Annual Conference on Landscape Architecture

East Lansing, MI | October 7-9, 2026

Landscapes in Transition

General Information

The Michigan Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects invites you to join us in East Lansing for our Annual Conference on Landscape Architecture. This year's theme, Landscapes in Transition: Responding to Technology, Ecology, and Social Responsibility, explores the evolving role of landscape architects and allied professionals during a time of profound change. As technological tools advance, ecological challenges intensify, and social responsibilities expand, we invite you to join us for this opportunity for professional growth and networking with fellow industry partners.

Registration:

Conference registration fees include all educational sessions as well as meals and refreshment breaks throughout the Conference on Thursday, October 8, 2026. SEPARATE registration and additional registration fees apply for Awards Celebration and Field Events. To register, visit the events page here:

REGISTER

Event Schedule

Wednesday, October 7th

12:00 PM - 3:00 PM: Sketch Walk, MSU Campus

3:30 PM - 5:00 PM: Botanical Tour, MSU Campus

7:00 PM - 9:30 PM: Awards Celebration, MSU Broad Art Museum

Thursday, October 8th CONFERENCE

8:30 AM - 9:00 AM: Continental Breakfast/Registration/Exhibit Expo

9:00 AM - 9:15 AM: Opening Remarks, Stephanie Onwenu

9:15 AM - 10:15 AM: Landscape Architecture as Climate Infrastructure: Natural Capital and Regional Resilience | Alicia Adams, PLA | 1.0 PDH, HSW *pending*

9:15 AM - 10:15 AM: Exhibit Expo

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM: Designing the 9Line: A Vision for Mobility and Placemaking | Eric Dryer, AICP and Simon Rivers, AICP | 1.0 PDH

12:00 PM - 12:15 PM: State of the Chapter, Dana Hernalsteen

12:15 PM - 1:30 PM: Lunch

1:30 PM - 2:30 PM: Landscapes Under Pressure: How Perception Shapes Use in a Changing World | Danielle Groth, RLA | 1.0 PDH

2:30 PM - 3:00 PM: Exhibit Expo

3:00 PM - 4:00 PM: Trees as Infrastructure: Leveraging Technology for Preservation | Bryan Walters, RCA | 1.0 PDH, HSW *pending*

4:00 PM - 5:00 PM: The Power of Landscape Architecture to Influence Urban Soil-building Through Community-scale Composting | Reneé V. Wallace and Charles Cross, ASLA | 1.0 PDH, HSW *pending*

Friday, October 9th

12:00 PM - 5:30 PM: LA Ride, East Lansing | PDH - TBD

Attendee Information

Conference Location & Accommodations

Conference Location & Accommodations:

Graduate East Lansing

133 Evergreen Ave.

East Lansing, MI 48823

Graduate Hotel is offering conference guests a special guest room rate of $119 until September 7, or until sold out, whichever comes first. To make your reservation, Click Here to access our special booking link or call the hotel directly at 844-888-4723 and reference MiASLA.

Daily valet parking available for $15 per day or self-park available at nearby Albert Ave. Garage or Grove St. Garage, daily max. $20, hourly rates vary.

Attire

Conference: Suggested dress is business or business casual.

Field Events: Please dress weather appropriate.

Awards Celebration: Suggested dress is cocktail attire.

Continuing Education

The Michigan Chapter- American Society of Landscape Architects is a LA Continuing Education System (CES) approved provider of Professional Development Hours (PDH). Approved hours will be listed by lecture/event in the conference agenda.

Landscape Architecture Continuing Education System™

LA CES™

EDUCATION PROVIDER

Sponsorship Opportunities

Michigan ASLA is seeking support for these special events by offering a variety of sponsorships and exhibit display opportunities. For more information visit:

MiASLA Homepage

Event Registration Costs

MiASLA Conference

Wednesday, October 7th (Field Events)

Day 1

Sketch Walk – Michigan ASLA Member $35 (non-member $45), Students $15

Botanical Tour - complimentary

Awards Celebration – $50

Thursday, October 8th (Conference)

Day 2

Conference early registration ends September 16th, 2026. After September 16th, an additional $25 will be added to registration fees.

