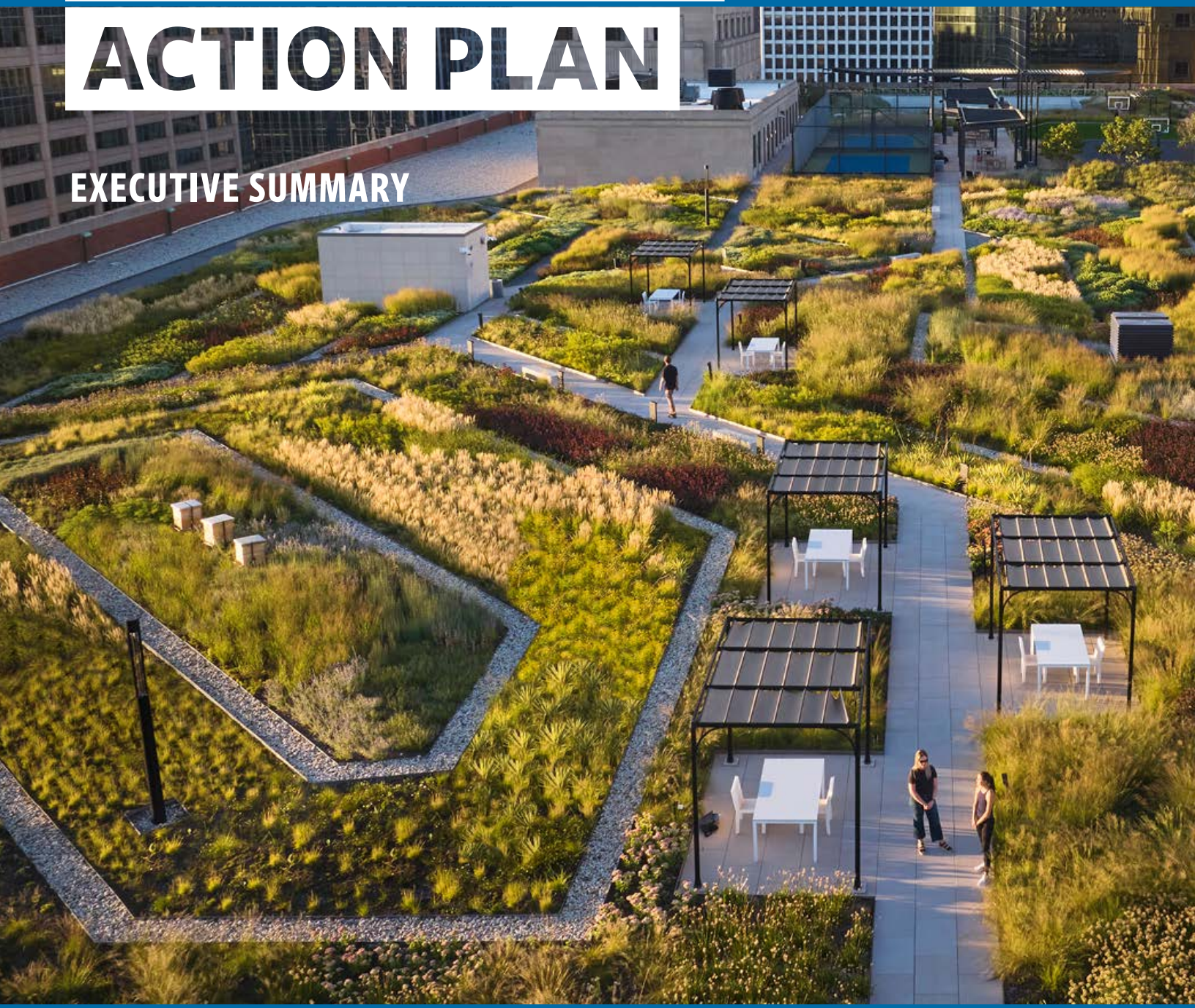
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE 2040

CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



FOR ASLA MEMBERS

2026–2030

American Society of Landscape Architects

ASLA Fund

Our Vision for 2040 -
All landscape architecture projects will:

- Achieve zero greenhouse gas emissions and double carbon sequestration from business as usual.
- Protect, conserve, restore, enhance, and manage biodiversity
- Provide significant economic benefits in the form of measurable ecosystem services, co-benefits, and livelihoods.
- Address climate and biodiversity injustices, amplify the power of communities, and increase the equitable distribution of climate and biodiversity investments.

