

# Verdical Group: Building a Net Zero Future

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Verdical Group, a sustainability consulting firm based out of Los Angeles, has been a proud 1% for the Planet Member Company since 2013. Their focus is on creating a greener, more environmentally responsible built environment.

Their Net Zero Conference is the largest green building event hosted annually in California and the largest net zero building event in the world. (Net zero buildings produce as much energy and / or water as they consume.) This year's conference, NZ19, will be hosted on October 2 – 4 at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

We sat down with the company's Founder, Drew Shula, to speak with him about the history of Verdical Group and the Net Zero Conference and what he's looking forward to in the coming years.

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## Q&A with Drew Shula, Founder of Verdical Group

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## How did you discover 1% for the Planet? Why become a member?

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I originally heard about 1% for the Planet through Patagonia founder and inspirational business leader, Yvon Chouinard. When I founded [Verdical Group](#), one of the first things I did after setting up the LLC was sign us up to become a 1% for the Planet member company. I wanted us to walk the talk and do business in a way that gave back to the environment.

## What issues matter most to Verdical Group? What nonprofit organizations does Verdical Group support?

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I've always said that Verdical Group is a small team that makes an impact many times larger than you might expect for a team our size. While we're a for-profit business and profit is important to keep the lights on, as a 1% for the Planet member and B Corporation, creating positive social and environmental impact is just as important.

We support a variety of nonprofits related to our work in the building industry, including a few of our favorites: the [U.S. Green Building Council Los Angeles Chapter](#), the [Los Angeles Cleantech Incubator](#), and the [International Living Future Institute](#).

## What inspires you?

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We're fortunate to convene the foremost leaders in the net zero building movement each year through our [Net Zero Conference](#), so we get to spend time with some of the most inspiring people in our industry, including Jason McLennan, Founder of the Living Building Challenge; Amanda Sturgeon, the CEO of the International Living Future Institute; and Mahesh Ramanujam, the CEO of the U.S. Green Building Council. All these folks have keynoted our Net Zero Conference, and they're always accompanied by an impressive list of speakers from leading architecture firms, engineering firms, construction companies, local governments, and building product innovators.

We're also inspired by project teams around the world, who are getting net zero projects done today, at the leading edge of this movement. So much so that we've decided to add building tours of net zero and near-zero buildings to this year's Net Zero Conference program, so that attendees can get on site to learn about net zero. We're also launching our Trailblazer Awards during the event to recognize leaders who are building a net zero future —people on the ground getting it done, with completed projects under their belts that can become case studies to share with the world.

## Can you tell us a little bit more about the upcoming Net Zero Conference?

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The Net Zero Conference is the world's largest event focused on net zero building, and it's also the largest annual green building event in all of California—the leading green building market in the world.

We focus on all aspects of the built environment's impact on carbon, energy, water, waste and transit. We're expecting 1,200+ attendees and 100+ exhibitors at the Los Angeles Convention Center. This is the premier conference venue in Southern California and sets us up with room to grow as we move toward the planned net zero code requirements for all new construction buildings in California.

## **Can you tell us about the updates to California Code and the impact of these updates?**

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California is requiring 100% of new residential projects in the state to be designed to net zero energy standards by 2020 (yes, that's next year!). The same will be required of all new commercial buildings by 2030.

These code changes are the primary driver of our conference growth. The next 10 years will be here before we know it, and we expect the conference to grow significantly as momentum and interest increase between now and then. The Net Zero Conference is focused on supporting industry, policymakers, and educators as they work to comply with these code changes and move toward a net zero future.

While there will be several sessions dedicated specifically to code changes (including the California deadlines and PCE and SVCE's CCAs), the Net Zero Conference will be packed full of tips, tricks, case studies, tools, and other resources for architects, engineers, construction companies, building owners, and other contractors—anyone who will be involved in the process of creating a net zero building.



Photo credit: JFAK Architects

## What is one thing we can all do right now to make a difference for our planet?

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Get educated, and spread knowledge to as many people as you can. We'd love to invite you to join us at this year's [Net Zero Conference](#) to learn more about net zero buildings, as well as general trends in sustainability that are occurring at the city, state, and building level. In typical 1% fashion, we're offering a [10% discount](#) to our 1% for the Planet family.

We also host the annual [Robin Hood Gala](#), an exclusive dinner party at the Jonathan Club in Downtown Los Angeles that focuses on raising awareness around the homelessness crisis in LA. There are nearly 59,000 people experiencing homelessness in LA County right now. This is heartbreaking and an unnecessary tragedy that we can all work together to solve, and for that reason we've lined up a great list of partners, all of whom are doing incredible work in the Los Angeles area and beyond: Keynote and California Senator Emeritus Kevin de León, The Skid Row Housing Trust, Homeboy Industries, United Way, the Giving Keys, and the Los Angeles Dodgers, Kings, and Sparks, to name a few.

## What's next? Any exciting plans on the horizon for Verdical Group?

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In addition to our building [project work](#), we've worked hard to get really good at event planning, and other companies have started to notice. This year, we spun off [Verdical Events](#), a sustainable event production consulting company. Verdical Events has now produced major sustainable events, including the B Corp Champions Retreat and events for the largest California utilities and the U.S. Green Building Council Los Angeles Chapter.

To that end, we're also looking to expand our impact every year that we put on the Net Zero Conference. Our growth trajectory has been up and to the right, and we want to stay on that course. We're inspiring thousands of people to build radically better buildings, and I can't image a better way to spend my time than working with great people to create an avalanche of impact.

Inspiration has a way of spreading like wildfire, and our hope is that we can inspire everyone at the Net Zero Conference and our other sustainable events to go back to their offices and bring what they learned to their clients and the projects on their desks. Ideas become actions, and before we know it, we'll be living in the future we dreamed was possible.

## ABOUT VERDICAL GROUP

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Verdical Group ([www.verdicalgroup.com](http://www.verdicalgroup.com)) is a leading LA-based full service green building consulting firm specializing in certification project management, net zero, commissioning, energy modeling, and program management. Verdical Group is a certified B Corporation and 1% for the Planet member company. In addition to managing some of the highest profile green building projects in California, including LEED Platinum and Living Building Challenge projects, Verdical Group hosts the nation's largest annual net zero building conference ([www.netzeroconference.com](http://www.netzeroconference.com)). Our sustainable event production arm is Verdical Events ([www.verdicalevents.com](http://www.verdicalevents.com)) through which we host our annual Robin Hood Gala ([www.robinhoodgala.com](http://www.robinhoodgala.com)).



The Verdical Group team out for a hike.