Michigan ASLA Member $195

Retired Current ASLA Member $145

Student Michigan ASLA Member $60

Non-Chapter Member $250

Friday, October 9th

Day 3

LA Ride Individual Rider – No PDHs $40

LA Ride Individual Rider – Including PDHs $120

LA Ride Students (with Valid ID) - Complimentary

Field Sessions

Sketch Walk Wednesday, October 7th

Time: 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM **Location: MSU Campus** **PDHs: 1.5**

Step into the story of landscape architecture through the language of sketching at the 9th Annual Sketch Walk, held at Michigan State University-the oldest agricultural college in the United States. Led by Jack Goodnoe, Bob Chipman and Dave Peterhans, this beloved field session invites students and seasoned professionals alike to slow down, observe, and capture the essence of place with pen and paper. The ability to sketch is a valuable and essential skill for understanding existing site conditions, for exploring and testing design solutions, and for conveying these ideas to others. The Sketch Walk is a delightful way to cultivate your ability to capture, explore, and communicate design ideas.

Botanical Tour Wednesday, October 7th

Time: 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM **Location: MSU Campus** **PDHs: 1.5**

Michigan State University's (MSU) campus is a living laboratory, steeped in history, preservation, and innovation. This guided Botanical Tour will begin with an introduction from the university's campus planner, Brandon List, followed by a classic plant walk with Dr. Robert Schutzki. During the plant walk, Dr. Schutzki will highlight advancements in adaptive traits of landscape plants and reintroduces the group to forgotten species. Through this hands-on experience, participants will expand their plant palettes and deepen their understanding of "right plant, right place" concepts.

Field Sessions

Award Celebration — Wednesday, October 7th

Time: 7:00 PM - 9:30 PM **Location: MSU Broad Art Museum**

Register to join us for an evening honoring excellence in landscape architecture as we recognize and celebrate this year's award winners. Mingle with peers and industry leaders while enjoying cocktails and hors d'oeuvres in this inspiring setting.

MSU Broad Art Museum: 547 E Circle Dr., East Lansing

East Lansing Parking Guide

LA Ride — Friday, October 9th

Time: 12:00 PM - 5:30 PM **Location: Lansing / East Lansing** **PDHs: TBH**

LA Ride is an interactive, slow to medium-paced bike ride where riders visit locations designed by landscape architects throughout the host city. Through this educational experience, attendees learn about projects of varies scopes and scales, the professionals who worked on them, and their contextual significance to the surrounding area and it's population. Every ride includes "Lecture Sites" and "Mini Stops" where planners, advocates, and technical staff give presentations to the group.

Conference Speakers

KEY NOTE SPEAKER: LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AS CLIMATE INFRASTRUCTURE - NATURAL CAPITAL AND REGIONAL RESILIENCE

SESSION DESCRIPTION: Landscape architects work at the exact scale where national disaster losses are generated, yet our profession's contributions are routinely framed as amenities rather than critical infrastructure. This session reframes landscape architecture as climate infrastructure by connecting natural systems to the risk-reduction logic that actually drives capital investment decisions.

Drawing on SmithGroup's climate practice in the Great Lakes region, this presentation introduces the concept of natural capital – the chain from natural asset to ecosystem service to benefit to value – and explores how landscape architects can translate design moves into the financial and performance metrics that clients, developers, and public agencies use to make decisions. Key frameworks include avoided cost thinking, ecosystem services valuation, and equity-centered performance measurement.

Attendees will leave with practical starting points for reframing their own work: leading with risk rather than amenity, making the case for what a landscape prevents rather than what it provides, designing for measurable performance, and making equity visible as a risk-reduction outcome rather than a co-benefit.

Alicia Adams, PLA, is a Principal and Climate Strategist at SmithGroup, where she leads resilience and adaptation work as part of the firm's national IMPACT program. Her practice centers on repositioning landscape architecture as critical climate infrastructure – reframing natural systems from amenities into measurable risk-reduction assets. With more than a decade at SmithGroup rooted in Detroit and the Great Lakes region, and now based in Pittsburgh, Alicia focuses on helping design teams and clients communicate the value of nature-based solutions in the language that drives investment decisions: risk exposure, avoided damage, and ecosystem service value. A contributor to SmithGroup's ASLA Climate Action Commitment, her work on green infrastructure and green gentrification in Midwestern cities informs her equity-centered approach to climate-resilient design.