To continue our work to achieve this vision, we have significantly updated our first plan — the ASLA Climate Action Plan — and its companion Field Guide to Climate Action for ASLA Members, which guided our efforts from 2022-2025.

The new, updated plan — **Landscape Architecture 2040: Climate & Biodiversity Action Plan** — builds on our progress and guides our profession into the future. It has one volume for landscape architects and another for ASLA and ASLA chapters.

The plan will be accomplished over the next five years – from 2026 to 2030. It sets important new targets for realizing our 2040 vision, establishing an ambitious set of 2030 benchmarks to meet in the areas of biodiversity, greenhouse gas emission reductions, carbon sequestration, adaptation, economic benefits, and climate and biodiversity justice.

Over the past few years, we have heard from landscape architects that the climate and biodiversity crises must be considered equal priorities. Our remarkable Climate & Biodiversity Action Plan Task Force and Advisory Group identified design strategies that can address both biodiversity and climate issues together.

"Over the past few years, we heard from landscape architects that the climate and biodiversity crises must be considered equal priorities."

(Cover) Landscape architects at Hoerr Schaudt transformed an unused roof in Chicago into a biodiverse green space with 40,000 plants from 50 species that also captures stormwater, reduces heat, and sequesters carbon. Image credit: ASLA 2023 Professional General Design Honor Award. The Meadow at the Old Chicago Post Office. Chicago, Illinois. Hoerr Schaudt / Dave Burk

The Task Force and Advisory Group found that landscape architecture is a powerful tool for:

- Reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions
- Increasing carbon sequestration
- Enhancing biodiversity
- Increasing resilience
- Improving equitable outcomes
- Providing real economic benefits
- And providing real economic benefits

The nature-based solutions we design have the power to achieve multiple benefits for communities at once.

Woven into the plan are new goals, objectives, actions, and success indicators. They are meant to help us all achieve our collective climate and biodiversity goals faster. The new plan also encourages us to work more effectively as a community — with clients, product manufacturers, and allied professionals — to make more rapid change.

We have made remarkable advances over the past three years, thanks to the work of the landscape architecture community.

We want to acknowledge the contributions of the members of the National ASLA Climate & Biodiversity Action Committee, who have turned many of our first plan's action items into reality. They have been central to getting us to where we are.

Today, the committee is made up of more than 50 empowered volunteer leaders. They have created easy-to-use resources that now shape how we all work and interact with communities.

More signs of progress:

- Landscape architecture firms of all sizes are starting to measure the benefits and impacts of their projects. And many are creating their own action plans.
- More product manufacturers and material suppliers are starting to make their environmental product data transparent.

Kona Gray, FASLA, PLA
ASLA President

Torey Carter-Conneen, Hon. ASLA
ASLA CEO

This plan is made possible by the ASLA Fund, which supports landscape architecture's vital role in addressing climate change and biodiversity loss through research, education, and advocacy.

The mission of the ASLA Fund: Investing in global, social, and environmental change through the art and science of landscape architecture.

- Educators are partnering with ASLA to develop impactful research on the benefits of landscape architects' climate and biodiversity work.
- A majority of ASLA Chapters have started their own Climate & Biodiversity Action Committees. And they have joined forces in a network to advance these goals.

We stand on a strong foundation built by a diverse community of climate and biodiversity leaders. We can make even more progress by 2030.

We invite you to delve into this new plan, make it your own, and lead this work in your organization and community.

Together, we will continue to make positive change for our communities and planet.

