

# **THE OLMSTED SCHOLAR AGENDA**

from Declaration  
to Action

**As Landscape Architects,  
we must declare our  
concerns and hopes for the  
future, and we must act.**

To rise to the climatic and social challenges of 21st century, we must collectively demonstrate value through urgent, focused actions.

Landscape Architects are catalyzers; we must utilize our skills and the entire breadth of our profession to explore, engage, and cultivate. Our profession must transcend our limited numbers to demonstrate our expertise and be recognized as the uniquely holistic yet impactful profession we aspire to be.

To supplement the LAF's New Landscape Declaration, we collectively offer the following actions for how to act now and plan for our future:

# Action 1

**“We will work to strengthen and diversify our global capacity as a profession.”**

“Diversity begets innovation.” Our profession must earnestly engage a diversity of people, project types, and communities. We must expand our means and methods to champion innovation, inside and outside the office. The profession should invite collaboration, excite the next generation, and collectively seek out emergent frontiers.



**SUPPORT DIVERSE COMMUNITIES**



**PUSH BOUNDARIES**



**DIVERSIFY OUR PROFESSION**

## ACT NOW

- Join or volunteer with professional organizations that nourish diversity.
- Financially sponsor and volunteer for landscape architecture student career discovery programs for K-12.
- Financially sponsor and volunteer for projects in communities in-need.
- Seek short-term and alternative projects for their ability to catalyze public conversation, stimulate new ideas and teach the profession how to fail forward.

## PRECEDENTS

- Kaiser Permanente’s National Diversity Agenda / Community Design Collaborative / EDSA Minority Scholarship program
- ACE Mentor Program / Future Landscape Architects of America / I+ Program
- AmeriCorps VISTA / Teach for America / EarthCorps
- Civic crowd-sourced funding

## PLAN NOW

- Champion diverse leadership and client-bases within workplaces.
- Support entrepreneurial career paths within the profession and encourage transdisciplinary collaboration beyond the design professions to break into new markets and push innovation.
- Seek funding sources for interdisciplinary, global reach and alternative project types.
- Evaluate existing project delivery methods and test new platforms.

## PRECEDENTS

- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation / The Knight Cities Challenge
- UN-Habitat / Informal Urban Communities Initiative
- Rebuild by Design / 100 Resilient Cities

# Action 2

**“We will work to cultivate a bold culture of inclusive leadership, advocacy and activism in our ranks.”**

Landscape Architecture must continue to expand its leadership role in project implementation and at-large to make effective change. We must encourage leadership from both within and beyond traditional practices to find new platforms for political and environmental advocacy and action.



**PROMOTE  
POSITIVE  
ACTIVISM**



**EXPAND  
ADVOCACY**



**STRENGTHEN  
LEADERSHIP**

## ACT NOW

- Join local and global advocacy boards, governmental committees and allied professional organizations.
- Encourage students and emerging professionals to seek out alternative career paths in government, non-profit, advocacy, activism, research, health industries, technology, agribusiness etc.
- Pursue work or build relationships with clients who focus attention on marginalized communities, endangered ecosystems, and neglected places.

## P R E C E D E N T S

- Design as Protest, National Day of Action / Audobon Society / Trust for Public Land
- Local green building councils, historic preservation committees, land conservation organizations, cyclist/ pedestrian advocacy groups
- AmeriCorps VISTA / Teach for America / EarthCorps

## PLAN NOW

- Seek funding sources and structures for design activism and advocacy projects.
- Make community engagement and public service a requirement for ASLA membership and/or CEUs for licensure.
- Expand local and state advocacy programs to encourage ecological development and reuse opportunities in urban areas while also protecting vital ecosystems and supporting underserved rural landscapes
- Support local and national policies and programs that strengthen landscape architecture's professional value.

