

POSITION

For this thesis, the development of a position is the basis for recommending a course of action for a particular issue. In this case, sustainable development and landscape architecture is the underlying issue. The chosen position is a reflection of the review of literature and the stated tenets of the profession of landscape architecture.

Landscape architecture has long considered itself a profession that seeks to be stewards of the land; perhaps there is no better forum for this than that of sustainable development. Sustainable development epitomizes landscape architecture's strive to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public and the land, as demonstrated by ASLA's Declaration on Environment and Development. So, why has the profession as a whole not been successful in demonstrating sustainable development? I think there are three issues that have limited landscape architects capacity to move forward in the sustainable development paradigm. The issues are: landscape architect's view sustainable development as an issue they have been addressing, the perceived complexity of sustainable development, and how to get started.

Most of our profession would likely agree that the ideal of sustainable development is a good thing – yet many feel that the ideas espoused by the proponents of sustainable development are concepts that they independently have been addressing for years. While to a certain extent the profession of Landscape Architecture has been addressing issues of sustainable development, the profession as a whole has a tremendous opportunity for furthering the research and design of the sustainability paradigm. One of the primary impediments landscape architects face in sustainable development is that there is currently no operational way for landscape architects to approach design in a sustainable manner. This makes it increasingly difficult to abide by the ASLA's Declaration on Environment and Development's objective¹ of 'accepting responsibility

for the consequences of their design, planning, management and policy decisions on the health of natural systems and cultural communities and their harmony, equity and balance with one another’.

Sustainable development is a concept that can be implementable at a range of scales, from an individual dwelling to the globe. Also, sustainable development requires that aspects of environment, social, and economic factors be addressed. A combination of the various scales of sustainable development with the aspects of environment, social, and economy presents a perception of complexity. While there is heightened complexity, it is important to understand that there is also a hierarchy to this complexity. The slogan ‘think globally act locally’ provides an underlying tone that begins to address this hierarchy. Without acknowledging this hierarchy, the notion of sustainable development can seem overwhelming, frustrating, and perhaps unattainable to many due to its complexity.

Perhaps the most important reason why landscape architects have not been successful in demonstrating principles of sustainable development is because they do not know how to get started. There is a continuous increase in the amount of information that pertains to sustainable development, but much of this information is widely dispersed. This dispersal reduces the likelihood of landscape architects following through on its objective to ‘Seek constant improvement in their knowledge, abilities, and skills, in their educational institutions, their professional practice and organizations, to more effectively achieve sustainable development’ as set forth in ASLA’s Declaration on Environment and Development. Another impediment that landscape architects face is the diversity of projects that we engage. This diversity dictates that no single solution is appropriate for every project, thus the need for a flexible procedure is

desirable. This flexibility will support other objectives of ASLA's Declaration on Environment and Development such as to:

'Generate design, planning, management strategies, and policy from the basis of the cultural context and the ecosystem to which each landscape belongs at the local, regional and global scale; and to develop and specify products, materials, technologies and techniques which exemplify the principles of sustainable development and landscape regeneration'.

The purpose of this thesis is to promote the establishment of a sustainable development framework that will enable landscape architects to embrace sustainable development. The framework is a procedure for learning about and applying sustainable development in landscape architecture. As a result of the framework's importance in this procedure, it is constructive to describe the framework's organization and its development.

ⁱ ASLA's Declaration on Environment and Development Objectives

Accept responsibility for the consequences of their design, planning, management and policy decisions on the health of natural systems and cultural communities and their harmony, equity and balance with one another.

Generate design, planning, management strategies, and policy from the basis of the cultural context and the ecosystem to which each landscape belongs at the local, regional and global scale.

Develop and specify products, materials, technologies and techniques which exemplify the principles of sustainable development and landscape regeneration.

Seek constant improvement in their knowledge, abilities, and skills, in their educational institutions, their professional practice and organizations, to more effectively achieve sustainable development.

Actively engage in shaping decisions, attitudes and values that support human health, environmental protection, landscape regeneration and sustainable development.