This plan is dedicated to Kongjian Yu, FASLA, PhD, Founder, Turenscape and Professor and Founding Dean, College of Architecture and Landscape, Peking University.

Kongjian led the world in envisioning a more harmonious relationship between people and nature. His projects, speeches, and writings inspired tens of thousands of landscape architects worldwide and captured the public's imagination. He saw landscape architecture as a "strategic and scientific tool" for solving the climate and biodiversity crises. He was a colleague, friend, and mentor to so many in our community.

Climate change and biodiversity loss are the most urgent problems the world faces today. They threaten the planet's health, the safety of our communities, and the resilience of our economies around the world. These connected issues are causing serious environmental damage — more frequent and severe climate related disasters, changing weather patterns, disappearing habitats, and the extinction of species. The effects directly impact our health and well-being, food supply, access to clean water, and livelihoods.

Underserved, marginalized, and Indigenous communities are hit the hardest. These communities are more likely to experience flooding, drought, or extreme heat, and they may not have the resources to recover. These groups are also more affected by the loss of natural systems that provide clean air, water, and other life-supporting ecosystem services.

Immediate, coordinated action is required to address climate change and biodiversity loss. Landscape architects must prioritize climate and biodiversity action, foster resilience, generate economic value, and ensure that all people have equitable access to healthy, sustainable environments. Now is the time to act.

Landscape architects are well-positioned to respond to climate and biodiversity challenges because a key part of our mandate is to protect and enhance health, safety, and welfare. We can design regenerative landscapes that deliver net positive results. We have the expertise to create climate and biodiversity positive projects that integrate natural systems with the built environment.

Climate positive design employs:

- Local, low-carbon, resource-efficient construction materials and methods
- Energy efficient and low or zero fossil fuel maintenance practices
- Planning for sustainable, multimodal, low-carbon communities
- Increased carbon sequestration through plantings to offset embodied carbon

"Immediate, coordinated action is required to address climate change and biodiversity loss. Landscape architects must prioritize climate and biodiversity action, foster resilience, generate economic value, and ensure that all people have equitable access to healthy, sustainable environments. Now is the time to act."

- Nature-based solutions for climate resilience
- Equity and climate justice for communities and people

Biodiversity positive design protects, conserves, enhances, and restores:

- Ecosystem function and connectivity
- Habitat and habitat connectivity that support native flora and fauna
- A net positive biodiversity outcome

Both climate and biodiversity positive design must consider equity, with an inclusive design process and equitable access.

This plan, **Landscape Architecture 2040: Climate and Biodiversity Action Plan**, provides a comprehensive and accessible set of action items to help practitioners get started with this important work and ultimately achieve the Landscape Architecture 2040 vision. This plan has been expanded from the 2022 Climate Action Plan and Field Guide to encompass *both climate and biodiversity actions*. And the plan's language and actions have been simplified to make it accessible to all types of landscape architects — those at small or large firms, and in private, non-profit, or public practices.

I am confident that the landscape architecture community can use the **Landscape Architecture 2040: Climate and Biodiversity Action Plan** to achieve a more regenerative, resilient, and equitable future. Let's get to work!

Meg Calkins, FASLA, FCELA
Chair, ASLA Climate & Biodiversity Action Plan Task Force
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North Carolina State University.

Michael Vergason Landscape Architects, Ltd designed the 7th Street Park and Recreation Pier at the Wharf in Washington, D.C. to be an intergenerational and equitable landscape that welcomes the city's diverse communities back to the waterfront. Image credit: ASLA 2024 Professional Urban Design Honor Award. Michael Vergason Landscape Architects, Ltd.

Equity Acknowledgement

The American Society of Landscape Architects acknowledges that the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation have a greater impact on marginalized communities, underserved populations, and Indigenous peoples who have long been stewards of the lands and waters we all depend on. These groups have historically been excluded — and often continue to be excluded — from decision-making, and their lands and resources have been appropriated without consent.

We recognize the deep-rooted knowledge and stewardship of Indigenous peoples whose practices offer essential guidance for regenerative design and climate resilience. We stress the need for placing their voices and leadership at the center of environmental restoration and climate resilience efforts.