## P R E C E D E N T S

- Kickstarter / Indigogo / Impact Hub / Enterprise Community Partners
- Doctors/Engineers/Architects Without Borders / Rural Training Track Medical Residency Programs

# Action 3

**“We will work to raise awareness of landscape architecture’s vital contribution.”**

Landscape Architecture requires a bold and loud communication strategy that represents our expanding capacity to the public, while attracting new projects and voices to the profession. Through both educational landscapes and new digital platforms, we can ensure we reach a broader audience.



**COMMUNICATE  
DESIGN PROCESS**



**ENGAGE  
COMMUNITY**



**SHOWCASE  
INNOVATION**

## ACT NOW

- Use clear, relatable language in public presentations. Do not use jargon.
- Foster citizen urbanists and community partners.
- Promote the profession via social media.
- Educate the public on the benefits of working with our profession.
- Evaluate current communication strategies and explore non-traditional and contemporary communication methods.

## P R E C E D E N T S

- AIA Trust communication resources
- 360 video / Facebook Live / Augmented reality apps / Podcasts
- ASLA “YOUR Land” publication for elementary and high school students

## PLAN NOW

- Partner with branding/marketing professionals to create a campaign to position the landscape architectural design process as relatable and relevant to the public.
- Increase opportunities for idea competitions or conferences that foreground multi-functional “artful and performative” landscapes to stimulate fresh solutions to local and global issues and gain visibility for the profession.
- Seek short-term and alternative projects for their ability to catalyze public conversation, stimulate new ideas and teach the profession how to fail forward.

## P R E C E D E N T S

- ASLA public awareness campaign / IDEO Design Thinking / PubMed / ALS Ice Bucket Challenge
- Van Alen design competitions / DredgeFest

# Action 4

**We will work to support research and champion new practices that result in design innovation and policy transformation.**

It is critical that the profession continues to demonstrate the value of existing and designed landscapes while elevating innovative research. To improve the efficacy of our work, we must strengthen research partnerships and integrate performative methods and techniques into practice.



**ENCOURAGE PARTNERSHIPS**



**EXPERIMENT + TEST**



**PUSH POLICY**

## ACT NOW

- Partner with an academic institution and a professional office to implement a research project.
- Implement a short/medium term demonstration project to create knowledge and showcase effectiveness for long-term change.
- Experiment with innovative tools and technology.
- Become your own client. Support in-office research to proactively identify issues that can be solved with landscape architectural services.

## PRECEDENTS

- Park(ing) Day / Market Street Prototyping Festival / CA Sierra ASLA's Pop Project / Pop Up City - Cleveland
- LAF Case Study Investigation / AECOM's Urban SOS Competition
- ASLA Green Roof / University of Toronto GRIT Lab
- Green Futures Research and Design Lab / University of Pennsylvania's Shoemaker Green
- VR / Drone photography / LIDAR

## PLAN NOW

- Establish metrics to prove the environmental and cultural value of ecosystem services.
- Expand funding sources for cross-disciplinary knowledge-building in both academic and professional practice.
- Require ecosystem services, environmental justice and research experience as requirements for ASLA membership and/or licensure.
- Advance the integration of sustainable techniques and culture in our practices. Divest from fossil fuels and offset CO2 footprints.
- Evaluate existing project delivery methods and test new platforms.

## PRECEDENTS

- SITES / LEED / Living Building Challenge / LAF Landscape Performance Series
- SWA's Innovation Lab XL / Sasaki's in-house research grants / Andropogon's Integrated Research Department
- EPA P3 Competition / TKF Foundation Open Spaces Sacred Places design + research projects
- Sharing economy platforms / Lyft / AirBnB / Zipcar

This list is not intended to be exhaustive; these actions are the beginning of a larger dialogue to address the concerns and hopes stated in the **New Landscape Declaration**. This is a framework for a more detailed action strategy we desire in order to inspire, direct, and hold us **accountable** (precedent: United Nations Sustainable Development Goals).

Landscape Architecture's unique ability to collaborate, innovate, empathize and shape the physical and cultural realm makes us well suited to lead the world in overcoming the urgent ecological and societal crises of our time by creating conditions of health and wellbeing for all.

**We are the next generation  
and we are ready to act.**