

ASLA 2019 Diversity Summit Report

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in ACTION:

Supporting Emerging Professionals - Inspiring the Next Generation of Landscape Architects - Connecting Design to Real-World Solutions

ASLA Center for Landscape Architecture, Washington, D.C.



American Society of
Landscape Architects

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“Take this profession and make it yours. Own it. I celebrate the fact that we are landscape architects. We have common things that make us the same, as well as important differences that I want to make part of this profession.”

– Shawn T. Kelly, FASLA, President of ASLA

Introduction

ASLA aims to be a pioneer in shaping the diversity, equity and inclusion culture of landscape architecture.

In 2013, ASLA convened its first annual Diversity Summit. Each summit has brought together a group of experienced and emerging landscape architects to develop a deeper understanding of how landscape architecture can attract a more diverse workforce and develop inclusive recruitment strategies for students. In 2019, the Diversity Summit included 19 attendees representing a cross-section of professionals with a wealth of experience and insight.



Patricia Algara, BASE Landscape Architecture
Valerie Aymer, Cornell University
Irene Compadre, Arbolope Studio
Aiman Duckworth, Biohabitats, Inc.
David Garce, GSBS Architects
Kendra Hyson, Neighborhood Design Center
Masako Ikegami, SWA
Kenneth Kokroko, SmithGroup
Gloria Lau, HNTB
Brian McCormack, McCormack
Gabriel Diaz Montemayor, The University of Texas at Austin
Breeze Outlaw, Sasaki
Andrew Sargeant, Lionheart Places
Jessica Soleyn, AECOM
Ramiro Villalvazo, Consultant
Gaylan Williams, Dana Brown and Associates
Cheeneng Yang, City of St Paul

Summit Proceedings

Day One: Introductory Activity & Brainstorming

On Friday, President Shawn T. Kelly, FASLA, CEO Nancy Somerville, Hon. ASLA, Past President Perry Howard, FASLA, and Career Discovery and Diversity Manager Lisa J. Jennings welcomed Diversity Summit participants to the ASLA Center for Landscape Architecture in Washington, DC. Howard led the group in a storytelling exercise that captured the power of narrative to inform discussions around the future of landscape architecture. Participants shared personal stories of their experiences with landscape architecture, how they entered the profession, and what they've experienced throughout their careers.

Key themes expressed included:

- Micro-aggressions in white, male-dominated firms
- Lack of spaces that facilitate solidarity and center the issues of marginalized identities
- Tokenism and stories of identity responsibly
- Methods to attract a diverse profile of landscape architects
- Responsibilities within landscape architecture and how the profession functions to support underserved/marginalized/vulnerable communities as a healing, regenerative, and reconciliatory profession versus active colonialism and active gentrification
- Bridging the disconnect and striking a balance between landscape architecture schooling and work-life
- Accompliceship (over allyship¹)

After the storytelling exercise, Lisa Jennings provided an overview of the progress made in year one toward goals identified during the 2018 Diversity Summit and elaborated on her programmatic goals for Career Discovery and Diversity in year two.

ASLA Progress Towards 2018 Goals

On June 22-24, ASLA hosted the 2018 Diversity Summit at the ASLA Center for Landscape Architecture in Washington, D.C. The following is a summary of action items discussed to help achieve five-year goals established at the 2017 Super Summit ([access the full 2018 Diversity Summit Report](#)):

- Diverse imagery and resources integrated across ASLA
 - Increased focus and visibility of diversity and inclusion content by creating [Career Discovery](#) and also [Diversity and Inclusion](#) categories in ASLA LAND and [Gentrification and Displacement](#) and [Inclusive Design](#) in The DIRT
 - Launched [#iPledgeASLADiversity Social Media Series](#) to encourage landscape architects and firms to take the pledge of committing to diversity and inclusion, then share using [#iPledgeASLADiversity](#).
- All ASLA materials in digital format and easily accessible
 - Automated the order process for [YOUR LAND](#) (increasing orders by 75%)
 - Translated [ASLA Discover Landscape Architecture Activity Books](#) website and books for kids, teens and adults into Spanish
- Align Career Discovery and Diversity efforts with Presidents' Council organizations
 - Held diversity training with President's Council.
- Build STEM/STEAM into the pipeline as integral to landscape architecture
 - Secured memberships and participated in collaborations with multiple STEM education organizations (see below)

¹ <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/ally-or-accomplice-the-language-of-activism>

In addition to the Diversity Summit goals identified in 2018, ASLA created the position Manager, Career Discovery and Diversity and hired Lisa Jennings to lead the Society's efforts. One full-time staff member has enabled ASLA to develop additional Career Discovery and Diversity resources, expand strategic alliances, and increase visibility with organizations representing the K-12/STEM educator community and allied stakeholders, with a special focus on reaching underrepresented populations.

