News Release

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Panelists at FGIA Fall Conference: Sustainability Not Going Anywhere Despite Changes in U.S. Policy

SCHAUMBURG, IL – Three panelists addressed the topic of sustainability at the Fenestration and Glazing Industry Alliance (FGIA) Fall Conference in Indianapolis. Those participating in the October 8, discussion, “Why Sustainability Matters Today: How Sustainability is Driving Codes, Clients and Competitiveness,” included Paul Bush ([Vitro Architectural Glass](https://www.vitroglazings.com/)), Chris Giovannielli ([Kawneer Company](http://www.kawneer.com/)) and Michelle Foster ([Home Innovation Research Labs](https://www.homeinnovation.com/)). The panel was moderated by FGIA U.S. Codes and Advocacy Director, Kathy Krafka Harkema, and sponsored by the [FGIA Sustainability Steering Committee](https://fgiaonline.org/committees/110).

“We are seeing codes and regulations tightening when it comes to sustainability,” said Foster on the topic of why sustainability still matters, despite a shift in U.S. federal policy. “The pace of change may be slowing down a little bit, but [it’s] not going to stop. Fenestration performance is a key compliance lever.”

There are also economic drivers like investor demand, lower operating costs, interest from home buyers and also financing incentives, said Foster. People want their structures to last despite extreme weather and to be resilient. “Even with the backlash at the federal level, sustainability is here to stay,” she said. “The industry momentum is real. We need to keep building better buildings.”

Giovannielli agreed, saying his company remains invested. “Sustainability is a little different for everybody, but there are some core features to it,” he said. “When we first started talking about [sustainability], it was a little bit of a hot potato: is it quality control? Is it HR? But it evolved over time, and now we have a dedicated team.”

Today, his company recognizes sustainability based upon what is important to architects: recycled content and certification. Giovannielli noted that in-house analytics show the company’s [Declare labels](https://declare.living-future.org/), which are like nutrition labels for products, are the most downloaded items from their website. “People want to understand the makeup of our products.”

Bush spoke to the glass side of the business and the cost structure of the product itself. “Think about the process of making glass,” he said. “A bucket of what looks like dirt turns into glass. Glass is very energy intensive. How can that process be more efficient so we can become more competitive and sustainable?”

Bush said there is research and development happening with glass manufacturers everywhere, in an effort to make it more sustainable. “Somewhere, there will be a breakthrough on that,” he said. “We’ve been working with sustainability even before it was called that. Regardless of how the political pendulum swings, we will be working toward that goal.”

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