We commit to advancing equity for all people by advocating for inclusive, community-driven approaches that:

- Address systemic inequities
- Champion environmental justice by amplifying underrepresented voices in decision making
- Ensure that all communities have equitable access to healthy, sustainable, and thriving environments.

ASLA CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN TASK FORCE

Acknowledgements
ASLA is grateful for the work of the ASLA Climate & Biodiversity Action Plan Task Force, who gave freely of their time and expertise to create this plan.

We are also very thankful for the substantive input from experts in the ASLA Climate & Biodiversity Plan Advisory Group.

Lastly, we appreciate the strong foundation that Pamela Conrad, ASLA, Diane Jones Allen, FASLA, José Almiñana, FASLA, Sarah Fitzgerald, ASLA, and Vaughn Rinner, FASLA, built with the 2022 Climate Action Plan and Field Guide.

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INTRODUCTION

Landscape architects have knowledge, skills, and abilities that make them uniquely qualified to address the urgent imperatives of climate change and biodiversity loss. They can do this by planning and designing equitable, regenerative places. This important work aligns with our professional mandate to protect the health, safety, and welfare of people and communities.

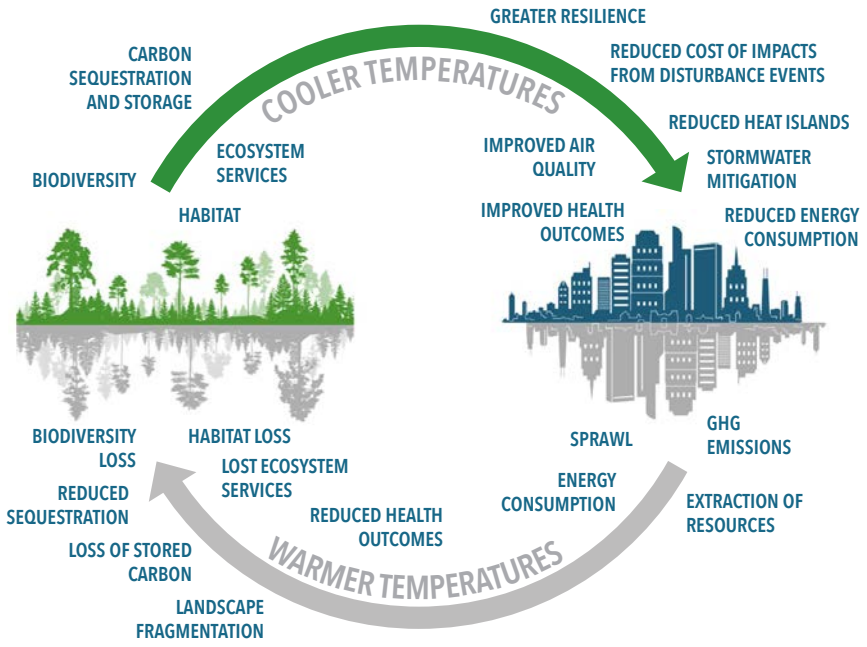
To support this work, ASLA has established a vision for 2040. All landscape architecture projects will:

- Achieve zero greenhouse gas emissions and double carbon sequestration from business as usual.
- Protect, conserve, restore, enhance, and manage biodiversity.
- Provide significant economic benefits in the form of measurable ecosystem services, co-benefits, and livelihoods.
- Address climate and biodiversity injustices, amplify the power of communities, and increase the equitable distribution of climate and biodiversity investments.

Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects collaborated with several Virginia Algonquian Tribes and archaeologists to design Machicomoco, a new state park in Virginia that reveals and honors Indigenous histories. Image credit: ASLA 2024 Professional Communications Honor Award. Connecting to Our Indigenous Histories at Machicomoco State Park. Gloucester Point, Virginia. Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects / Nick Hubbard

To realize this vision, there are benchmarks that must be achieved over the next five years. **All landscape architecture projects will:**

- Achieve a 50-65 percent reduction in greenhouse emissions and double carbon sequestration from business as usual.
- Increase biodiversity through protection, conservation, restoration, enhancement, and management strategies, supporting goals of protecting 30 percent of existing ecosystemsand restoring 30 percent of degraded ecosystems.
- Provide significant economic benefits in the form of measurable ecosystem services, cobenefits, and livelihoods.
- Address climate and biodiversity inequities by amplifying the power of communities, supporting local leadership, and increasing the equitable distribution of climate and biodiversity investments.



Biodiversity is connected to the climate, creating a circular relationship that both exacerbates and improves environmental and human health impacts. The top half of the circle illustrates the positive impacts that biodiversity has on the built environment, while the bottom half illustrates the negative impacts that urbanization and industry have on biodiversity. Image credit: Meg Calkins

The relationships between biodiversity loss and climate change require integrated efforts to address both issues at the same time. Protecting and restoring biodiversity can help mitigate climate impacts, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions can support ecosystem resilience and foster biodiversity.

Goals, objectives, and actions in this plan reflect the integrated approach required to address climate change and biodiversity. Many interventions

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY

Biodiversity loss is closely intertwined with climate change, creating a feedback loop that exacerbates environmental and human health impacts. As global temperatures rise due to increased greenhouse gas emissions, wildlife health is affected by habitat destruction, altered migration patterns, and disrupted breeding cycles. Plants struggle to adapt to shifting climate zones, resulting in reduced growth, greater competition from invasive species, and loss of native plant communities. These challenges disrupt ecosystems, reducing their capacity to sequester carbon and regulate climate, further accelerating climate change.

OUR COLLABORATORS

Collaboration with allied disciplines, scientists, product manufacturers and material suppliers, community members, and traditional knowledge bearers is key to the success of the actions in this plan. Annotations indicate which collaborators are needed to achieve the actions outlined.

AR	Architects
CE	Civil engineers
CG	Community groups
CHP	ASLA Chapters
CL	Client, owner
CM	Community members, citizen scientists

have multiple co-benefits. For example, designing a site with non-invasive, naturalized plant communities can contribute to plant biodiversity and habitat. At the same time, these plants will moderate climate by sequestering carbon, conserving water use, and reducing stormwater runoff — all of which offer economic and environmental benefits

The ASLA Climate & Biodiversity Task Force and Advisory Group have created an action plan in two volumes:

Landscape Architecture 2040: Climate & Biodiversity Action Plan For ASLA Members

This volume is intended for ASLA Members to use individually and in their firms, public institutions, non-profit organizations, and community groups. This is an updated and expanded version of the 2022 Field Guide. This plan offers actions for equitable, climate and biodiversity positive practices in projects and business operations.

Landscape Architecture 2040: Climate & Biodiversity Action Plan For ASLA and ASLA Chapters

This is written for National ASLA and its Chapters. This is an updated and expanded version of the 2022 Climate Action Plan. This plan continues a path of action for National ASLA and Chapters to support their members in equitable, climate and biodiversity positive planning and design.