Jennings shifted ASLA's existing outreach engagement model to one that focuses on formal and informal educators, environmental education and advocacy groups, and stakeholders within the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) communities. Under the leadership of Jennings, the Phase I goal (2018-2019) to model strategies that could be adopted and implemented in ASLA chapters across the country was met. During that time, the vision for ASLA's Career Discovery and Diversity efforts grew to include:

- Building strong community relationships that support all students in their explorations of landscape architecture
- Developing resources that equip students with the knowledge to understand and ability to identify and address real-world problems
- Connecting students with specialized and nationally-recognized landscape architecture mentoring programs
- Providing member volunteers and teachers with quality resources to effectively deliver landscape architecture education and introduce landscape architecture as a STEM discipline
- Investing and interacting strategically with STEM stakeholders
- Modeling effective partnership engagement strategies for ASLA chapter adoption and implementation

New strategic partnerships developed in Phase I included:

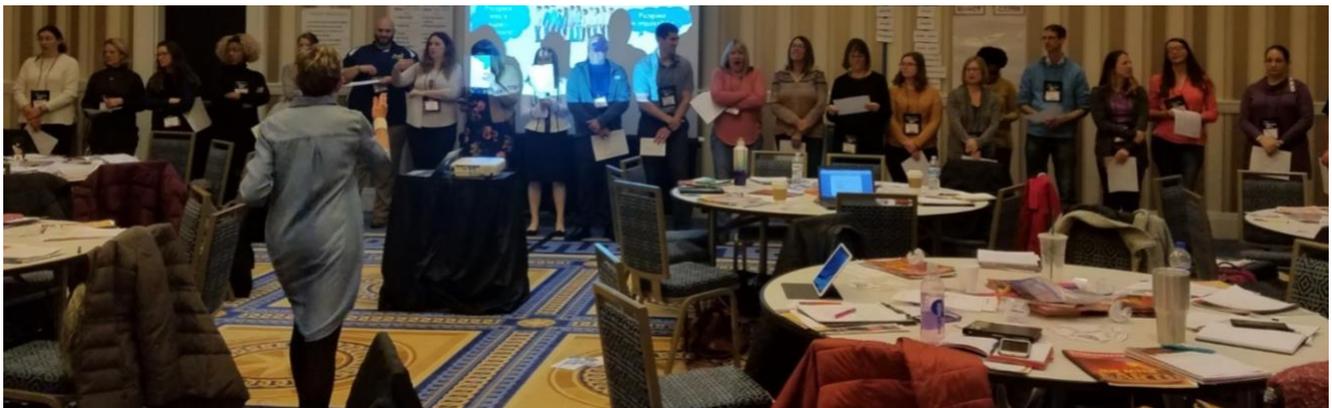
- [Black Landscape Architects Network \(BlackLAN\)](#) - BlackLAN is a LinkedIn network with 90 members, inclusive of 16 international members from Africa. The purpose of the BlackLAN is to provide Black landscape architecture professionals and students from around the world with a networking platform that promotes opportunity, highlights accomplishments, and mentors students.
- [Future City](#) - Future City is a project-based learning program where students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades imagine, research, design, and build cities of the future. Participants complete five deliverables: a virtual city design (using SimCity); a 1,500-word city essay; a scale model built from recycled materials; a project plan, and a presentation to judges at Regional Competitions in January. Regional winners represent their region at the finals in Washington, DC each February. After completing Future City, student participants are not only prepared to be citizens of today's complex and technical world, but also poised to become the drivers of tomorrow. ASLA was a sponsor of the Best Integration of Nature-Powered Solutions award won by the mid-atlantic region.



- [MobilizeGreen](#) - MobilizeGreen is a national-scale initiative that helps communities advance sustainability priorities while jumpstarting green careers for students. The organization recruits, trains, and places diverse students in sustainability internships with local governments, federal agencies, and corporations, removing barriers, creating opportunities, and connecting students to career pathways, leveraging public-private resources.



- [National Science Teachers Association](#) – NSTA the largest organization in the world committed to promoting excellence and innovation in science teaching and learning for all. NSTA's current membership of 50,000 includes science teachers, science supervisors, administrators, scientists, business and industry representatives, and others involved in and committed to science education.



