



## POLICY

# Hillary Clinton

USGBC's Rachel Gutter  
on the Former Secretary  
of State and First Lady

# The 10 Most Powerful Women in Sustainability

The challenge of sustainability has opened new opportunities in fields long filled by men. Some jobs are completely new; others require new approaches to old tasks. The recipients of the inaugural Women in Sustainability Leadership Award, presented by this magazine, illustrate the importance of diversity in the sustainability field, and should inspire us to infuse more positions with sustainability-related responsibilities.

Revitalized by new goals, these jobs would appeal to millennials and transform workplace cultures that have been resistant to both women and people of color. After all, working toward sustainability across an organization and diversifying its workforce should go hand in hand.

**Introduction by Guest Editor Liz Davey**  
Director of Sustainability, Tulane University

**Hillary Clinton recently told me** that she is a fan of my work at the Center for Green Schools. It was just before we got our picture taken together, so in the photo I'm grinning from ear to ear. *Seriously? Did Hillary Clinton just say she's a fan of your work?* Because Hillary, I'm a fan of *your* work. In particular, I am a fan of the trail that you have blazed for women of my generation to lead the effort to tackle the greatest challenges of our time.

Hillary Clinton is behind much of the incredible progress that healthcare, energy policy, and international trade have experienced throughout the past two decades, and that barely begins to scratch the surface. It's impossible to sum up her career, though her Twitter offers a concise, and admittedly playful, summary: "Wife, mom, lawyer, women & kids advocate, FLOAR, FLOTUS, US Senator, Sec-State, author, dog owner, hair icon, pantsuit aficionado, glass ceiling cracker, TBD..."

In all that she does, Hillary Clinton embodies sustainability with a capital 'S.' She has made a concerted, nonpartisan effort to not only sustain, but to nourish and embolden society, our planet, and the global economy.

When it comes to environmental policy, Hillary's record is mixed, but her longstanding commitment to cultivating young leaders, particularly female ones, and equipping them with the skills they need today to tackle the challenges of tomorrow speaks to the heart of our movement. She's taken a strong stance on the role of women in sustainability, proudly lending a voice to the World Bank's finding that women are essential to sustainable development. She urges us to "knock the barriers down to women's full participation on boards of companies that make decisions about sustainability," citing evidence that "corporations

"[Evidence shows that] corporations with women in leadership positions are actually more focused on sustainability. It would be good for business and for results if those doors were opened."

Hillary Clinton

with women in leadership positions ... are actually more focused on sustainability. It would be good for business and good for results if those doors were opened."

She certainly has led the way. During her tenure as Secretary of State, Clinton championed women's rights at home and abroad, famously stating at the Rio+20 meeting in 2012 that sustainability starts at home when women are "empowered to make decisions about whether and when to have children."

Her advocacy does not stop there. As First Lady, Hillary recognized the strategic importance of public early childhood education across the country. She tirelessly advocated for the expansion of Head Start to include early childhood education and for widespread implementation of the Children's Health Insurance Plan, reinvigorating the role of a First Lady with a portfolio of projects and initiatives. Today, Hillary continues these efforts through Too Small to Fail—which advocates alongside prominent curriculum thought leaders on behalf of students and educators—and the



Clinton Foundation. One initiative, "No Ceilings: The Full Participation Project and Women and Girls," promises to lift women—and, in particular, young girls—out of poverty to foster a truly equal 21st century. And the Clinton Global Initiative continues to galvanize students' interest in advocacy and volunteerism around the world.

Clinton also was responsible for launching the State Department's Bureau of Energy Resources, marrying technology, private investment, and good governance to stabilize a rapidly changing energy sector and increase America's independence from foreign energy, while simultaneously capitalizing on the tremendous resources of the US Agency for International Development to support sustainable development around the world. It's the passion for across-the-aisle progress and pragmatic, collaborative solutions that make Hillary such a worthy icon for women in sustainability.

When it comes to greening built environments, she has no reservations. She calls LEED "a simple, powerful idea" and notes that USGBC's popular green building rating system "was an idea that was so profoundly true that I and others, when we first heard about it, just kind of looked up and said, 'Well of course, that is exactly what we need to be doing.'"

We need powerful leaders—female leaders—to prove that there is common ground on which to find solutions that fit for all of us. Hillary is doing just that, reviving the spirit of the triple bottom line, demonstrating that great things can happen when we shoot for the intersection of people, planet, and prosperity.

