

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY (B205, 206, R2001, R2007)



Policy Statement

The American Society of Landscape Architects believes that both human civilizations and the natural ecosystems represent integral parts of our environment, and therefore must be protected, restored, and perpetuated.

In order to provide a healthy, productive, and socially enriching life for all, the Society urges public and private decision makers to employ sustainable design policies and practices, minimize environmental degradation, avoid excessive consumption, and respect the needs of future generations.

Rationale

Sustainability is the capability of natural and cultural systems to maintain themselves over time. It is impacted by: (a) individual and collective actions; (b) the amount and the rate of consumption; and (c) the intrinsic properties and carrying capacity of each system. Ideally, sustainable development should incorporate three diverse viewpoints:

- Ecology: preserving the integrity of ecological subsystems, respecting the global interdependence, and pursuing environmental stewardship.
- Economics: maximization of human welfare within the constraints of existing capital stock, budget realities, cost-saving considerations, fiscal requirements, and available technologies.
- Sociology: key actors are humans whose patterns of social organization are crucial for devising viable solutions for a better future on local, regional, national and global levels. Their concerns include: cohesion of community, equity, social justice, cultural identity, diversity, solidarity, civility, tolerance, pluralism, law, and discipline.

Sustainability should be a guiding principle of the landscape planning, design, and management processes and decision making. The goals associated with creating a sustainable environment include:

- Reducing pollution and avoiding waste;
- Avoiding, minimizing, and/or mitigating human impacts on the environment;
- Protecting and conserving all natural ecosystems;
- Improving production and consumption cycles, including replacement/reduction of non-renewable resources;
- Improving waste collection, recycling and recovery;
- Promoting more efficient energy use and production; and
- Preserving visual and cultural resources for present and future generations.

Communities should accept responsibility for the consequences of planning, design and operational decisions upon human well being, the viability of natural systems and their right to co-exist. Designs should consider long-term value. All products and processes

should be evaluated and optimized for the full life cycle to determine the undistorted cost-benefit account of waste and consumption.

Landscape architects, as planners, designers and managers, should share knowledge and encourage communication between colleagues, professionals from other disciplines and fields, public officials and community leaders, clients, developers, contractors, manufacturers and suppliers to:

- Enhance the understanding of and strengthen the integral relationship between natural processes and human activity and how the concept of sustainable design fits into everyday life.
- Examine policies, regulations, and standards in industry and government to identify barriers to the implementation of the principles of sustainable development.
- Improve policies, practices, processes, procedures, products, and services that link long-term sustainable considerations and development.
- Encourage community and business leaders to bring the existing built and natural environments up to sustainable development standards and to reflect the philosophy of sustainability in the design, planning, and management of their communities.