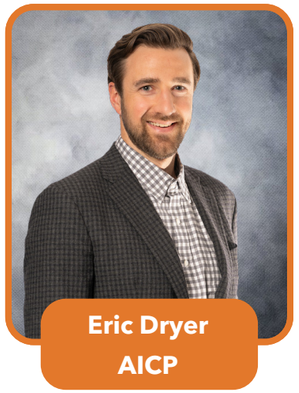
Alicia Adams
PLA

DESIGNING THE 9LINE: A VISION FOR MOBILITY AND PLACEMAKING

SESSION DESCRIPTION: Join us for an inside look at Oakland County's 9Line, an ambitious vision to transform the Nine Mile corridor into a signature regional landscape and non-motorized connection. Spanning ten communities, the 9Line weaves together cultural destinations, parks, and neighborhoods while creating new opportunities for recreation, mobility, and community identity. This session highlights the planning and design work led by OHM Advisors, including the landscape design for Oak Park and the firm's leadership in the Phase 1 and Phase 2 planning efforts and implementation strategy. Presenters will explore the corridor's history, existing conditions, and the opportunities and constraints that shaped the project's vision. Attendees will learn how this collaborative effort is advancing a new model for suburban corridor transformation, delivering recreation access, strengthening local economies, supporting public health, and expanding equitable access to open space.

9 LINE

DESIGNING THE 9LINE: A VISION FOR MOBILITY AND PLACEMAKING



Eric Dryer, AICP, is an accomplished urban planner with extensive experience in creating sustainable and vibrant communities. As a Principal at OHM Advisors, and the Studio Manager for the Michigan Planning and Landscape Architecture team, Eric brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the projects he undertakes, advocating for data-driven, holistic, and innovative design solutions.

Based in Detroit, Eric is deeply passionate about improving cities and the quality of life for residents. His keen eye for detail and strategic approach to planning have led to the successful completion of numerous projects that have positively impacted communities across the Midwest. Eric is passionate about finding ways for infrastructure, development, and natural spaces to work together in harmony and he brings an approach that relies equally on data, community input, and design to help communities find feasible solutions to the advancing communities.

Eric has led planning and design projects around Michigan and Ohio, including the City of Kalamazoo's Parks and Recreation Plan, Detroit's E. Warren/Cadieux and Greater Warren/Conner Neighborhood Framework Plans, MDOT's Washtenaw Avenue PEL Study, and the Medina County Strategic Transit Plan. He has also led transportation, non-motorized, and land use planning studies in Monroe, Westland, Grayling, Oakland County, and Lansing.

When not planning, Eric spends his time cycling around Detroit and in Northern Michigan, working on his historic home in Detroit, and tending to the landscaping and garden at his home.

Simon Rivers, AICP, is an urban planner and equity advocate from Southfield, Michigan. He is currently the Supervisor of Planning for Oakland County Parks, focusing on public engagement, sustainability, and regional connectivity. Previously, Simon was an Associate Planner at Oakland County Parks, and has worked in the fields of planning consulting, education, and government at the local and federal level. He is also an appointed member of the Southfield Parks and Recreation Board and a founder of the Black Excellence and Empowerment employee resource group at Oakland County.

Conference Speakers

LANDSCAPES UNDER PRESSURE: HOW PERCEPTION SHAPES USE IN A CHANGING WORLD

SESSION DESCRIPTION: Landscapes are changing, and so are the people moving through them. From the dunes, trails, and seasonal rhythms of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore and Glen Arbor to the open gathering spaces of The Diag at University of Michigan, ecological pressures, technology, tourism, and social change all influence how spaces are experienced and used.

This session explores how people respond to exposure, refuge, visibility, movement, and social pressure within public landscapes, and how those responses may be shifting in a rapidly changing world. Through Michigan based examples, participants will look at how gathering, circulation, lingering, and interaction patterns can reveal deeper changes in perception and comfort.

The presentation also invites designers to consider how their own lived experiences, personalities, comfort thresholds, and ways of perceiving the world may subtly shape the spaces they create. Through observation, reflection, and a short interactive exercise, attendees will explore how greater awareness of perception can strengthen design thinking and support more responsive, human-centered landscapes.

Danielle Groth, RLA, is a 1993 graduate of Michigan State University with a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture. She began her career with the City of Detroit Parks and Recreation Department and later practiced with Land Design Studio and SmithGroup JJR, focusing on public landscapes, institutional projects, and community-oriented spaces.

Over time, Danielle's landscape architecture career shifted toward the healing arts as she deepened her understanding of how nature and designed environments influence human well-being. She is now co-owner of Angel Whispers Healing Center, where her work centers on perception, nervous system regulation, and the emotional experience of self and place.

Drawing on both design and healing arts, Danielle bridges landscape architecture with neuroscience informed and trauma aware approaches. She is the co-author of Shift Your Lens: Healing Your Stories™, a program that helps people understand the lens through which they experience the world.

Conference Speakers

TREES AS INFRASTRUCTURE: LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY FOR PRESERVATION

SESSION DESCRIPTION: Trees are often discussed as amenities but rarely evaluated or managed as infrastructure. This session focuses on how landscape architects can use technology and data to make informed, defensible decisions about tree preservation within real development constraints.

