

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



American Society of
Landscape Architects



The American Society of
Landscape Architects Fund

Foreword



ASLA has developed its first Climate Action Plan in the spirit of great optimism. We envision communities becoming healthier and economically stronger because they have committed to drawing down carbon, restoring ecosystems and increasing biodiversity, and reducing reliance on vehicles – all while ensuring everyone in their community has equitable access to these benefits.

Landscape architects are already partnering with communities to achieve this vision. But as we increasingly experience the impacts of the climate and biodiversity crises, we know we need to act faster. We are the only design professionals who can bring all the pieces together and plan and design what communities need to prepare themselves for a changing world.

We envision landscape architects on their own; in small, medium, and large firms; in non-profit organizations and community groups; in public practice; and in academia leading the way to a healthier, more resilient future.

We envision landscape architecture firms enjoying greater economic success because of their early embrace of ambitious zero emission goals. Landscape architects can grow their practices faster once they commit to a path to zero emissions and help others get there too. And they can help transform the landscape architecture

product marketplace, creating demand for healthier, lower-cost, and zero-emission products.

We understand that achieving our vision will depend on creating change in our own business operations and the entire supply chain of products and services that are a part of designed landscapes. We envision leveraging our collective power and growing new partnerships with industry partners that will help us achieve a zero-emission profession by 2040.

The path forward will not be easy, but by leading now we can ensure this transformation is rooted in nature, equity, and zero-emission growth. This plan represents the values of all landscape architects who want to see communities thrive far into the future. And it also reflects the goal of every landscape architect to successfully capture new opportunities.



Eugenia Martin,
FASLA,
ASLA President



Torey Carter-Conneen,
ASLA CEO

IFLA CLIMATE ACTION COMMITMENT

In 2021, ASLA was a signatory of the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) Climate Action Commitment, which was presented at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) that convened in Glasgow, Scotland.

This Commitment is supported by 70,000 landscape architects in 77 countries.

The ASLA Climate Action Plan is rooted in three goals and six initiatives of IFLA Climate Action Commitment.

With our plan, ASLA seeks to align with our fellow landscape architects worldwide and amplify our collective capacity to create positive change.

ASLA Climate Action Plan Elements

Vision

Vision for 2040 – All landscape architecture projects will simultaneously:

- *Achieve zero embodied and operational emissions and increase 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 protect, conserve, and enhance biodiversity*

Goals

Practice: Scale up Climate Positive Approaches

Equity: Empower Communities

Advocacy: Build Coalitions

By 2025, these goals will be advanced through 21 objectives and 68 actions.

Goals and actions will be revisited and updated in 2025 and every five years until 2040 and beyond.

Initiatives

Practice

Carbon Drawdown

Achieve zero emissions and double sequestration by 2040



Equity

Climate Agency

Advocate for climate justice and social well-being



Advocacy

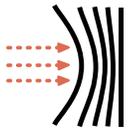
Climate Leadership

Galvanize climate champions



Climate Resilience

Enhance capacity, biodiversity, and resilience of liveable cities and communities



Cultural Empowerment

Learn from cultural knowledge systems and practices of care



Global Alliance

Advance the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and expand international collaboration