Last year, at Greenbuild in Philadelphia, she issued a call to action. She said, "We not only can do better—we must do better. We have to get back to working in ways that bring us together, not drive us apart... it is time for us to start doing not only the right things, but the smart things. And at the top of any agenda about America's future, sustainability has to be viewed as one of the key goals for building back stronger here at home." Let's take her up on that. [gb&d](#)

*Rachel Gutter is the director of the USGBC's Center for Green Schools in Washington, DC. She is widely regarded as one of the nation's foremost experts on the topic of green schools.*



MANUFACTURING

**Rochelle Routman**

Director of Sustainability, Mohawk Group

**We made an amazing discovery in 2013.** While most companies are trying to optimize their product, which is a buzzword for subbing less toxic ingredients, we realized we had actually accomplished this on our own and were way ahead of the game. Now, we're getting hundreds of our products declared through the International Living Future Institute and are sharing all ingredients with anyone who wants to know.

**The biggest thing I'm learning?** Customers change. Ten years ago, they might not have cared so much about what goes into a product, but now they do. They're familiar with nutrition labels and are thinking about what they bring into their homes.

**We're at an important crossroads as a community.** My background as a geologist has taught me that the Earth is our life-support system, and we rely on it for everything we need for survival. The same elements that are in our body are in the Earth, but we've caused abrupt changes in the balance of things.

**When my mother went to first grade,** she had never heard English before. She ended up being the valedictorian of her high school. Whenever I asked my mother for help with my homework, she would say, "Figure it out on your own." I learned to appreciate that. It taught me to be self-reliant and confident in my abilities to decipher complicated problems and look for solutions when others may have just given up.

**Some of us don't yet understand** the importance of involving more diverse voices. That's a missed opportunity.

**Collaboration is more important than ever before.** Internally, I'm leading a cross-functional team that is made up of employees from all over the company. We call it our Sustainability Council. We're involved in delivering the message of the Living Building Challenge across the country through special events we host. We're also looking at building a manufacturer's coalition around sustainability in the coming years.

**I keep reading that we don't have enough young people** interested in science, and that's a shame. It's so vital. For new people coming up, I tell them it's really helpful to have a technical foundation like science or engineering before they move into a communications or policy function because it helps to have that fundamental understanding of natural systems and how the Earth works. *As told to Zach Baliva*

"Customers change. Ten years ago, they might not have cared so much about what goes into a product, but now they do." Rochelle Routman, Mohawk Group



## CONSTRUCTION

## Beth Heider

Chief Sustainability Officer, Skanska

**I was brought up by a mother who was an Earth Science teacher.** She was the sponsor for the first Earth Day at her school in Cincinnati, Ohio. I grew up with it; I couldn't avoid it. So it's part of my worldview that we need to live in a way that is respectful of the environment.



## HOSPITALITY

## Cindy Ortega

Chief Sustainability Officer,  
MGM Resorts International

**As chief sustainability officer** and senior vice president of the corporate sustainability division of MGM Resorts International, Cindy Ortega takes a whole-systems approach to sustainability. Her varied background—something she says is a commonality among the men

and women leading sustainability divisions of large companies in corporate America—"is a very good platform for a sustainability professional to work from," she says.

Ortega has built a career with MGM, the Las Vegas-headquartered hospitality and entertainment giant, that spans more than two decades. She began in finance, moved to IT, and then into a senior finance position as a hotel controller for the 3,000-room Mirage Hotel and Casino. It was during that time that she began specializing in energy, learning everything from how electrical systems work to the nuances of energy and natural gas price structures. In 2000, she was named CFO of eight of MGM's subsidiaries.

Leading MGM's sustainability division since 2006, Ortega's

current initiatives—which she says consist of dual priorities in two completely different areas of the organization, and which require the use of both sides of her brain—include a massive lighting retrofit that will see the replacement of more than one million light bulbs across MGM's 17 resorts, reducing total energy use by at least ten percent. On the other side of the spectrum, MY Green Advantage, an employee engagement program deployed to MGM's 62,000 employees in 2013, uses a social platform through which employees earn points for incorporating green practices—like reducing water use—into their daily lives.

Pursuing sustainability while providing exceptional service is a delicate balance. This is the "continual challenge in hospitality,"

Ortega says, but she has succeeded largely by being clear about the company's real environmental impacts and having an eye for the behind-the-scenes potential.