This course examines how tools such as sonic tomography, resistance micro-drilling (Resistograph), and carefully coordinated tree surveys can be applied to assess structural integrity, quantify risk, and prioritize preservation efforts. Through real-world case studies, attendees will see how these methods influence site planning, grading, and construction decisions, balancing preservation goals with budget and feasibility.

The session emphasizes practical application: when advanced testing is appropriate, how to interpret results, and how to translate findings into design and development strategies. Participants will leave with a clearer framework for treating trees as critical infrastructure, making preservation decisions that are both technically sound and economically realistic.

Bryan Walters, RCA, is a landscape design professional with over 20 years of experience spanning landscape architecture, urban forestry, landscape construction and maintenance. As a Registered Consulting Arborist and ISA Certified Arborist, he specializes in integrating arboricultural analysis and tree preservation strategies into the landscape design process.

His work focuses on balancing ecological performance, constructability, and experiential design through thoughtful site planning and the preservation of existing natural systems. Bryan has extensive experience with pre-development tree assessments, preservation planning, site design and construction administration on projects throughout the Southeast.

Outside of his professional life, Bryan enjoys spending time with his wife and three boys, fishing, hiking and is an avid DJ/music producer.

THE POWER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE TO INFLUENCE URBAN SOIL-BUILDING THROUGH COMMUNITY-SCALE COMPOSTING

SESSION DESCRIPTION: There is real tension facing Michigan cities and communities regarding how to sustainably manage food waste through composting systems. The tension exists between an urgent imperative to reduce climate impacts caused by methane emissions generated from food waste in landfills, and how that waste is diverted and composted in responsible, equitable ways, especially on residentially zoned land. Now is the perfect time for landscape architects to bring their unique ability to manage tensions while designing productive land-based solutions to the table. No matter what scale composting is done "The What Abouts" are the same… What, you want to put that where? What does it look like? What about the smells? And What about the doggone rats?

The coupling of "design" and "landscape architecture" with compost site planning and infrastructure development has the potential of not only addressing these 3 could be "showstoppers", it can also help facilitate the transformation of people's relationship with food scraps from "waste" to "resource". Informed, engaged landscape architects have the power to positively influence perspectives about the use of residential land for building soils that address urban systems challenges such as flooding, heat island effect, poor air quality, climate change, food insecurity, and chronic health conditions. Our aim in this interactive session is to explore the relationship between landscape architecture and composting, to provoke curiosity and inquiry, and to share a pathway for taking action now.

THE POWER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE TO INFLUENCE URBAN SOIL-BUILDING THROUGH COMMUNITY-SCALE COMPOSTING

Charles Cross, ASLA, is the Director of Landscape and Urban Design at the Detroit Collaborative Design Center and an Adjunct Professor at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Architecture & Community Development (SACD). Charles holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture from Western Michigan University, a Bachelor of Science in Landscape Architecture and a Master of Urban Design degree from The City College of New York. He has experience in the public sector, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Michigan Department of Natural Resources as well as private sector work with SmithGroup/JJR.

His research interests include GIS and cultural asset mapping in Afro Brazilian communities. Charles contributes to the design profession through presentations, lectures and as a guest critic throughout North America. He has been published and exhibited nationwide.
Charles has served on multiple boards and as a panelist with the Rose Center on Public Leadership/National League of Cities, the Mayors Institute for City Design, Detroit Mayor Sheffield's Transition Committee, and the Lincoln Institutes Legacy Cities Community of Practice faculty. He is a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Black Landscape Architects Network, and the American Planning Association. Charles is a 2018 Fulbright-Hays Fellow.

Reneé V. Wallace has the privilege of advancing strategic change work through Detroit-based entrepreneurial entities – Doers Edge LLC (CEO), FoodPLUS Detroit (Executive Director), and Doers Change Leadership Institute & Doers Change Lab (Founder, Under development). She has been a facilitative leader, business consultant, coach, and trusted advisor for over three decades, specializing in development of strategic engagement and execution systems for industry and community-based organizations. Reneé is committed to advancing composting and has a body of concentrated work in Detroit. Through Doers Edge, she recently implemented the City of Detroit's Compost Program pilot drop-off site. She leads FoodPLUS Detroit's "Peoples Compost Initiative", hosts a "Compost Community of Practice" and co-leads "ReMark Composting Solutions" a program that supports development of community-scale composting systems and compost-based soil solutions development. Recognition in composting include a Spirit of Detroit award, Michigan Recycling Coalition Excellence Award , and U.S. Compost Council H. Clark Gregory Award.

Conference Sponsors

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