

2024 LANDSCAPE X SYMPOSIUM



Saturday, 8/24

Landscape X Culture X Community

NCC24-003 Reimagining Our Streets: Building Community Through Slow Streets in San Francisco
(1.25 PDH, LA CES/HSW)

Event Type: Panel Discussion
Time: 9:00 am - 10:15 am
Location: Lakeside Suite
Capacity: 40

Join this panel to explore how we creatively use, design, and steward streets, where community members, horticulturists, landscape architects, and nonprofits co-create public spaces that foster imagination, connection, and friendship.



Panelists



Thea Yang | Assistant Project Manager, San Francisco Parks Alliance | Session Moderator

Thea is a dedicated landscape designer and planner who possesses an unwavering passion for creating vibrant public spaces that foster strong communities. She currently serves as one of the driving forces behind SF Parks Alliance's capital projects.

Before joining the SF Parks Alliance, Thea worked as a landscape designer at BASE Landscape Architecture, where she contributed to the development of public parks and schools in the Bay area. Her innovative and thoughtful approach to design consistently left a positive impact on the communities she served. Beyond her local contributions, Thea's commitment to promoting public spaces extended to a global level. She worked closely with former National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis on a visionary project to establish a national park system in China.

Alec Hawley | Landscape Architect, Founder of Fauvescraper Studio

Alec found his love of landscape through a winding path exploring ecology, gardening, farming, and the humanities. Not a day passes in his life without a trip into the park with his 2 dogs and 2 daughters where discussions of biology, design and puddle jumping ensue.



As a Designer, he worked for award winning firms across North America with clients and projects in 6 continents ranging from local community groups to International Corporations. He prides himself in his ability to find the unique, simple, and humane aspects of landscape that help to make a place not simply one of many, but to call out the intrinsic qualities that make it one of a kind. His open and positive disposition brings a basis for cooperative and open collaboration with peers, clients and community.

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Katy Birnbaum | Founder/CEO, Into The Streets SF

Where you see a desolate street, Katy sees a party waiting to happen. With this unique vision and a passion for bringing people together, Katy founded Into The Streets in 2023 to help lead San Francisco's regeneration efforts with a focus on culture, community, and creativity. Since then, Into The Streets has been recognized by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and the Center for Architecture & Design/AIA-SF for its outstanding efforts to revitalize Downtown SF. Bringing over a decade of experience in event production, community organizing, team development, and public/private partnerships, Katy knows how to invite stakeholders to the table to successfully collaborate, share a vision, and make immediate and lasting change in their communities.



Molly Hayden | Page Slow Street Steward

Molly is a chronic volunteer and heavily involved as a Steward for Page Slow Street, an organizer for SF BikeBus, advocate for Ocean Beach Park and on the board for Lower Haight Merchants & Neighbors Association. A Pacific Northwest native, she spent a decade in Boston and enough time in Manhattan to realize she could make there, but would rather call San Francisco home. She is passionate about car-free spaces, petting all the dogs, and seeing every National Park (currently 35/63).



Wren Sayler | Commercial Plantscaper, Owner, Sprout and Stem Co

Wren founded plantscaping company Sprout + Stem Co in 2018 after spending many years working in retail and retail plant buying. Throughout her mid 20's she became enamored with the world of botany and horticulture, and devoted any free time she had to studying plants. She was truly dazzled by the lively intricacy of the natural world, which was something she'd loved as a child but lost somewhere along the way to adulthood. Once she obtained her degree in marketing and management she decided to pursue her rekindled passion and focus solely on plantscaping as her chosen career.

Sprout and Stem now has clients all over San Francisco and supplies a range of services - from commercial plant care and maintenance, to large scale moss wall installations, to interior plant installs, to faux plant design. She has also taught several plant-focused team building workshops for companies all over the country. Wren deeply believes in spreading the joy and excitement of the natural world with every single one of her clients, and is truly passionate about the psychological benefits that greenery can provide in any space.

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Session Outline

Background and Overview of Slow Streets in San Francisco

This segment will provide a comprehensive overview of the Slow Streets in San Francisco, which developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus will be on the shared goals of these streets: transforming urban spaces to be more pedestrian, bike-friendly, community spaces that encourage people to connect and gather instead of isolate and displace. The presentation will cover both community-driven and government-led slow streets projects, highlighting the crucial role that nonprofits play in supporting these initiatives.

Case Study: Page Slow Street in San Francisco

We will explore how the Page Slow Street has exemplified a successful community-driven slow street project. Insights from slow street stewards and supporters will illustrate effective methods for fostering community involvement through events, programming, physical improvements, and maintenance, such as parklets and street murals. The discussion will also address the challenges faced, surprises encountered, and successes achieved in shifting public perceptions and ensuring the sustainability of these improvements.

Understanding the Role of Landscape Architects in Community-Driven Projects

This segment will highlight the vital role of landscape architects in creating vibrant, community-focused spaces. Examples will showcase how landscape architects address community needs and contribute to successful slow street projects. Panelists will discuss how thoughtful design and engagement can translate community visions into actionable outcomes, and how designers can advocate for collaborative public space planning with the city to support community-driven initiatives.

Q&A

The session will conclude with a Q&A period, allowing attendees to ask questions and gain additional insights based on the presentations and discussions.

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the development and purpose of slow streets in San Francisco and explore strategies for reimagining urban public spaces.
- Gain practical insights from slow street stewards and supporters on effective place-making and community engagement strategies. Discover methods to enhance community spaces to foster connections and neighborhood engagement.
- Learn how to collaborate with communities to bring public space visions to life.
- Explore strategies for navigating governmental processes and fostering creativity in public space design.