

VOLUME 12, NUMBER 1 **MICHIGAN** CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY  
OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS



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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings fellow landscape architects and colleagues!

Fall. Changing leaves, a chill in the air, roars from football stadiums and the excitement of the coming holidays and season's festivities. My favorite season is upon us.

There is something magical about fall in Michigan. It is a wonderful reminder about how powerful, dynamic and dramatic the landscape can be. There is nothing quite as beautiful this time of year as a bright red/orange sugar maple emblazoned on the horizon or the blue and yellow flowers of a field of asters and goldenrods alive with pollinators frantically savoring the pollen from the last blooms of the year. Yet these colorful landscapes aren't for us, it's simply a happy coincidence that we enjoy the seasonal fall display. The changing landscape is a vital function of the regional ecosystem, and every detail—including flower color, seed ripening, and leaf drop—all evolved step by step to create a healthy ecosystem in balance and harmony. What does it mean to us as designers if the main purpose of the landscape isn't aesthetics but rather ecological functionality? What happens when we disrupt and replace pieces of our native ecosystems with foreign alternatives?

Fall is also the time of year when aspiring landscape architects return to their studios and classrooms to sharpen their skills and lay the foundation for the future of our profession. Earlier this year I was speaking with a group of students and I asked them what they wanted to focus their careers on or what gets them the most excited about the profession. Their answers were unique,

ambitious and very exciting. This is what got me hooked on landscape architecture and keeps me energized to this day. Our profession can cross boundaries, solve problems, change paradigms and literally create a better world. Whether that's introducing functional native landscapes into 21<sup>st</sup> century cities or creating landscapes that strengthen communities, culture and character through design, the heights we can achieve are limited only by our imaginations. I implore you to think like a student and let your imagination run wild. Look past the dazzling colors on the surface and see the connections and opportunities that are hiding in plain sight.

I hope you enjoy this great issue of MiSITES, brought to you by the hard work of our new editor Meghan Diecchio! This issue highlights the work and accomplishments of Shannon Sylte, Student ASLA, and Abigail Reimel, Student ASLA, who were both nominated for the Olmsted Scholars Program and are two of the bright future leaders of our profession; a recap of a thoughtful roundtable discussion about habitat and recreation perspectives, hosted by SmithGroup; and our government affairs report. Thank you for taking the time to review our quarterly publication which gives you a first hand look at some of the exciting projects, initiatives, and activities happening across our great state.

**Wes Landon, ASLA**  
President, Michigan Chapter of ASLA

*Editor's Note: All images in this publication are used with permission of the author or advertiser.*

## ON THE COVER:

Illustration from Dexter Wetland Project, see page 7 (source: A. Reimel)

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

October 3-4, 2018

### MiASLA Annual Meeting & Expo

Radisson, Kalamazoo, MI

Contact: Ben Baker, bakerbe4@gmail.com

October 19-22, 2018

### ASLA Annual Meeting & Expo

Philadelphia, PA

Contact: [www.asla.org](http://www.asla.org)

## STUDYING FOR THE LARE?

If you would like to sign up for LARE study groups, please email Dana at [education@michiganasla.org](mailto:education@michiganasla.org).

## SHARE AN IDEA!

If you would like to contribute to MiSITES, or suggest a topic or project to cover, please email: [SITESpublications@michiganasla.org](mailto:SITESpublications@michiganasla.org)



# LAF ANNOUNCES NATIONAL OLMSTED SCHOLARS

Washington, DC

In May the Landscape Architecture Foundation (LAF) announced the selection of its 2018 National Olmsted Scholars and Finalists. The Olmsted Scholars Program recognizes and supports students with exceptional leadership potential who are using ideas, influence, communication, service, and leadership to advance sustainable design and foster human and societal benefits.

Named for Frederick Law Olmsted, the father of American landscape architecture, the Olmsted Scholars Program, with its \$25,000 graduate and \$15,000 undergraduate prize, is the premier national award program for landscape architecture students. Now in its 11th year, the program recognizes one outstanding student from each accredited landscape architecture program in the U.S. and Canada, along with the jury-selected graduate and undergraduate national award winners and finalists. Students are both honored for past achievements and recognized for their future potential to influence the landscape architecture profession.

This year's National Olmsted Scholars are Elizabeth Camuti, a master's student at the University of Virginia, and Karina Ramos, an undergraduate at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Liz receives the \$25,000 graduate prize and plans to leverage the award to continue her ongoing research about new forms of socio-ecological infrastructure for isolated populations threatened by climate change and extreme weather, specifically the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Her work advances a design methodology that couples advanced digital technologies with local knowledge. Liz will use the award to support travel, tools, and surveillance technologies to better understand how

infrastructural improvements implemented in the wake of recent storms might interface with new forms of human occupation. Liz graduated from UVA with a Master of Landscape Architecture in May.

Karina receives the \$15,000 undergraduate prize and will use the award to design a physical plan for Puente Piedra, an emerging town 55 km away from Lima, Peru. Inspired by David Gouverneur's "informal armatures" approach, which provides a framework for the processes of informal urbanization, Karina will first conduct case study research in her hometown of Los Olivos, an adjacent district that evolved through the planned growth and development of an existing informal settlement. She plans to present her findings and recommendations to Peru's federal housing and urban development agency. Karina graduated this spring from UMass with a Bachelor of Science in Landscape Architecture.