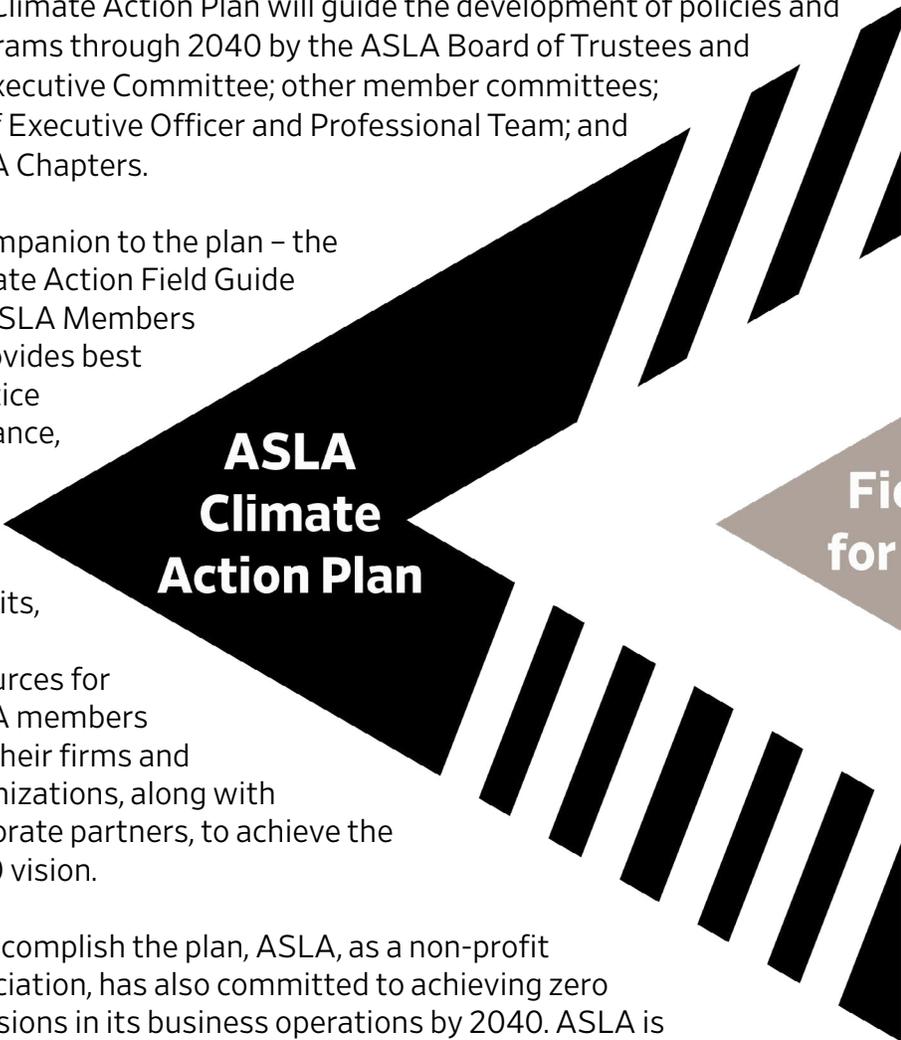
Framework

The Climate Action Plan will guide the development of policies and programs through 2040 by the ASLA Board of Trustees and its Executive Committee; other member committees; Chief Executive Officer and Professional Team; and ASLA Chapters.

A companion to the plan – the Climate Action Field Guide for ASLA Members – provides best practice guidance,

toolkits, and resources for ASLA members and their firms and organizations, along with corporate partners, to achieve the 2040 vision.