- [National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\) Cooperative Science Center in Atmospheric Sciences and Meteorology Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions](#) - Led by Howard University and funded by the Educational Partnership Program with Minority-Serving Institutions Cooperative Agreement, the mission of NCAS-M is to increase the number of workforce-ready graduates from underrepresented communities in NOAA-related sciences, as well as to support NOAA and other federal agencies, academic institutions, and the private sector.



- [STEM Education Coalition](#) – The STEM Education Coalition is an alliance of more than 600 business, professional, and education organizations. Our Coalition works aggressively to raise awareness in Congress, the Administration, and other organizations about the critical role that STEM education plays in enabling the U.S. to remain the economic and technological leader in the global marketplace.
- [STEMx](#), - The STEMx™ network is a multi-state STEM network which provides an accessible platform to share, analyze, and disseminate quality STEM education tools to transform education, expand the number of STEM teachers, increase student achievement in STEM, and grow tomorrow’s innovators. The network is composed of 18 leading STEM organizations across 16 states/territories.

Additional partner collaborations held in Phase I of ASLA Career Discovery and Diversity engagement included:

- American Institute of Architects (AIA)
- Boys and Girls Club
- DC Environmental Education Consortium (DCEEC)
- Landscape Architecture Foundation (LAF)
- National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE)
- Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)
- Washington, DC Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education

In addition to working with educator and STEM stakeholder advocates, Jennings spearheaded hands-on K-12 outreach activities at ASLA in the Center for Landscape Architecture.

2019 Diversity Summit Goals and Objectives

Following the storytelling activity and review of 2018 Diversity Summit goals, Past President Perry Howard, FASLA laid out the following objectives for the Summit:

1. Entertain any unmet 2018 goals and work plan issues
2. Think more deeply and in more complex ways about diversity, equity, and inclusion
3. Explore strategies for ASLA to advance its diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts
4. Tackle some of the most pressing issues facing diverse communities and/or vulnerable communities
5. Engage in Advocacy discussions

The goal of this assignment was to compile a list of real-world problems impacting underrepresented and/or marginalized identities and advise ASLA on the development of a narrative that positions ASLA, landscape architects and the profession as problem-solvers to diverse audiences. Perry closed the discussion inviting participants to spend the evening focusing their initial discussions in order to develop action-oriented recommendations specifically for goals three and four.

Day Two: Action Planning – Goals Three and Four (Explorations/Issues/Solutions)

Action Planning

Participants were organized into groups to discuss action planning strategies, after which they reported out on the following list of pressing issues affecting underserved communities with solutions unique to the landscape architecture profession.



Action Planning

Landscape Architecture: Creating solutions to challenges impacting underserved/marginalized/vulnerable communities

I. Climate Change & Environmental Justice

- Clean air
- Clean water
 - Polluted water – develop plans to improve water quality and promote healthy water usage behaviors
- Healthy access to biodiversity and nature
- Landscapes – blackscapes, what do external spaces look and feel like for minority identities, what do Eurocentric spaces feel like for minority identities?
- Conveying aggregate effects of day to day individual behaviors on systems like climate change/significance of individual behavior
- Geography (Flooding communities – design and relocate)

Solutions:

- Education
- Signage in neighborhoods educating on changes in physical landscape/new developments & intentionally
- Externalities – create data driven models to understand the larger impact of projects holistically

II. Community Capacity-Building

- Cultural Competency
 - Language barriers, from multiple languages spoken to inaccessibility of design via specialized jargon (design vernacular)
- Community-First Design/Dismantling top-down imperialist approach to community design work
 - Lack of representation in leadership at legislative level
 - Lack of opportunity for vulnerable populations to prove and demonstrate their capacity, creating a self-perpetuating cycle/self-fulfilling prophecy
 - Reduction of “saviorism” behaviors and attitudes
 - Cognizance of how a community self-governs and respecting the process. Community active and first, not passive part of design process.
 - Meeting a community where they are – suggesting visions/potential positive improvements without imposing them – broadening spheres of imagination for ideal communities

Solutions:

- More resource and information sharing – case studies
- Firms – incentivize cultural training and research
- LAs – use plain language
- Immersion in the community before designing for it
- Meeting people where they are – creating access to decision making spaces
- Foster relationships with local leadership
- Feature accomplishments by minorities
- Push back against exploitative developers
- Asset mapping – looking at community’s social capital/values in addition to physical resources
- Check your privilege

