



February 20, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) and our 15,000 members, I am proposing recommendations to include in your upcoming President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2025 (FY2025). ASLA suggests increased investments for nature-based solutions, water management, national parks and public lands, active transportation, and community development. Increased funding in these areas will help address some of our nation's greatest challenges—climate change, biodiversity, equity, public health, national security, and economic and social development. The recent investments in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act aid these efforts, but increased federal investments are needed to ensure landscape architects continue to help communities create healthy, safe, and resilient places nationwide.

ASLA applauds the administration's efforts to improve our nation's infrastructure as outlined in previous budgets, executive orders, and other policy efforts. To continue the path to "investing in America," ASLA recommends the following key priorities be included in the President's Budget Request for FY2025:

NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

ASLA urges you to continue to unlock at least \$25 billion in federal agency funding to promote nature-based solutions (NBS). As you know, nature-based solutions are techniques, actions, and strategies that mimic or augment natural systems. From green roofs, green streets, bioswales, and rain gardens to reforestation, urban tree canopies, protection and conservation of natural areas, and the sustainable management of farms and fisheries, landscape architects are the leading design professionals utilizing nature-based solutions. Nature-based solutions are cost-effective ways to address several challenges, including climate and biodiversity crises, air and water quality, public health, and more.

BIODIVERSITY

ASLA urges a minimum \$1.4 billion in FY2025 for state and territorial wildlife agencies to implement their Wildlife Action Plans and Tribal Nation conservation efforts. This funding will help conserve and protect our nation's natural landscapes, endangered species, and ecosystems. Landscape architects and others would be able to access this funding to improve biodiversity nationwide by incorporating native tree and plant species, planning and designing wildlife corridors, and restoring degraded ecosystems.

CLIMATE CHANGE

ASLA urges that the FY2025 budget include \$25 billion to continue to help build communities' resilience to floods, wildfires, storms, extreme heat, and drought brought on by climate change. Landscape architects access this funding to plan and design infrastructure projects that create climate resilience, expand conservation and ecosystem management, strengthen America's natural disaster response capabilities, and more.

EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Justice40: ASLA suggests that the FY2025 budget continue providing 40 percent of certain federal investments to create opportunities that proactively recognize and equitably address underserved populations. Historically, underserved communities have been plagued by environmental injustices and inequitable access to goods and services. Justice40 investments provide funding and policy solutions that can help landscape architects work with underserved communities to enhance environmental justice initiatives, including community engagement efforts, environmental planning standards, outdoor recreation projects, accessible transportation options, and more.

WATER MANAGEMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Clean Water State Revolving Funds (CWSRF): ASLA recommends the FY2025 budget include full funding of \$3.25 billion for the Drinking and Clean Water State Revolving Funds. In particular, ASLA urges that the Clean Water State Revolving Fund be fully funded and that steps are taken to increase the set-aside for the Green Project Reserve

(GPR) from 10 percent to 20 percent. Increasing the percentage of funding for the GPR will allow more communities to use green infrastructure, water and energy efficiency, and other innovative projects to address and manage their water and stormwater issues. The CWSRF is one of the largest federal funding sources for landscape architects to plan and design water infrastructure projects.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) programs: ASLA suggests the FY2025 budget include increased investments of \$9.57 billion for USACE to implement nature-based solutions in public water infrastructure projects that address stormwater runoff, flood control, sea-level rise, damaged shorelines, natural landscape protections, ecosystem restoration, and more. Landscape architects collaborate with USACE on these and other water management projects to provide community-wide benefits, including improved human, environmental, and economic health.

Chesapeake Bay: ASLA urges \$1.1 billion for the Chesapeake Bay budget. This funding would allow continued restoration efforts for the largest estuary in the United States and in North America, covering 64,000 square miles and including more than 150 rivers and streams that drain into the Bay. This funding is critical to improving water quality and the overall health of the bay. Funding will help address non-point source pollution, Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for sediments, open space activities, and other innovative strategies to preserve the bay.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative: ASLA urges the FY2025 budget to include \$500 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). The GLRI is the leading federal program designed to clean up legacy pollution, restore habitats, combat invasive species, and address shoreline erosion across the basin. The Great Lakes serve as a vital source of economic activity, recreation, and drinking water for millions of Americans. Providing adequate funding will allow landscape architects to continue to work on critical restoration projects for these important water bodies.

NATIONAL PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS

National Park Service (NPS): ASLA suggests \$5 billion to invest in the National Park Service to continue to maintain our national parks and important federal lands. NPS needs additional funding above the FY2024 request to address the increased deferred maintenance backlog, the mounting physical risks from climate change, and the financial challenges associated with inflation. In particular, the administration should tailor its request to account for the upcoming renewal deadline for the Great American Outdoors

Act Legacy Restoration Fund. Reauthorizing and increasing this fund is essential to addressing the rising NPS maintenance backlog.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF): ASLA urges the FY2025 budget to maintain the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) authorized level of \$900 million for LCWF. The current Senate budget proposal to rescind \$100 million of this authorization is misguided, as there are projects in the current pipeline that will utilize this funding, soon. ASLA urges the administration to ensure that this unique fund remains as authorized. As the growing demand for LWCF projects far outpaces currently available funds, ASLA recommends an additional \$450 million in discretionary funding to supplement GAOA funds, for a total of \$1.35 billion to the program.

Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS): ASLA suggests \$100 million for the National Historic Landmarks Program (NHL) budget to provide for additional competitive grants in restoration, rehabilitation, education, and documentation of cultural heritage sites nationwide. Specifically, ASLA suggests that \$15 million of this total go to HALS. In 2000, HALS was established to recognize the importance of landscapes and the need to apply different methodologies to document them. Historic landscapes often form important touchstones of national, regional, and local identity. Once surveyed and documented, these historic landscape records are housed at the Library of Congress, where they may be accessed for research and other informational activities.

African American Burial Grounds Preservation Act: ASLA urges inflation-adjusted increases to the annual \$3 million authorized to the National Park Service under this act. The program aims to identify, document, refurbish, and reconnect burial sites that have been neglected and abandoned. Maintaining a steady public investment in this program through FY2027 is a cost-effective method for documenting this important part of our nation's history.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grants: ASLA suggests the FY2025 budget includes at least \$2 billion for the RAISE program. RAISE grants provide flexible funding opportunities for large and small communities to invest in transportation infrastructure projects that meet national environmental, economic, and social equity goals, including active transportation, Complete Streets, recreational trails, Transit-Oriented Development, and more.

Surface Transportation Block Grants (STBG): ASLA urges the administration to support STBG at its FY2025 amount of \$1.468 billion, which would allow \$14.68 million for the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). TAP funding supports pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, Safe Routes to School, and other active transportation projects. Landscape architects are leaders in planning and designing active transportation projects that provide safe, cost-efficient transportation options for communities nationwide.

Thriving Communities Program: ASLA urges \$75 million for the Thriving Communities Program, which would provide much-needed technical assistance to communities seeking to secure federal transportation funding. Throughout the years, landscape architects have heard from communities about their need for guidance, tools, resources, and other technical assistance to help them navigate the federal funding and procurement process. With adequate funding, the Thriving Communities Program could ensure that communities have the necessary technical assistance, planning, and capacity-building support to compete for federal aid and deliver quality infrastructure projects.

Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program: ASLA urges the FY2025 budget include at least \$202 million to remove, retrofit, or alter highways or other transportation facilities that create barriers to mobility, access, economic opportunity, or other forms of social connectivity. ASLA urges the administration to take steps to ensure that RCP grants are awarded to projects that fundamentally address these barriers and not to projects that merely expand or refurbish historically divisive transportation facilities.

Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program (WCPP): ASLA urges at least \$75 million for projects that reduce the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions and improved habitat connectivity for terrestrial and aquatic species. As the planet continues to grapple with the biodiversity crisis and its impacts, emphasis should be placed on maintaining and restoring habitats. Wildlife corridors and wildlife crossings are vital and cost-effective ways to maintain resilient ecosystems and to protect public health and safety on roads.

National Scenic Byways Program: ASLA suggests an increased investment of \$25 million for the Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byways Program, which recognizes, preserves, and enhances national scenic roads. Under this program, roads may be designated a National Scenic Byway due to their national cultural, historical, recreational, natural, or scenic significance. Scenic byways often stimulate tourism, outdoor recreation, and other economic development opportunities for the hosting

communities. Landscape architects work with communities to protect, preserve, and enhance these special places.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Urban and Community Forestry Program: ASLA suggests the FY2025 budget include \$40 million for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Urban Community Forestry Program to counter urban heat islands, enhance community resilience to extreme storms, and to create nature-based solutions to address climate change. This increased funding is especially important in the context of the current El Niño cycle to protect communities that have not historically been subjected to consistently high temperatures.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG): ASLA urges \$3.3 billion for the Community Development Block Grant program to revitalize neighborhoods across the United States. CDBGs can help create suitable housing options, renovate infrastructure, develop equitable outdoor recreation access, and create jobs to support communities and stimulate economic development.

Once again, thank you for your leadership in upgrading our nation’s infrastructure. ASLA looks forward to working with your administration and Congress to enact sound fiscal policies. A responsible FY2025 budget will empower landscape architects to continue creating projects that make communities safer, healthier, more resilient, and more equitable. If you have any questions or would like to follow up on this matter, please feel free to contact me or ASLA Managing Director of Government Affairs, Roxanne Blackwell, Hon. ASLA at rblackwell@asla.org or (202) 216- 2334.

Sincerely,



Torey Carter-Conneen
Chief Executive Officer
American Society of Landscape Architects

Cc; The Honorable Shalanda D. Young, Director
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