"We've avoided the low-hanging-fruit kinds of programs that are targeted at what the guest sees," she says.

During her tenure thus far, Ortega says she feels most proud of game-changing projects such as CityCenter, an 18 million-square-foot mixed-use complex on the Las Vegas Strip that is the now largest LEED Gold-certified new construction project in the world. She gives due credit to her team: "I command the ship," she says, "but the real creativity, the real expertise, knowledge, and drive comes from the people working on my team."

By Joann Plockova

"I have a small garden where I start things from seed. Having that affinity for nature is part of the heartbeat that guides the decisions that I make."

Beth Heider, Skanska

### I came to sustainability

through this lens of the business opportunity of green buildings. It was through this perspective of asking how we could serve both society and the environment in a socially and economically responsible way.

**The next generation of sustainability leaders** has grown up as sustainability natives. A lot of my generation was looking to realize our ambitions in the business world. Sustainability wasn't a big part of the lexicon until [Vice President Al] Gore came out with *An Inconvenient Truth* and sort of whacked society upside the head.

**The new generation of millennials** has had more education. They're more connected, and I think that will be transformative in a huge number of ways.

**Leadership is critical.** The new version of LEED encourages the disclosure of unhealthy chemicals in building materials. In retaliation, the American Chemical Council joined forces with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to lobby for a rider to a very popular energy bill that would preclude the use of LEED on any federal project. Mike McNally, our CEO, said, "We

will not be on the wrong side of history." He withdrew Skanska from the Chamber in a very public way. We need leadership like that.

**It required tremendous personal courage and corporate bravery** to take a principled stand for healthier buildings, and Mike's leadership made a difference: the USGBC just announced an initiative to work together with the ACC.

**I have both a national and global role.** I'm involved in setting the policy and creating the framework for Skanska's sustainability initiatives in the US. I do a lot of public speaking, exploring ideas, and doing research that will help advance the industry.

**I have a small garden where I start things from seed.** If you pay attention to seeds and don't spray pesticides in your garden, you attract all kinds of butterflies and bees. You create an environment for them, and then they pollinate your flowers, and you get this incredible Garden of Eden. Having that affinity for nature is part of the heartbeat that guides the decisions that I make. *As told to Evan Cline*



NONPROFIT

# Amanda Sturgeon

Executive Director,  
International Living  
Future Institute

**I learned the power of observing nature** and loving the mystery of it from my grandpa. I spent a lot of time gardening with him, just spending hours in his greenhouse.

**I left England fairly young** and spent about two years traveling before I went to college in Australia.

It was really on that journey—being outside every day amongst different cultures, in amazing places from an ecological standpoint—that I grew my passion for sustainability.

**The Sydney Opera House has always stopped me in my tracks.**

That building is really an exploration of who we are as people in this world. I was very influenced by Australian vernacular architecture and entered architecture school intentionally looking for ways to reawaken this deep relationship between people and nature.

**The biggest misconception about the Living Building Challenge?**

People think it's impossible. They say the standard's too high. But we've seen people do it on a standard budget and on a fast-tracked

schedule and within design-build contracts. We've seen people do remarkable things to create living buildings.

**I think the nonprofit sector** has the ability to make more change than the public or private sectors, at least currently. We have the ability to stop, take the focused time to look at barriers, and then unravel them a little bit. You don't have that time in the middle of a contract designing a building.

**I'm someone who likes to lead** from a place of expertise and ethics, not just bravado and hot air. As I've come to have more expertise in this field and realized that I have something to share with others, I've really developed a passion for leadership.

**I delegate a lot to my team.** With adding the Living Community and Living Product Challenge programs, we're looking at the remaking of everything—products, buildings, communities, cities. The staff is poised really well to take the Living Building Challenge to the next place and address that scaling elegantly.

**I believe in living a sustainable life that balances family** and my passion for my work. We need to shape the world with a vision for what we want it to be and make it happen. If you do that, you can grow in your career and your home life, in parallel. *As told to Lindsey Howald Patton*

*"I'm someone who likes to lead from a place of expertise and ethics, not just bravado and hot air. As I've come to have more expertise, I've really developed a passion for leadership."*

Amanda Sturgeon,  
International Living  
Future Institute



TECHNOLOGY

# Arielle Bertman

Principal, Energy and  
Sustainability, Google

**I work to create clean, sustainable investments and businesses** that enable lower costs and make renewable energy more accessible. These businesses and investments are resilient, commercially attractive, and have impact. Google defines "impact" over the long term, which enables us to consider earlier

stage, higher-risk investments with the potential for higher returns.