III. Infrastructure

- Wraparound Services/Disenfranchisement
 - Continuum of care resources/wraparound support through good design that eases burden on communities to act entrepreneurially to ensure basic needs of modern society are met. Lifespan social support
- Public Space Infrastructure
 - Disinvestment in neighborhoods, lack of funding, lack of inclusive public realm, oppressive/aggressive public realm – *which community's concerns get addressed first?*
 - Overcrowded or lack of green space
 - Create safe public spaces for children to play
 - Promote ownership of neglected waterways and spaces, urban blight – unified streetscapes that bring history and current cultural use without encouraging gentrification
 - Public spaces for public grieving/shaping and reflecting public narrative/national identity
- Urban blight – reclaim vacant lots, rethink and redesign asphalt spaces
- Replacing failing infrastructure in a just way
- Centering humans in design, fostering safety, mental health, physical health, and social cohesion
- Mobility
 - Lack of transportation facilities/dangerous roadways – design alternate ways of getting around

Solutions:

- Promote post-occupancy research and acknowledgement of failure/reparation of failures - award
- being vulnerable and honest
- Rethinking what “basic needs” consists of and include them in massive plan that developers are responsible for (ex. Green infrastructure, food security, transportation, internet, etc. must be prerequisites)
- Smart growth as a tool for reclaiming some of these spaces

IV. Combatting a History of Systemic Socioeconomic Injustice

- Unfair policing practices, police brutality, over policing, and pipeline to prison/mass incarceration
- Generations of broken families and policy-driven under resourcing
- Overcoming sense of hopelessness/lack of agency grown from entrenchment in history of institutional disenfranchisement
- Predatory developers and property managers, unfair lending practices, exploitation of homeowners
- Quality education
- Affordable housing
- Inaccessible nature of pro bono work – lack of access to funds
- Food insecurity – LAs can design food gardens
- Access to Jobs

Solutions:

- LAs can encourage use of public space and community ownership of the space – feel permission to be there, safety and familiarity
- Infuse acknowledgement of land, historical and present, in the design
- How to build equity into funding systems
- Diversity training for leadership
- Workforce awards to firms that have healthy employment practices
- LAs as accomplices/agents of change with community members

Additional Ideas for ASLA

1. Utilize technology to reach younger audiences, including augmented reality apps, Minecraft, etc.
2. Develop accountability measures on diversity, equity, and inclusion leadership training
3. Increase recognition of firms leading with effective diversity practices
4. Integrate diversity criteria into ASLA award structure
5. Include younger professionals and more diverse sets of members on judging committees
6. Collaborate with advocates and experts, bringing in our expertise as landscape architects
7. Re-evaluate how we assess the impact of projects and which projects win awards
8. Improve communication of what landscape architects do at local chapters, etc.
9. Establish a DE&I PPN and other spaces with ASLA POCs/people of marginalized identities/job board
 - a. Create a forum to discuss, mentor, advise, support on career experiences
 - b. Professional development network
10. Engage and recruit landscape architects who are not members of ASLA

ASLA Advocacy Update with Daniel Hart

ASLA Government Affairs staff member Daniel Hart provided an update on advocacy efforts in federal government. The key issues ASLA's advocacy efforts focus on are chosen based on ASLA membership's priorities as determined in a survey circulated every two years, and include:

- Water
- Transportation
- Parks and Recreation
- Climate Change
- Environmental Justice

At this year's Advocacy Day, ASLA board members and chapter leaders made asks regarding three pieces of legislation:

- Restore Our Parks Act and Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act, which would fund over half the nearly \$12 billion National Parks Service deferred maintenance backlog
- Water Quality and Job Creation Act, which would reauthorize and expand the Clean Water State Revolving Fund program under EPA
- Transportation Alternatives Enhancement Act, which would increase funding for Transportation Alternatives such as bike/pedestrian programs

All ASLA advocacy campaigns are accessible at: <https://www.asla.org/GovernmentAffairs.aspx>.

Conclusion of Day Two

To conclude the day, President Shawn T. Kelly reiterated his gratitude to the participants for their contributions to the future of ASLA's work on diversity. "Your voices are critical. Honor that." He announced he will add diversity best practices as an agenda item at the next Presidents' Council meeting.

Day Three: Individual Commitments-Streamlining Recommendations-Solutions-Concluding Thoughts

Individual Commitments

Sunday began with members declaring their individual commitments towards diversity goals for the year. They then convened for the final brainstorming session to streamline the list of issues and solutions.

