IMPACT ENTERPRISE EXCELLENCE AWARD (LARGE ENTERPRISE)

DP Architects sets the benchmark for sustainability disclosure and design

The firm uses a framework called Attributes of Purposeful Design in part to guide projects towards Green Mark certification. BY MICHELE BATCHELOR

DP ARCHITECTS (DPA) is under no obligation to disclose its sustainability performance, including its carbon footprint. It's privately held, with no regulator requiring the figures. But it chose to publish them anyway.

"We do so because annual disclosure imposes a discipline that internal tracking doesn't," said Seah Chee Huang, chief executive officer.

"We advise clients on carbon and that position is difficult to sustain without measuring and disclosing our own emissions while the scope of mandatory climate disclosure continues to broaden."

DPA which won the Impact Enterprise Excellence Award (Large Enterprise), began measuring its carbon footprint in 2023 and has reported the results every year since. The firm's total greenhouse gas emissions for 2024 were about 3,141 tonnes of carbon dioxide, up from 2,430 tonnes the year before, driven largely by an expanded reporting boundary that now covers its 16 offices worldwide, not just Singapore. Purchased goods and services, the carbon embedded in what the firm buys, remained the largest single source, accounting for 43 per cent of the total.

The firm has set targets against its baseline. A 50 per cent cut in operational carbon by 2030, net-zero operations by 2045, and net-zero whole-life carbon across every project by 2050, aligned with Singapore's Green Plan and the United Nation's 1.5 deg C threshold year.



DP Architects' CEO, Seah Chee Huang, says the firm is prototyping what it calls a "sustainability AI agent".
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Sustainability categories

DPA applies the same reporting instinct to the design work it does for clients. Since 2015, the firm has benchmarked every project against eight sustainability categories through a framework called Attributes of Purposeful Design, or APD, now implemented firm-wide as a digital assessment tool known as the APD toolkit.

The firm uses APD in part to guide projects towards Green Mark certification, the Building and Construction Authority's official sustainability rating for Singapore buildings.

Across its completed Singapore projects in 2024 and 2025, 67 per cent achieved Green Mark Platinum or LEAF Platinum or better. At Singapore's Central Manpower Base, completed in 2025, the building achieved a 47.6 per cent cut in energy use, benchmarked against the APD framework.

To take its commitment to transparency further, DPA now plans to publish findings from the APD toolkit's dataset, which include data on carbon, water, ecology and social performance across a decade of buildings in Singapore's tropical, high-density conditions, when no comparable consolidated dataset currently exists.

"The decision to publish the APD dataset's findings follows the same reasoning, applied beyond our own operations. Voluntary reporting is accountability for how we operate. Publishing the dataset's findings is accountability for how we design," said Seah.

"The sector accounts for nearly 40 per cent of global energy-related emissions, and South-east Asia's floor area is projected to double by 2060. The scale of the decarbonisation task exceeds what any individual practice can address through its own portfolio."

DPA is also prototyping what it calls a "sustainability AI agent". Instead of only scoring a finished design, the tool would suggest options and their likely performance while architects are still making decisions.

On the community engagement front, DPA signed two partnerships in September 2025.

One, with Nanyang Polytechnic's School of Design and Media, establishes a shared curriculum, co-certification, and internship pathways. Nearly one quarter of the architects the firm hired over the past two years were former interns. The second formalises a 10-year commitment with Montfort Care, the social service agency behind the firm's Goodlife Studio network for seniors.

To date, DPA employees have completed 61 volunteer sessions at Goodlife Makan, a senior community kitchen, since the initiative launched in 2025. DPA has designed six projects with Montfort Care to date, the most recent, Goodlife Studio at Marine Parade, opening this year, with more in the pipeline. "Ultimately, we believe positive impact is not about one-off initiatives, but about enduring partnerships built around shared purpose," Seah added.

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