

Aaron Vaden-Youmans

Sustainability Director, Grimshaw

The urgent challenge of the 2020s is addressing climate change, but solutions must address climate within the wider challenge - component to a larger more complex emergency - as a climate, justice and biodiversity emergency requiring equitable, multitasking solutions for a still growing and urbanizing global population.

Further, we cannot simply address this complexity with strategies to achieve sustainable outcomes. Our equitable solutions must achieve sustainable outcomes, but they must go beyond as we have already lost too much - too much social and environmental capital for short term economic capital.

We cannot simply sustain; we must also restore and regenerate what we have lost.

"The future is not determined; the future is in our hands; what happens over the next centuries will be determined by how we play our cards this decade" - Johan Rockström (Director of The Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research)

In my work I am focused on facilitating the critical transition to near zero carbon emissions well before 2040 in North America, and I facilitate this by demonstrating scalable solutions through design and advocacy.

In addition to demonstrating scalable solutions, we need to better represent the co-benefits of engaging this emergency now and in an integrated manner.

We need to build new coalitions to enact policy as well as new coalitions to re-envision our future – an equitable, regenerative future – another world.

Currently I am working on a range of external and internal sustainability initiatives including the piloting and implementation of Grimshaw's approach to achieving net zero carbon ready design on all projects. Grimshaw has recently committed to an ambitious start of the new decade in which all of Grimshaw's international operations and studios operate on a net zero carbon basis from FY 2020 onward (achieved), and all of its design work will be net zero carbon ready by 2025.