Deep Dive: Embracing a holistic view of the issues affecting underserved/marginalized/vulnerable communities with solutions unique to the landscape architecture profession

I. Heal/Protect/Advocate for the Environment

Issues

- Air, water and soil pollution
- Climate change
- Species extinction and habitat loss
- “Bad” land use and planning
- Ecology
- Lack of equitable access to quality open space

Solutions

- Brown field remediation
- Reforestation
- Habitat restoration
- Wildlife corridors
- Rain gardens
- Stream restoration
- Floating wetlands
- Walkable communities
- multimodal transportation
- “shade-scapes”
- Urban forest
- Green infrastructure
- Coastal restoration/stabilization
- Equitable green space park planning – sports, dog parks, playgrounds, national parks
- Community gardens
- Waterfront parks
- Streetscapes
- Plazas
- Sports fields
- Watershed planning
- land conservation
- Green roofs
- policy advocates

II. Strengthening Community Engagement

Issues

- Cultural awareness

Solutions

- Communicate value of pro bono work
- Conduct post-occupancy surveys
- Check your privilege
- Seat at the table
- Strengthen community relationships
- Invite diverse stakeholders

III. Built Environment**Issues**

- Food security
- Public space
- Failing infrastructure (electricity, poles, gray water, sewage)
- Neglected Spaces
- Mobility

Solutions

- Promote community garden; promote policy changes for access to beekeeping, different tree species (fruiting trees) as street trees
- Transform and create multifunctional/generational space for community
- Promote green energy, re-use of gray water, native plants and drought species, prevention of natural disaster, i.e. flooding, fire, mitigate climate change plans to change behavior
- Reclaim and transform vacant spaces; Provide community ownership of spaces; LA as mediator
- Complete streets – trails and bikeways – connections. Safety → speedbumps.

IV. Injustice**Issues**

- Access/lack thereof
- Agency/lack thereof
- Inclusive history
- Cultural awareness
- Strengthen community engagement
- Basic quality of life

Solutions

- Explaining the value of design to community and space
- Designing quality spaces
- Policy
- Job creation – pathways to green jobs through education
- Strengthen community relationships
- Landscape design with visibility/stakeholder inclusive design “unlikely partnerships”
- Create a seat at the table

The Summit concluded with a private tour of the National Building Museum Exhibition *Eviction*.

ASLA Career Discovery and Diversity

2019 Diversity Summit Recommendations

The following final recommendations are a result of deep dialogues and strategizing sessions at ASLA's 2019 Diversity Summit, a three-day working group composed of landscape architect professionals of color.

How do we make diversity structurally INTEGRAL to the concept of landscape architecture?

Build Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Career Support Networks within Landscape Architecture

- Establish a minority ASLA Professional Practice Network (PPN)
- Establish speakers' panel
- Establish a directory of small firms
- Establish a variety of educational resources for People of Color (POC), including web-based initiatives and informal opportunities for networking (mixers, etc.)

Create Clear Accountability Benchmarks for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Leadership Training

- Continue to provide diversity training for ASLA leadership
- Train ASLA leadership on accompliceship to serve as champions for diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Build in tangible rewards to firms that demonstrate advancements in the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Encourage leader-audits about diversity/processes to hold people accountable for diversity
- Implement strategies that incentivize cultural competency in landscape architecture work
- Facilitate financial access to landscape architecture career path through scholarships and other funding opportunities

Investigate and Promote Deeper Perspectives of Diversity

- Highlight nontraditional role models
- Tell stories about landscape architects from diverse backgrounds in a responsible, non-tokenizing way that increases their visibility, as well as create other avenues of responsible representation
- Develop a Best Practices brochure for firms and universities to encourage work culture and curricula transformation (less Eurocentric)
- Capture unique work carried out in diverse communities and implement special awards
- Create a database of diverse, engaging speakers

2019-2020 Career Discovery and Diversity Goals

As ASLA continues to advance the recommendations of the Diversity Summit, Jennings will turn her attention to the Phase Two (2019-2020) of the new strategic engagement model which will focus intently on strategies to:

- Prepare ASLA members and chapters to adopt and implement engagement outreach strategies to increase educators, new strategic partners, and STEM stakeholders
- Optimize a contemporary paradigm whereby messaging and resources are developed to showcase unique solutions landscape architects apply to real-world problems
- Establish ASLA national position, values, and goals for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion through an awareness campaign for firms, institutions, and individuals

Together, these strategies will serve to educate and engage young people in the profession of landscape architecture and position ASLA members and chapters to implement and measure.



*Special thanks to 2019 Diversity Summit Facilitator
Perry Howard, FASLA, Past President*

*Lisa J. Jennings
Manager, Career Discovery and Diversity*

*Kelli Bland
Manager, Meetings and Special Programs*