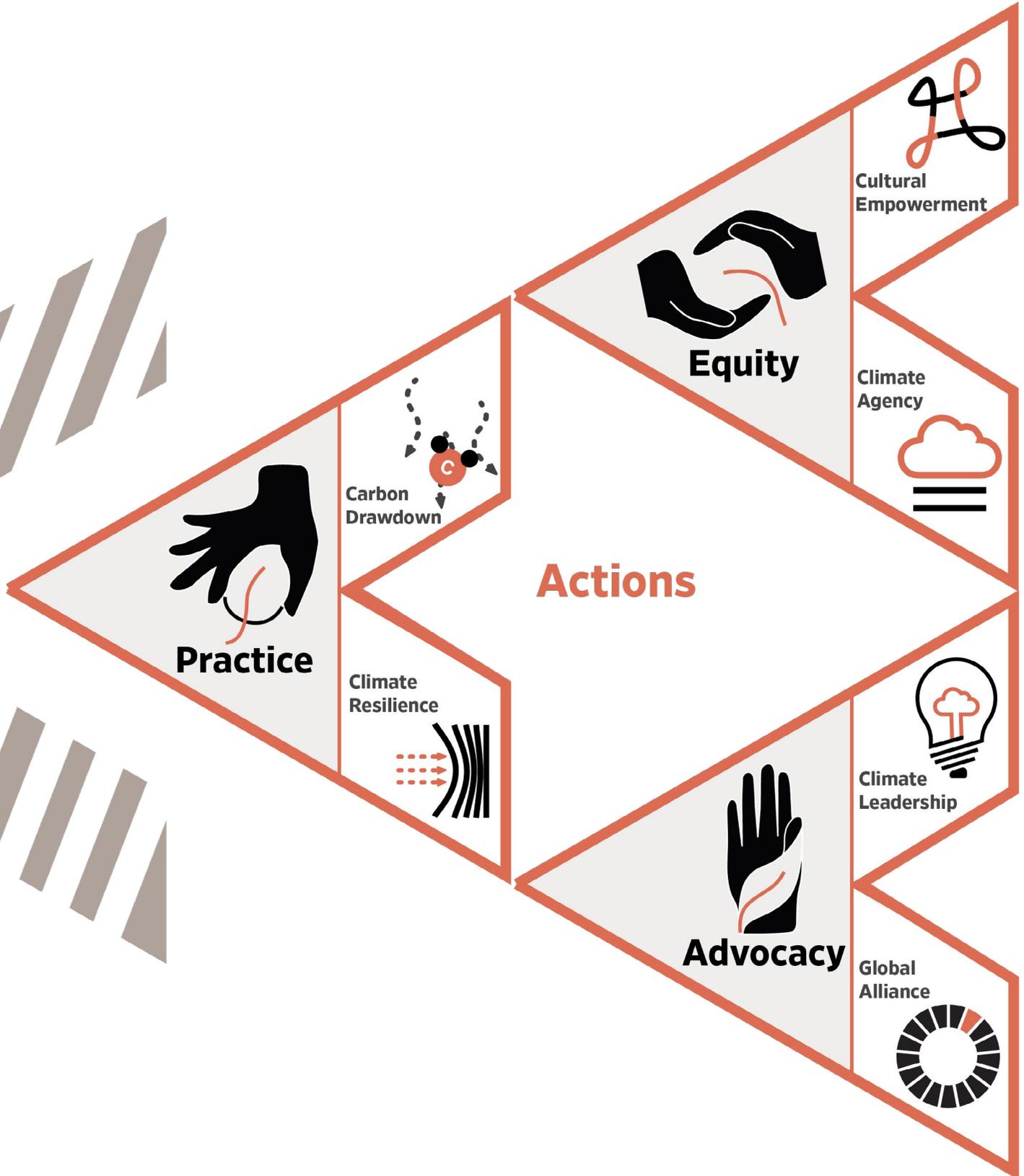
To accomplish the plan, ASLA, as a non-profit association, has also committed to achieving zero emissions in its business operations by 2040. ASLA is calculating baseline Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions for its 2022 Conference on Landscape Architecture in San Francisco and headquarters operations in Washington, D.C. and has committed to reducing its overall emissions by 20% by 2024. ASLA will use its own journey to zero as a learning opportunity for its members, EXPO exhibitors, and partner organizations.

A large, black, arrow-shaped graphic pointing to the right. The text 'ASLA Climate Action Plan' is centered within the arrow. The arrow has a jagged, sawtooth-like edge on its right side.

**ASLA
Climate
Action Plan**

A large, grey, arrow-shaped graphic pointing to the right. The text 'Field Guide for Members' is centered within the arrow. The arrow has a jagged, sawtooth-like edge on its right side.

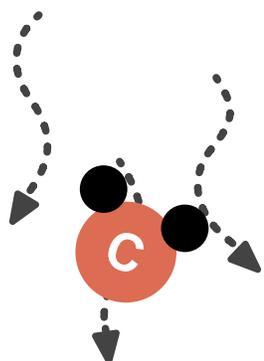
**Field Guide
for Members**



Practice



ASLA 2022 Professional General Design Honor Award. Riverfront Spokane. Spokane, WA, USA. Berger Partnership / Built Work Photography



Initiative 1

Carbon Drawdown

Achieve zero emissions and double sequestration by 2040

We will dramatically reduce operational and embodied carbon emissions produced by our work, harness the unique capacity of landscape to draw down carbon dioxide, and advocate for clean and multi-modal transport systems.

—IFLA Climate Action Commitment

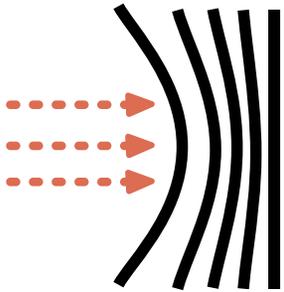
All landscape projects will reach zero emissions by 2040 while providing economic, environmental, social, and cultural co-benefits, including increased sequestration and biodiversity.

ASLA will 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

Landscape architects can accelerate carbon drawdown with nature-based strategies and smart planning, design, and specification. We will provide guidance, education, training, and research to support our members' efforts.