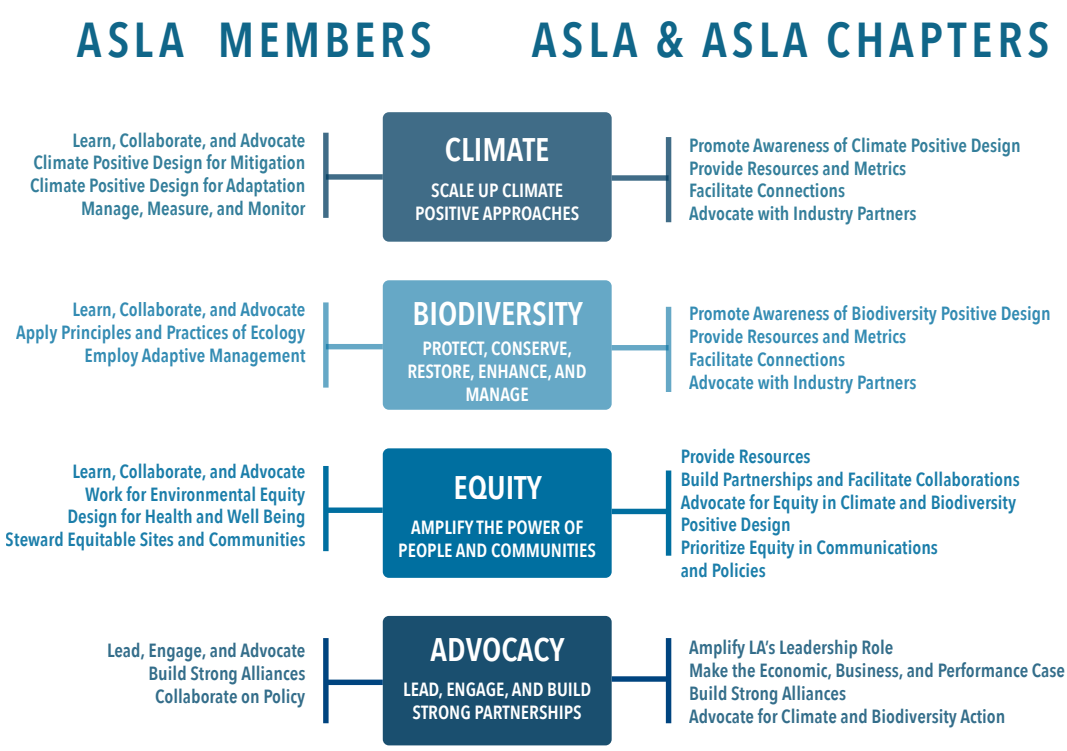
While landscape architects play a critical role in addressing the climate and biodiversity crises, we cannot engage these imperatives alone. Collaboration with allied disciplines, scientists, policymakers, developers, product manufacturers, community members, and traditional knowledge bearers is key to success. This plan uses annotations to indicate which collaborators are needed to achieve the actions outlined (see sidebar).

These volumes have been developed to support global initiatives aimed at enhancing climate resilience and protecting biodiversity. In the field of landscape architecture, this plan aligns with the Climate Action Commitment set forth by the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA). It also aligns with broader international frameworks, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's goals, and the Architecture 2030 Commitment Challenge.

OUR COLLABORATORS (CONTINUED)

CN	Contractors
COE	Coastal engineers
DE	Developers
EC	Economists, economic benefit analysts
ECO	Ecologists, natural resource scientists, biologists
ENV	Environmental Engineers
GE	Geotechnical Engineers
GOV	Governments
HI	Historians, archaeologists
HO	Horticulture and Nursery Industry
HQ	ASLA National
INS	Insurers
INV	Investors
LA	Landscape architects
LCA	Life cycle analysts
MFR	Manufacturers
NGO	Non-governmental and non-profit organizations
NN	Native Nations
PL	Planners
PRO	Professional organizations
PUB	General public
RE	Non-academic researchers
SE	Structural Engineers
SM	Site managers
STU	Students
SUP	Material suppliers and vendors
TE	Transportation Engineers
TKB	Traditional knowledge bearers, Indigenous peoples
UNI	Academic institutions

FRAMEWORK



Landscape Architecture 2040: Climate & Biodiversity Action Plan volumes are organized around four key goals addressing Climate, Biodiversity, Equity and Advocacy. The goals are the same for both volumes, but the objectives differ. Image credit: Meg Calkins.

The Climate and Biodiversity Action Plan is composed of four goals that are the same for both volumes:

- Climate: Scale up climate positive approaches
- Biodiversity: Protect, conserve, restore, enhance and manage
- Equity: Amplify the power of people and communities
- Advocacy: Advance climate and biodiversity action through leadership and engagement

Objectives, actions, and success measures vary by volume.

This document, which is for ASLA Members, offers a comprehensive set of goals, objectives, actions, and success measures for climate and biodiversity positive projects, equitable landscapes and communities, and advocacy efforts.

