

April 6, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500



Re: *White House Investing in Nature Call to Action*

Dear Mr. President:

The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) applauds your actions to highlight and promote the use of nature-based solutions as a critical tool in addressing some of the nation's biggest challenges. I am pleased to call attention to some of ASLA's recent actions and commitments to invest in jobs, youth, and resilient cities and communities through nature, as requested in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy's document *Investing in Nature*.

Landscape architects, using their STEM-focused education and training, plan and design all outdoor spaces, including community master plans, multimodal transportation networks, transit-oriented development projects, outdoor parks and recreation spaces, water management projects, and more. In designing these community infrastructure projects, the profession routinely utilizes nature-based solutions to mitigate the impacts of climate change, manage stormwater, reduce the heat island effect, protect coastal communities, and more. ASLA is pleased that your groundbreaking report *Opportunities to Accelerate Nature-Based Solutions: A Roadmap for Climate Progress, Thriving Nature, Equity, and Prosperity* spotlights these and other benefits of nature-based solutions and sets out a roadmap to encourage its increased use.

ASLA is committed to highlighting the work of landscape architects and how their projects routinely protect the public's health, safety, and welfare. The landscape architecture profession is dedicated to conserving and restoring nature and designing infrastructure projects that help communities achieve their resilience and climate goals. ASLA is pleased to share a few of the Society's commitments to investing in nature.

ASLA's Commitments to Ensuring American Workers Have New, Marketable Skills for the Nature-Based Economy

ASLA believes that the future holds unlimited opportunities for jobs in the nature-based economy, particularly for the landscape architecture profession. Climate and other environmental concerns are increasing the demand for sustainably designed infrastructure projects and open spaces. Efforts to protect coastal communities, conserve water, prevent water and air pollution, mitigate flooding, preserve biodiversity, and control wildfires are expected to persist. These and other concerns are increasing the demand for landscape architects.

ASLA is committed to growing the profession of landscape architecture, which begins with engaging preK-12 students, especially those in underserved populations, and introducing them to STEM coursework, ecology and natural environments, community planning, designing infrastructure projects, and more. The focus of ASLA's Career Discovery and Diversity agenda is the development of high-quality environmental education resources, the expansion of strategic

alliances, and increased visibility with STEM educators, including teachers, school counselors, and after school leaders.

In an effort to increase student awareness of landscape architecture, ASLA has partnered with the [Future City Competition](#), a design challenge for over 60,000 middle school students. ASLA is a Special Award Sponsor for the Best Integration of Equity in Design and Nature-Powered Solutions, which recognizes the power of nature, the power of design, and the thoughtful work of landscape architecture to transform spaces for the benefit of all people. In September 2021, ASLA launched [DREAM BIG with Design, A Showcase of Landscape Architecture](#), which offered an assortment of resources, including recorded videos and hands-on sketching sessions, to introduce students to landscape architecture.

The profession is also working to ensure that students enrolled at the 97 landscape architecture university degree programs around the nation are prepared to be leaders in utilizing nature-based solutions to plan and design resilient community projects and in addressing the climate and biodiversity crisis. The Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB) is the official accrediting body for professional degrees in landscape architecture at the undergraduate and graduate levels. As such, LAAB develops standards to evaluate landscape architectural degree programs objectively and judges whether a school's landscape architectural degree program is in compliance with the accreditation standards.

LAAB recently published revised [Accreditation Standards](#) to include Core Values that programs are required to embed into their curriculum and policies such as Environmental Health, Sustainability, Resilience, and Stewardship and Application of the Sciences to the Design of Natural and Built Landscapes. Additionally, as part of Standard 3: Professional Curriculum, programs are required to include knowledge of plants, ecosystems, climate science, resilience, landform/landscape engineering and green infrastructure, and more. These revisions, along with long-standing quality curriculum, will ensure that landscape architecture students will be prepared to tackle the current and future issues and crises facing our nation.

Find ASLA education resources for preK-12 students and university programs:

[The Roof Is Growing Educational Program](#)

[ASLA Activity Books](#)

[YOUR LAND Magazine](#)

[Tools for PreK-12 Teachers](#)

[Accreditation Standards for Professional Programs in Landscape Architecture](#)

[Landscape Architecture is a STEM Discipline](#)

ASLA's Commitments to Green Learning Environments and Engaging Youth with Nature

Landscape architects have a proven track record of creating green outdoor learning environments that allow for hands-on educational experiences, while providing community-wide benefits, including heat protection, stormwater management, climate resilience, wildlife habitats, and more. Currently, far too many students attend schools located on grounds of hot asphalt surfaces forcing them to stay indoors the entire day. ASLA is committed to helping transform these concrete-laden school grounds into green spaces that will allow students and staff to learn from and enjoy the benefits of nature.

ASLA is working with congressional leaders to reintroduce and pass the Living Schoolyards Act, which would provide resources for school districts to plan, design, and implement outdoor learning

spaces. ASLA is also working with federal legislators to reintroduce and pass the Public School Green Rooftop Program, which would provide public schools resources to plan, design, and implement green roofs on their buildings. The measure also has the potential for creating outdoor learning spaces that will also provide community benefits, including energy conservation.

As a long-time and active member of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Coalition, ASLA has successfully worked with federal legislators to achieve permanent authorization and robust funding for the program. The LWCF provides critical funding to safeguard natural areas, water resources, and cultural heritage, and to provide recreational opportunities for all Americans. Landscape architects access LWCF funding to plan and design new local parks, renovate existing sites, and for future park planning in communities across the nation. ASLA and its members are committed to the continued success of the LWCF and to utilizing these funds to create safe, accessible, and healthy outdoor recreation spaces so youth and all Americans have increased opportunities to engage with nature. Further, ASLA is working to pass the Outdoors for All Act to ensure that dedicated park and recreation funding is available for underserved communities.

