

The global building industry's net-zero imperative - the time is now

By [Etienne van Niekerk](#)

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A recent report, *Net-zero buildings: Where do we stand?*, published by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) states that buildings totalling the size of a city such as Paris are being constructed weekly. The worrying part, highlights the report, is that less than one percent of these buildings are being assessed for carbon footprint.



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Considering it is globally accepted that buildings account for 38% of the world's carbon emissions, the above highlights the importance of accurate reporting and accountability.

The WBCSD report echoes this sentiment, stating the building industry is responsible for 14 gigatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions every year. "This needs to be reduced by half by 2030 and to zero by 2050 to achieve the goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement which aims to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels," says the report.

Without a realistic picture of its carbon footprint, the building industry would find it extremely difficult to put proactive and tangible targets in place.

"We must see more data sharing, more collaboration and transparency to be able to achieve the decarbonisation that the world demands of us in the next few decades," comments the WBCSD report.

Implementing steps

More than ever, the time to start implementing steps to ensure the global building industry reaches the Paris Agreement target is now. Fourteen gigatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions is an enormous amount and can't be ignored. Here are some important and deliberate steps:

- The industry needs to establish internationally defined carbon metrics for reporting.
- Make voluntary rating systems and performance guarantees mandatory, especially for new and retrofitted buildings.
- Encourage the retrofit of buildings to meet net-zero target, using fiscal incentives to encourage an energy-conscious industry.
- Introduce smart tools into new and retrofitted construction – therefore digitally connected buildings that will deliver sustainable, high-performance and energy efficient gains.
- Proactively inspect buildings to ensure it continues to meet set carbon metrics.



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It can be done

IntenCity, located in Grenoble, France, is a shining beacon and fantastic example of sustainable building practices and

operations. It is a place where technology, data, and innovation come together to create a more connected, flexible, intuitive, and intelligent space that is sensitive to the environment.

Utilising Schneider Electric's EcoStruxure solutions and an end-to-end digital architecture, IntenCity represents the consolidation of multiple sites to reduce its energy footprint while creating a smart building that supports world-class innovation and the well-being of employees.

The site generates over 920MWh of energy per year using 4,000m² of photovoltaic panels and two wind turbines. Through a unique microgrid partnership, energy is also shared with neighbouring buildings and the city of Grenoble.

The resilience of the building's power infrastructure is supported by real-time visibility of power flow and circuit capacity. At the same time, smart relays and breakers help isolate faults, shed non-critical loads, and automatically transfer to alternate power sources when needed.

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