Each goal includes specific objectives and numerous actions tailored to different practice settings, regions, and project types. We recognize that not all actions are universally applicable. The plan highlights regional priorities while emphasizing the most impactful strategies.

The plan cannot provide detailed and comprehensive information for each action. Many are supported by links to additional resources – including relevant national and international standards – to guide implementation and further learning.

GOAL 1
CLIMATE

Scale up climate positive approaches for mitigation and adaptation. Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 50-65% by 2030 and achieve zero emissions by 2040. Double carbon sequestration from business as usual.

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS
OBJECTIVE 1.1 Learn about, collaborate on, and advocate for climate positive design.	**ACTION 1.1.1** Engage a diverse group of experts and knowledge bearers in addressing climate positive goals, actions, and metrics appropriate to the region and site.
	ACTION 1.1.2 Pursue knowledge about the actions, resources, and tools available for climate mitigation and adaptation.
	ACTION 1.1.3 Advocate amongst peers, clients, stakeholders, suppliers and allied professionals for climate action on projects.
OBJECTIVE 1.2 Mitigate greenhouse gas emissions in site design and community planning. Reduce project GHG emissions by 50-65% by 2030 with zero emissions by 2040; double sequestration from business as usual.	**ACTION 1.2.1** Plan and design sustainable, multimodal, low carbon communities.
	ACTION 1.2.2 Reduce embodied carbon emissions through reuse of onsite structures, right sizing hardscape and site structures, and selecting locally produced, low-carbon materials and products.
	ACTION 1.2.3 Design for reduced operational carbon emissions by minimizing fossil fuel-powered maintenance equipment, designing for reduced energy and water usage, supporting building energy efficiency, and producing renewable energy onsite.

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS
OBJECTIVE 1.2 (continued)	**ACTION 1.2.4** Maximize carbon sequestration and storage potential throughout the project life cycle by protecting existing vegetation and soils, restoring ecosystems, and building soil carbon.
OBJECTIVE 1.3 Employ nature-based solutions for climate adaptation.	**ACTION 1.3.1** Develop climate adaptation strategies in collaboration with project team and other experts, assessing risks and using forecast models.
	ACTION 1.3.2 Design landscapes to minimize heat islands and related impacts.
	ACTION 1.3.3 Design landscapes to maximize water conservation.
	ACTION 1.3.4 Design for increased storm events and risk of flooding using nature-based solutions.
	ACTION 1.3.5 Design for sea level rise using nature-based solutions.
	ACTION 1.3.6 Implement fire safe design strategies.
OBJECTIVE 1.4 Manage, measure, and monitor for climate positive sites and practices.	**ACTION 1.4.1** Measure greenhouse gas emissions using industry standard tools, and then share the data through established and accessible reporting formats.
	ACTION 1.4.2 Engage in maintenance and adaptive management techniques specific to the site design and develop performance measures to meet climate positive goals.
	ACTION 1.4.3 Pursue sustainability certifications for projects and professionals.
	ACTION 1.4.4 Develop a firmwide climate and biodiversity action plan.
	ACTION 1.4.5 Participate in the forthcoming Landscape Architecture 2040 commitment program.

GOAL 2
BIODIVERSITY

Protect, conserve, restore, enhance, and manage for biodiversity. Support the global goals of protecting 30% of existing ecosystems and restoring 30% of degraded ecosystems by 2030, with a goal of protecting and enhancing biodiversity on each project.