**Three things have helped me to find my way in this field.** A strong analytical and engineering background gave me confidence to delve into the technical details; supportive and brilliant colleagues have challenged me and helped me grow as I learned the renewable energy industry; and I'm passionate about learning, which is important, since this is a fast-changing and always evolving field.

**I completed my first Ironman triathlon last year.** A love of challenges is also one of the many reasons I chose to study engineering. While we're getting better, unfortunately, it is still a male-dominated field.

**When I think about my colleagues,** we complement each other because of the varied perspectives and approaches that we bring to the team—not because of our genders. That being said, I have always thrived on defying stereotypes and see challenge and competition as a motivator.

**I may never be the person** designing the next clean energy breakthrough, but I am confident engaging at a technical level and asking important questions. This has opened doors and helped me build trust and respect, both internally and externally.

**I tell people to never underestimate your knowledge** and preparation for a situation. I was once

involved in a tough negotiation with a notorious counterparty on a technical risk issue. Because I had read all the engineering reports and was familiar with the technical aspects of the project, I could navigate the tricky situation, and we moved forward with the respect of the male-dominated group.

**This helped me realize two things:** Negotiations are a favorite part of the deal process, but some people lack the information to make the best decision, so knowing your projects—especially the technical, financial, or legal details—and sharing information with confidence is invaluable. This is a simple, but underappreciated element.

*As told to Russ Klettke*

## FOOD &amp; BEVERAGE

# Bea Perez

Chief Sustainability Officer,  
Coca-Cola

**Bea Perez leads a group more populous than the city of Seattle.** As Coca-Cola's chief sustainability officer (the company's first) she oversees more than 700,000 people—because every employee at Coca-Cola participates in sustainability efforts. Under her leadership, the company has set a number of objectives to be reached by 2020, including improving water efficiency by 25 percent, replenishing 100 percent of the water the company uses, recovering 75 percent of bottles and cans in developed markets, and supporting small and sustainable farms.

Although serving as a chief sustainability officer is new for Perez, who was named to the position in 2011, service itself is not. She is a leader in several community service organizations, including the Grammy Foundation and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. She sits on the Board of Trustees for Save the Children Fund, which promotes children's rights and relief in developing countries. Her work in both the private and public sector allows her to tackle varying objectives

close to her heart. "My biggest challenge," she says of her appointment at Coca-Cola, "is having to pick and choose where to focus our initiatives. There are so many problems to be solved in this world."

Perez's background is in marketing, so she understands that Coca-Cola has to function first as a business to have room to tackle sustainability issues. Before she stepped into her current role, she was chief marketing officer of Coca-Cola North America. She joined the company in 1996 after transitioning from an advertising agency, where she handled Coca-Cola initiatives. That business-oriented background has helped her outline realistic and worthwhile goals, and the company is transparent in reporting its progress in meeting those initiatives. Coca-Cola's annual sustainability report outlines its objectives and how much closer it has come to meeting them within the previous year.

What Perez keeps in mind as a leader, and what she tries to impart to all 700,000 people she oversees, is that sustainability can't be an afterthought. It has to be part of the planning and development phase of every project, and it has to be an integral part of operations. "You also have to know what you stand for," she says. "And if you're missing opportunities on the ground to make an impact, you have to listen to your local people." *By Mary Kenney*



#### MORE INCREDIBLE WOMEN IN GREEN LEADERSHIP

Learn about more amazing women changing the world at [gbdmagazine.com](http://gbdmagazine.com) or by downloading our iPad edition from the App Store. From architect Maya Lin to Steelcase's Angela Nahikian, we've got the scoop on more of the most innovative women in sustainability leadership today—women who are shaping our planet through environmental education, policy, technology, and elsewhere.

"Most companies make a balance between work and family very challenging. At Verdani Partners, it's not about when or where you get the work done, it's about performance and results."