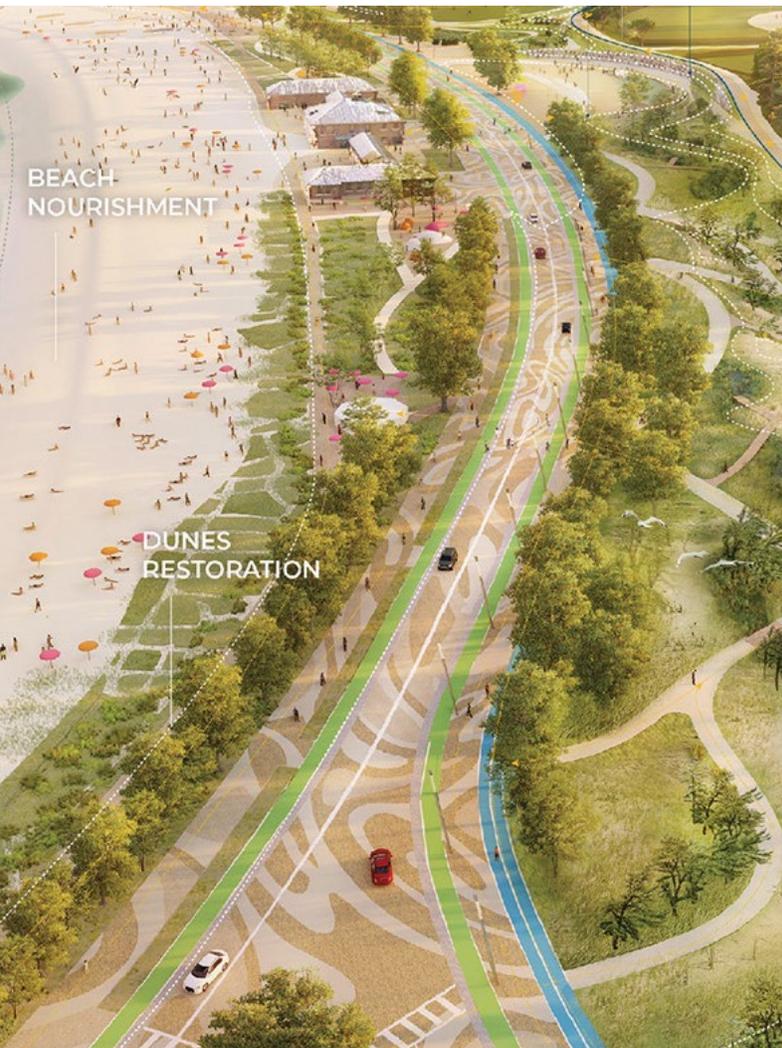
As of 2020, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has found humanity can only put a maximum of 340 more gigatons of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere if we want a good chance of only increasing temperatures by 1.5° C (2.7° Fahrenheit), instead of 2° C (3.6° Fahrenheit).



Initiative 2

Climate Resilience

Enhance capacity, biodiversity, and resilience of liveable cities and communities



Implementing green infrastructure approaches, landscape architects will work to mitigate urban heat island effect and reduce the risks associated with fire, drought, and flood.

—IFLA Climate Action Commitment

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.

How ASLA Will Make Progress

By 2040 — These two key practice initiatives will be achieved through 7 objectives, tracked against 8 success indicators.

By 2025 — These goals and objectives will be advanced by completing 33 action items.

Beginning in 2023 — Several action items will be initiated and prioritized for internal and donor funding.

Highlighted actions include:

- Develop a searchable database of climate action case studies.
- Develop a searchable database of member climate experts.
- Support the development of the economic case for a low- and zero-emission product supply chain, including Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) by landscape architecture product manufacturers.
- Launch a new Climate and Biodiversity Positive Commitment to support members measuring the impacts of their work.
- Deliver continued professional development specific to the climate and biodiversity crisis, zero-emission market development, and climate justice.
- Provide curated resources to inform, guide, and support members' Climate and Biodiversity Positive design and planning practices.
- Develop an ASLA organizational emission reduction plan to realize a 20% reduction in the carbon footprint of ASLA and its Conference by 2024.

- Determine low- and zero-emission market growth opportunities according to various decarbonization scenarios and scope 1-3 emission reduction targets for 2040.
- Develop a guide on how to partner with and influence federal and state departments of transportation, community-level project sponsors, planning departments, and developers to reduce transportation-related emissions.
- Aim for Biodiversity positive / 10 percent biodiversity net gain and support the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration.
- Contribute to advancing the global movement to protect at least 30 percent of terrestrial, coastal, and ocean ecosystems by 2030 (30x30).
- Develop biodiverse urban forests and aim for 40 percent canopy cover for cities by 2030.