Find ASLA resources for nature-based advocacy efforts:

[Land and Water Conservation Fund Issue Brief](#)

[Outdoors for All Act Issue Brief](#)

[Landscape Architects Design Vibrant, Resilient, and Just Communities for All](#)

[Landscape Architects Design Multimodal Transportation Networks for All](#)

ASLA's Commitment to Building Resilient Cities and Communities through Nature-Based Solutions

Landscape architects plan and design nature-based solutions to help all communities reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate. Landscape architects design with nature to transform parks and open spaces into natural carbon sinks. They develop resilient nature-based solutions that reduce the impacts of extreme heat; coastal, ground, and inland flooding; sea level rise; pollution; and wildfires. They also increase biodiversity and protect and restore ecosystems, which underpin life on Earth. Their highly diverse climate work ranges in scale from a site to a street, neighborhood, district, city, county, and region. At all scales, landscape architects improve the long-term health and resilience of communities by planning and designing in concert with ecosystems.

In 2022, ASLA announced a new focus on scaling up equitable, nature-based solutions to the climate and biodiversity crises. The [ASLA Climate Action Plan](#) charts a pathway for landscape architects to achieve zero greenhouse gas emissions in their projects and operations, and increase carbon sequestration by 2040.

By 2040, all landscape architecture projects will simultaneously:

- Achieve zero embodied and operational emissions and increase carbon sequestration
- Provide significant economic benefits in the form of measurable ecosystem services, health co-benefits, sequestration, and green jobs
- Address climate injustices, empower communities, and increase equitable distribution of climate investments
- Restore ecosystems and increase and protect biodiversity

The plan's vision will be achieved through six initiatives:

1) Carbon Drawdown: Attain zero emissions by 2040 and double carbon sequestration

All landscape projects will reach zero emissions by 2040 while providing economic, environmental, social, and cultural co-benefits, including increased sequestration and biodiversity. Landscape architects can accelerate carbon drawdown with nature-based strategies and smart planning, design, and specification. ASLA will provide guidance, education, training, and research to support our members' efforts. ASLA will also support members, firms, and organizations in achieving:

- Zero emission business operations
- Zero emission landscape architecture projects
- Zero emission economic growth
- A zero-emission landscape architecture product marketplace

2) Climate Resilience: Enhance capacity, biodiversity, and resilience of livable cities and communities

ASLA will provide education and examples to support landscape architects in preparing communities to adapt to a changing world. ASLA will develop and connect members with resources to learn about the projected climate impacts of today and the future, helping them to evolve practices to better respond to the climate emergency through planning and design.

3) Climate Agency: Advocate for climate justice and social well-being

For centuries, policy decisions about land use, zoning, transportation, and other aspects of the built and natural environments have resulted in negative health, safety, and economic impacts on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. Advancing equitable community development is core to all climate action by 2040. ASLA will provide training and guidance to landscape architects on:

- Engaging and empowering communities
- Developing equitable outcomes that rely on equitable processes
- Supporting increased investment in community-based climate solutions

ASLA will also work with organizations to identify and help reverse historic inequities. Efforts will include facilitating partnerships with Indigenous, underserved, and historically marginalized communities to plan and design climate solutions that fairly distribute benefits of climate-related investments.

4) Cultural Empowerment: Learn from cultural knowledge systems and practices of care

ASLA will support and respect Indigenous-led movements that aim to reclaim ancestral lands along with the cultural, spiritual, ecological, and healing benefits that come with the land. As the climate crisis escalates, Indigenous cultures, underserved, and under-represented communities will be disproportionately impacted. When working on projects and issues that intersect with underserved cultures, landscape architects can support community-led processes and self-determination, beginning with deep listening and knowledge sharing.

5) Climate Leadership: Galvanize climate champions

The plan will amplify relationships and communicate how landscape architects mitigate carbon and adapt to a changing environment, elevating the role of landscape architects into higher levels of decision making. Through communications efforts, we will build support for nature-based solutions to the climate and biodiversity crises. Education and training for ASLA members will increase our effectiveness in strategically advocating for climate-positive policies, while also advancing equity and economic development. ASLA will raise the visibility of the unique qualifications of landscape architects to:

- Provide climate and biodiversity crisis solutions through collaborations and outreach
- Build strategic partnerships to strengthen collective action

6) Global Alliance: Advance the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals and expand international collaboration

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations in 2015, as an urgent call to action for all countries with specific goals to be accomplished by 2030. While traditional landscape architecture is built on the philosophy of sustainability, it focuses on a few of the SDGs, including clean water, sustainable cities and communities, life on land and water, and good health and well-being. As the profession evolves, landscape architects can also support the remaining SDG goals such as supporting equity, increasing food security, responsible consumption and production, and taking climate action. By doing this, ASLA can advance the global effort to create a more peaceful and just world, placing a priority on progress for those who are the most in need.

Find resources about landscape architects' nature-based solutions to the climate and biodiversity crises at all scales – from the regional and urban to site and residence:

[2021 Market Demand for Climate Solutions](#)

[Climate Action Plan Videos](#)

[Climate Action Field Guide](#)

[Climate Action Plan Case Studies](#)

[Guide to Climate Change Mitigation and Landscape Architecture](#)

[Guide to Resilient Design](#)

[Guide to Green Infrastructure](#)

[Guide to Transportation and Nature-based Solutions](#)

[Guide to Ecological Residential Design](#)

Once again, thank you for your efforts to promote nature-based solutions as a viable policy option to address some of our nation's pressing issues. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact me or ASLA Federal Government Affairs Director Roxanne Blackwell, Hon. ASLA, at rblackwell@asla.org.

Sincerely,



Torey Carter-Conneen
Chief Executive Officer