Daniele Horton,  
Verdani Partners



## REAL ESTATE

## Daniele Horton

Founder and Principal,  
Verdani Partners

**My love for buildings, nature, and environmental issues** took root in early childhood in Brazil and was deepened in graduate school when I studied sustainable development at Harvard University. It was at Harvard that I learned about global issues and felt I needed to do something.

**I led sustainability programs for a large office REIT for almost a decade.**

But I wanted to do more without the constraints of a business that wasn't my own. So I followed my passion and founded my own firm.

**Most companies make a balance between work and family very challenging.** When I had kids, I had to move closer to family and was afraid I'd lose my job because the company was not very open to telecommuting. At Verdani Partners, it's not about when or where you get the work done. It's about performance and results.

**A big part of our success at Thomas Properties Groups** [GRESB's highest environmental performer in the Americas in the office category three years in a row] was developing a game plan. Initially, every property was doing something different. We visited the properties and came up with a centralized and robust sustainability program that was implemented portfolio-wide. This included an internal sustainability resource site, collaboration tools, sustainability policies, and a calendar of events.

**Sustainability doesn't happen overnight,** so it's important to focus on ongoing improvement programs.

*As told to Julie Schaeffer*



ENERGY

# Robyn Beavers

Senior Vice President of Innovation, NRG Energy

**I didn't have career ambitions in energy at an early age.** But I was raised in a family that valued working hard and respecting people. I learned it was a scary world out there but that it was possible to make good things happen—and that things are constantly changing, that there's a lot of newness and unexpected events that make it hard to predict what will come next.

**I really liked math and science as a kid, but I wasn't "gifted."** What I liked about both subjects was that you could use them to solve problems, which I thought was really cool. But in business—unlike with math and science—there are some gray areas: economics, irrational psychology, politics.

**The thing that makes me hopeful** about energy and the climate is that I'm inspired by nature, how it's resilient and receptive to change. Industry similarly responds to shifts and changes.

**I don't think the challenge is as daunting** as we sometimes make it out to be. The tools are there. We are overhauling infrastructure. Solar panels are becoming cost-effective. State governments are allowing new policies, such as distributed power, and encouraging clean generation. It's not about inventing some crazy, new thing. We just have to focus on scalability.

**There's a lot of opportunity to do great things.** For example, there are a lot of inefficient building systems. Our job now is to optimize for efficiency. We need elegant buildings and infrastructure.

**In everything I do,** I push the built environment toward better design. I have experience across solar, wind, the US Department of Energy, and even consumer tech. Career choices are about learning and producing and finding solutions to the really hard problems.

**The older I get, the less it's about gender.** Relative to men and women in energy, I have always felt different from everyone I've worked with. Getting people to gel is the goal.

**But women should be an important part of sustainability.** We are 50 percent of the population. We have a knack for absorbing a lot and for multitasking. *As told to Russ Klettke*



FINANCIAL SERVICES

## Leisha John

Americas Director of Environmental Sustainability, Ernst & Young

**gb&d:** You've held many positions over your 30 years at EY. What experiences have most informed your values and leadership style?

**Leisha John:** I've learned how important it is to be flexible. I've worked in so many parts of the organization that I know our culture well, and I know what skills are necessary to lead. We're big, but we're grounded in our values. We have a commitment to diversity and inclusion, and everyone's opinion matters. I have an EcoCare network of 800 volunteers in the United States, and I have my green champions in various departments. They help me get my initiatives done.

**gb&d:** Engagement can be a challenge at any organization. What have you seen work well?

**John:** We try to make real operational changes that make a difference. In the US, for example, we have 80 offices, and we've moved to an operational standard called Print Plus. This requires our people swipe a badge before they print, and it's had a significant impact on reducing the amount of paper we use.

**gb&d:** What takes most of your time?

**John:** These days, I spend a good portion on reporting. We measure our annual carbon footprint, and are greening our operations. It's becoming more and more important to be transparent. Last year, I worked to harmonize EY's sustainability reporting around the globe to make it more consistent.

**gb&d:** What can the industry do better?

**John:** We all need to raise our game around reporting and focus on getting deeper instead of just reporting on the information that is most readily accessible.

**gb&d:** What major trends are you seeing?

**John:** I've noticed a push from millennials, from the young people that come and work at EY. They want us involved in these green efforts. It's coming from clients and from employees. Also, it's not just large and leading companies anymore—it's small and medium-sized organizations as well. *Interview by Zach Baliva*

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Robyn Beavers, NRG Energy