of the Marvin Gaye Recreation Center, ISTUDIO Architects designed DC's first resilient hub case study. Through passive design strategies, the building leverages the principle of "hot air rises" to cool the interior. When weather conditions permit, the building operators are prompted to open windows and facilitate natural ventilation, showcasing our commitment to energy efficiency through thoughtful, context-responsive design.

These projects are representative of ISTUDIO Architects' broader strategy to integrate energy efficiency into the DNA of our designs, promoting sustainability and resilience while fostering a sense of community. Each endeavor reflects our unwavering commitment to advancing the intersection of artful design and environmental responsibility in the built environment.

✓ **Renewable Energy/Solar Panels**

At ISTUDIO Architects, our commitment to sustainable development and smart energy usage underscores our approach to renewable energy strategies. Recognizing the design and construction industry's significant impact on greenhouse gas emissions, we actively engage with community stakeholders and owners to implement tailored energy reduction solutions that align with the site context and our clients' operational capacities.

Solar panels stand out as a prominent feature in our proposals, strategically integrated to offset the building's energy needs. By harnessing the power of solar energy, we contribute to the reduction of the environmental footprint of our projects.

In addition to active renewable solutions, ISTUDIO Architects incorporates passive design strategies that further enhance energy efficiency. Features such as solar louvers and thoughtful building orientation not only emphasize exterior views but also play a crucial role in reducing the mechanical energy loads required for heating, cooling, and lighting. These strategies not only showcase our commitment to sustainable practices but also demonstrate our dedication to creating energy-efficient, aesthetically pleasing spaces that resonate with the surrounding environment.

✓ **Employee Commute/Customer Travel**

Employee Commute/Customer Travel: Describe measures taken to reduce the number and length of employee and/or customer trips taken by single occupancy vehicles. Offer bike parking, metro passes; encourage lower-emission forms of transportation.

ISTUDIO Architects has implemented comprehensive measures to significantly reduce energy-intensive transportation within our operations. Situated in the heart of Washington, DC, just two blocks from the White House, our office benefits from an ideal location for sustainable commuting options.

The office is strategically positioned along the 16th street corridor, a major bus thoroughfare connecting various routes throughout the city. This prime location allows our team to easily access public transportation, with convenient metro stations at Dupont Circle and Farragut West. Additionally, the pedestrian-friendly neighborhood encourages employees to walk to nearby cafes, restaurants, and local businesses, reducing the need for energy-intensive transportation.

Recognizing the environmental impact of commuting, ISTUDIO Architects promotes sustainable transportation alternatives. Our office building provides free, lockable bike storage, encouraging employees to cycle to work and further minimizing our carbon footprint. To support our team's commitment to sustainable commuting, the studio's management plan includes commuter benefits. Employees can take advantage of tax-free contributions to their metro cards when utilizing public transportation, fostering an eco-friendly and cost-effective approach to daily commuting. Through these initiatives, ISTUDIO Architects actively contributes to the reduction of energy-intensive transportation and promotes a more sustainable urban lifestyle.

✓ **LEED/Green Globes/Living Building Challenge/International Green Construction Code (IgCC)/Other**

ISTUDIO Architects is proud to exemplify its commitment to environmental stewardship by strategically aligning its operations with LEED/USGBC standards. Our journey begins with the conscious decision to lease office space in a LEED certified building, ensuring that our workplace reflects the highest standards of sustainability and resource efficiency.

By choosing a LEED certified building, we actively contribute to a reduced environmental footprint, as these structures adhere to stringent guidelines for energy efficiency, water conservation, and overall environmental performance. This deliberate choice is a testament to our dedication to sustainable practices from the ground up, providing our team with a workspace that aligns with our core values.

Within the confines of our studio space, we take our commitment to wellness and sustainability further by targeting WELL certification. This multifaceted approach encompasses considerations for air, water, nourishment, light, fitness, and comfort, creating an environment that promotes the well-being of our team members. From ergonomic design to indoor air quality initiatives, we strive to foster a workspace that prioritizes the health and productivity of our staff.

ISTUDIO Architects doesn't stop at meeting standards; we actively champion green building programs by participating in conferences and speaking engagements. Our advocacy extends to diverse platforms, where we share insights, experiences, and best practices with industry professionals, policymakers, and the public. By contributing to the dialogue surrounding sustainable architecture, we aim to inspire positive change within the broader community.

Whether it's through our choice of office space, pursuit of certifications within our studio, or advocacy efforts on the global stage, ISTUDIO Architects remains steadfast in its commitment to LEED/USGBC standards. We believe that by integrating these principles into our everyday practices and actively participating in industry discourse, we can play a pivotal role in shaping a more sustainable and resilient future for the built environment.

✓ **Building Energy Performance Standards (BEPS)**

ISTUDIO Architects yields an outsized impact on green building practices. First and foremost, our architectural designs adhere to LEED minimums, setting a high standard for sustainability in every project. From inception to completion, our design strategy ensures that our designs not only meet but exceed environmental benchmarks, contributing significantly to a greener and more resilient built environment.

Additionally, ISTUDIO is a staunch advocate for biophilic and WELL practices, integrating wellness considerations into every space we design, regardless of size. Our commitment to creating environments that prioritize the health and well-being of occupants. Passive design strategies are a cornerstone of our approach, aimed at reducing mechanical and electrical loads. By harnessing natural elements such as sunlight, ventilation, and thermal mass, our designs optimize energy efficiency and decrease reliance on conventional heating, cooling, and lighting systems. This proactive approach not only minimizes environmental impact but also contributes to long-term energy savings.

Beyond the confines of our studio, ISTUDIO actively engages in public discourse through speaking engagements, advocating for sustainable practices and raising awareness about the impacts of climate change. Our outreach efforts extend from the local community to the global stage, recognizing that the effects of climate change are interconnected and transcend geographical boundaries. Our outsized impact on green building practices is a testament to our unwavering commitment to designing buildings that are thoughtful, innovative, and environmentally conscious.

✓ **Awards/Certificates**

ISTUDIO has redefined the architectural landscape with a series of pioneering projects, marking 'firsts' in urban design. From the resilient hub at Marvin Gaye Recreation Center to the solar chimneys at Powell Elementary School and the solar-powered city council in Takoma Park, Maryland, ISTUDIO has consistently pushed boundaries. Their crowning achievements include the first green roof on the National Mall in Washington and culturally sensitive, regenerative ecotourism centers in East and West Africa for the US Forest Service.

This trailblazing work has earned ISTUDIO prestigious awards from AIA, Architizer, the Architect's Newspaper, and Rethinking the Future. Their global impact was underscored by an invitation to exhibit at the Venice Biennale in 2019. Additionally, ISTUDIO's commitment to excellence extends to industry-specific recognition, including the American Institute of Steel Construction IDEAS award and the DC Mayor's District Sustainability Award, along with numerous local, state and national AIA specific sustainability citation awards.

ISTUDIO's legacy is characterized by a commitment to innovation, sustainability, and international recognition, contributing to the evolution of architectural standards and a more resilient and sustainable DC.