One-million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, and seventy-five percent of the Earth's ice-free land surface and two-thirds of the oceans have been significantly altered by humanity. Protecting 30 percent of land and freshwater and 30 percent of oceans by 2030 (30X30) is the minimum required to conserve remaining biodiversity and ecosystems.

Equity



ASLA 2022 Professional General Design Award of Excellence. Palm Springs Downtown Park. Palm Springs, CA, USA. RIOS



Initiative 3

Climate Agency

Advocate for climate justice and social well-being

Landscape architects will increase support for equity and equality, rights to nature, food security, and the right to clean water and air, green spaces housing, and affordable and accessible transportation options for all.

—IFLA Climate Action Commitment

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.

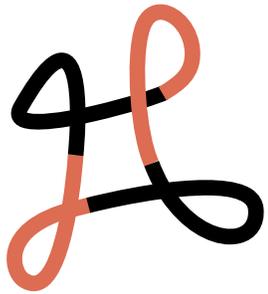
- ASLA will provide training and guidance to landscape architects on:
- Engaging and empowering communities
- Developing equitable outcomes that rely on equitable processes.
- Supporting increased investment in community-based climate solutions.

ASLA will work with organizations to identify and help reverse historic inequities. Efforts will include:

- Facilitating partnerships with Indigenous, underserved, and historically marginalized communities to address past and current inequities.
- Planning and designing climate solutions that fairly distribute benefits of climate-related investments.



ASLA 2022 Professional Analysis and Planning Honor Award. Accelerating Rural Recovery and Resilience: The Pollockville Community Floodprint. Pollockville, NC, USA. NC State University Coastal Dynamics Design Lab



Initiative 4

Cultural Empowerment

Learn from cultural knowledge systems and practices of care



Respecting and working with Indigenous cultural land management knowledge to mitigate climate crisis impacts and continue work toward reconciliation are our priority.

—IFLA Climate Action Commitment

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.

ASLA 2022 Professional Design Honor Award. A Community's Embrace Responding to Tragedy: The January 8th Memorial and the El Presidio Park Vision Plan. Tucson, AZ. USA. Chee Salette, Tina Chee Landscape Studio

How ASLA Will Make Progress

By 2040 — These 2 key equity initiatives will be achieved through 7 objectives, tracked against 9 success indicators.

By 2025 — These goals and objectives will be advanced by completing 14 action items.

Beginning in 2023 — Several action items will be initiated and prioritized for internal and donor funding.

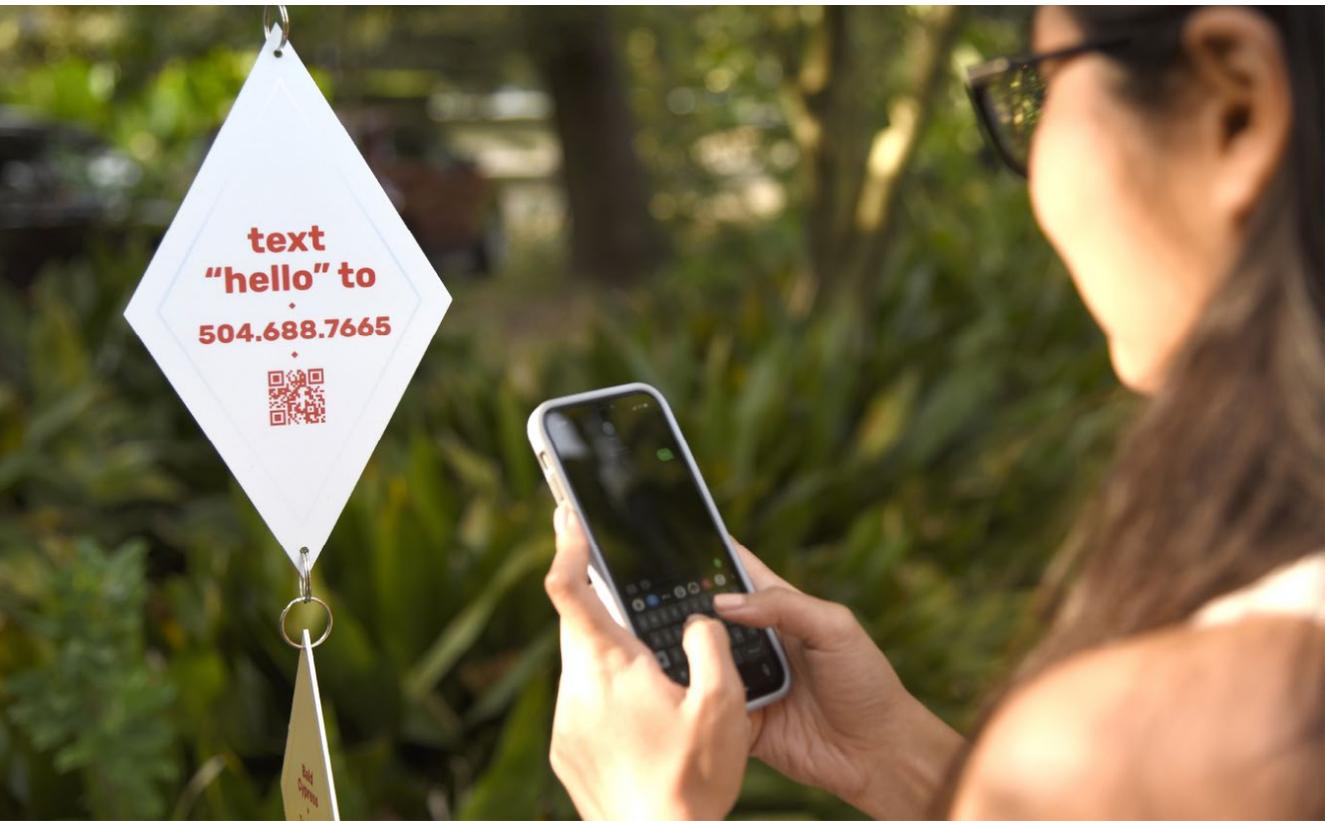
Highlighted actions include:

- Develop a series of workshops with partner organizations focused on equitable zero-emission growth.
- With guidance from the ASLA Racial Equity Plan and partner organizations, develop an equity measure or metric that must be checked or applied when executing all goals of the action plan.



ASLA 2022 Professional Urban Design Honor Award. Denny Regrade Campus. Seattle, WA, USA. Site Workshop / Stuart Issett

Advocacy



ASLA 2022 Professional Communications Honor Award. Talk Tree to Me: Facilitating a Complex Conversation Around Trees in Detroit. Detroit, MI, USA. Spackman Mossop Michaels



Initiative 5 Climate Leadership

Galvanize climate champions

Landscape architects are uniquely placed to galvanize and lead a built-environment response to this crisis. We will continue to collaborate with clients, suppliers, and allied professions to champion Climate Positive Design.

—IFLA Climate Action Commitment

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.

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.

Definition of Climate Positive Design:

Design that reduces emissions and increases sequestration over a project's life span while also providing environmental, cultural, and economic co-benefits such as biodiversity, equity, and resilience.



Initiative 6 Global Alliance

Advance the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and expand international collaboration

Through each of the 77 nations represented by the IFLA, landscape architects within our member associations (including ASLA) accelerate our work to repair global ecosystems.
—IFLA Climate Action Commitment

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 to 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.



How ASLA Will Make Progress

By 2040 — These 2 key advocacy initiatives will be achieved through 7 objectives, tracked against 9 success indicators.

By 2025 — These goals and objectives will be advanced by completing 24 action items.

Beginning in 2023 — Several action items will be initiated and prioritized for internal and donor funding.

Highlighted actions include:

- Develop series of studies analyzing latest global peer-reviewed scientific research on the benefits of landscape architecture strategies to reduce emissions and help communities adapt to various climate impacts. Partner with landscape architecture educational programs, forming networks to source research and conduct reviews. Use studies as a basis for regional ASLA webinars and workshops that will encourage additional local research and knowledge sharing.
- Partner with allied organizations to explore practitioner peer review for project documentation to ensure knowledge outputs are relevant or can be applied in projects.
- Develop and establish communication within regions and nationally through establishment of Chapter Climate Action Committees and chairs and university faculty and student representatives.



ASLA 2022 Professional Residential Design Honor Award. Coast Ridge Residence. Portola Valley, CA, USA. Scott Lewis Landscape Architecture



Cover Image: ASLA 2022 Professional Residential Design Award of Excellence. Edwin M. Lee Apartments. San Francisco, California. GLS Landscape | Architecture / Patrik Argast