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS
OBJECTIVE 2.1 Engage in learning, collaboration, and advocacy for biodiversity.	ACTION 2.1.1 Engage with a diverse group of experts and knowledge-bearers in learning and collaboration to establish a deeper understanding of biodiversity needs, goals, actions, and metrics appropriate to a region and site.
	ACTION 2.1.2 Advocate among peers, clients, suppliers, and allied professionals to protect and enhance biodiversity.
OBJECTIVE 2.2 Apply principles and practices of ecology to support site, regional, and global biodiversity goals.	ACTION 2.2.1 In the initial discovery phase, deepen the collective understanding of the site and region through the lens of biodiversity and landscape ecology.
	ACTION 2.2.2 Establish goals for biodiversity protection, conservation, restoration, enhancement, and management; then develop biodiversity baselines for the site.
	ACTION 2.2.3 Engage in biodiversity positive design for the project that supports rewilding, increases habitat connectivity, and enhances provision of ecosystem services.
	ACTION 2.2.4 Require protection of flora, fauna, soils, water, habitat, and air quality during design and construction.

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS
OBJECTIVE 2.3 Employ an Adaptive Management Framework that encompasses maintenance, monitoring, evaluation, decision-making, and interventions to achieve biodiversity goals.	ACTION 2.3.1 Set monitoring protocols during the design process to measure progress toward biodiversity goals.
	ACTION 2.3.2 Monitor biodiversity at regular intervals over the life of the landscape.
	ACTION 2.3.3 Prepare an Adaptive Management Plan that includes monitoring, maintenance, and management protocols.
	ACTION 2.3.4 Share knowledge and data to broaden understanding of our individual and collective roles in addressing the biodiversity crisis.

GOAL 3
EQUITY

Amplify the power of plural and diverse communities and people to achieve equitable climate and biodiversity positive design.

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS
OBJECTIVE 3.1 Learn about, communicate, and advocate for human health and social well-being	**ACTION 3.1.1** Engage in deep listening to community members, users, and decision makers to understand the past and present factors related to the project that have or could contribute to inequities.
OBJECTIVE 3.2 Work toward environmental equity by putting the voices, needs, and knowledge of communities at the center of all aspects of a project.	**ACTION 3.2.1** Build the power of communities through inclusive engagement, community-led goal-setting, and participatory design.
	ACTION 3.2.2 Advocate for the equitable distribution of projects and assets with municipal decision makers, community groups and other policymakers.
OBJECTIVE 3.3 Design for the health and well-being of communities and people.	**ACTION 3.3.1** Understand and address environmental injustices in collaboration with allied professions, community groups, and policymakers.
	ACTION 3.3.2 Prioritize cultural inclusion and commemoration using participatory processes and by engaging community knowledge.
	ACTION 3.3.3 Use construction materials and methods that support human and environmental health.
OBJECTIVE 3.4 Steward equitable sites and communities.	**ACTION 3.4.1** Collaborate to establish methods of community stewardship of projects early in the project process.

GOAL 4
ADVOCACY

Advance climate and biodiversity action through leadership and engagement

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS
OBJECTIVE 4.1 Lead, engage in, and advocate for equitable climate and biodiversity positive design.	ACTION 4.1.1 Champion climate and biodiversity positive design within your organization.
	ACTION 4.1.2 Communicate your organization's climate and biodiversity impact.
	ACTION 4.1.3 Engage and educate clients, collaborators, developers, contractors and site managers.
	ACTION 4.1.4 Educate and engage the public about the benefits of climate and biodiversity positive design.
	ACTION 4.1.5 Engage manufacturers and suppliers by sharing your climate and biodiversity goals, communicating product performance expectations, and preferences for climate and biodiversity positive attributes in specifications.
OBJECTIVE 4.2 Build strong alliances.	ACTION 4.2.1 Engage a broad network of allied professionals and organizations to maximize collective impact in climate resilience and biodiversity.
	ACTION 4.2.2 Strengthen ties with scientists and academics through collaboration on projects and research.

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS
OBJECTIVE 4.2 (continued)	**ACTION 4.2.3** Engage with global alliances and initiatives to support their goals for climate mitigation, adaptation , biodiversity, and equity.
OBJECTIVE 4.3 Collaborate on climate and biodiversity policy with policymakers and elected officials.	**ACTION 4.3.1** Work with elected officials to guide policies for climate and biodiversity positive design and planning.
	ACTION 4.3.2 Collaborate with public agencies and clients to establish or strengthen climate and biodiversity positive design and development standards.