Also honored are six National Olmsted Scholar Finalists. The graduate finalists, who each receive a \$5,000 award, are:

- Rachel Ison, University of Southern California
- Nicholas Jabs, University of Pennsylvania
- Steven Nuñez, University of Texas at Arlington

The undergraduate finalists, who each receive a \$3,000 award, are:

- Toni Candanedo, Arizona State University
- Bryce Donner, University of Florida
- Karen Lomas-Gutierrez, University of California, Davis

Two independent juries of leaders in the landscape architecture profession selected the winners and finalists from a group of 50 graduate and 35

undergraduate students nominated by their faculty for their exceptional leadership potential. These top students earned the designation of 2018 University Olmsted Scholars and join the growing community of 634 past and present Olmsted Scholars. The prestige and publicity associated with the award serve to promote the significance of the landscape architecture profession and help attract inspired and motivated leaders.

Among the nominated students, titled University Olmsted Scholars, were Shannon Sylte of the University of Michigan and Abigail Reimel of Michigan State University.

Shannon Sylte, MLA Candidate 2019, is interested in creative participatory design to develop inclusive community spaces. Prior to beginning graduate studies in landscape architecture at the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment, Shannon worked to develop an art non-profit, permaculture-based community garden, youth jobs training program, and urban agriculture initiative. Her interests are centered on innovative material reuse and cooperative design using digital tools. She draws inspiration from collaborative art, growing and cooking food, and personal storytelling. Shannon aspires to use her career in landscape architecture as both a vehicle for social progress and ecological enhancement.

Abigail Reimel, Student ASLA, is a Michigan State University student in her fourth year working towards her Bachelors of Landscape Architecture with a Minor in Entrepreneurship and Innovation. At Michigan State University, she was the Student Chapter President and student liaison to the Michigan Chapter of the ASLA. She is also the current Chair of the Student Advisory Committee where she hopes to increase diversity within the ASLA as well as encourage student involvement and retention by means of communication and connection. The primary driver behind her fascination with landscape architecture is its ability to operate as a creative problem-solving profession across the realm of ecological and social responsibility. When not in the LA studios, she enjoys kayaking, running, and volunteering with the Adaptive Sports and Recreation Club for students and community members with disabilities at Michigan State University.

To celebrate their nomination, MiSITES invited Shannon and Abigail to contribute an article about their work at their respective universities. Their work illustrates how professionals and students alike are pushed to incorporate sustainable design into their work.



**Abigail Reimel, MSU, BLA anticipated winter 2018**



**Shannon Sylte, U-M, MLA candidate, anticipated 2019**

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Outdoor Classroom (source: A. Reimel)



## Elevating Education

# DEXTER WETLAND PROJECT

Washtenaw County, MI

BY ABIGAIL REIMEL, STUDENT ASLA

### Project Overview

As a portion of a Regional Environmental Design Studio, taken during Spring Semester 2018, our class was challenged to find a storm water management solution for a site recently clear-cut to make way for new sports recreation fields. The proposed fields' location disturbed a portion of the on-site wetlands, offering us the opportunity to explore the DEQ permitting process within the state of Michigan. The site itself spans nearly 100 acres bordered by Shield Road to the North, Parker Road to the West, Mill Creek to the East, and a section of forested wetland to the south (see site master plan graphic, right).

We began the course project with a brief project analysis for the proposed sports facilities and site visit to gain insight on the scale of the proposed work. With an expectation of increased runoff due to the field construction, the class began an overall site study examining the regional context, the impacts to and from neighboring semiaquatic and aquatic ecosystems, and the potential for unique water management solutions. The project requirements were flexible to allow for creative interpretation of potential solutions while offering structure through the MDEQ wetland permitting process requirement for the project.

### Partnered Inventory & Analysis

Following our initial site visit I continued the inventory and analysis with a fellow student where we began identifying a series of opportunities and constraints spanning the site. We began by locating the site using the GIS files offered by Washtenaw County in conjunction with regional data provided by



Site Master Plan (source: A. Reimel)

the state. This allowed us to establish an accurate picture of the initial site and the surroundings including the existing topography, roads, building footprints, water systems (including floodplain and wetland location), and zoning / parcel locations.

In addition to GIS, we explored the seasonal solar exposures, site and site adjacent coverage types, and on-site soil types. Each of these allowed us to gain a comprehensive picture of the site in its current state and explore the potential impacts of the proposed recreation facilities. One of our primary findings included the directed flow of water from the site to the adjacent Mill Creek, a portion of the Huron River Watershed. Additionally, we discovered the potential for physical connections to adjacent schools within the district and



**Wetland & Infiltration Cross-Section** (source: A. Reimel)

to the Border to Border Trail system improving public connections to Downtown Dexter. Surrounding the site is primarily single-family residential and agricultural land uses allowing us to address the impacts of runoff from those environments in addition to the runoff from the school site. The extensive wetlands and potential for flooding on the site proved to be a challenge for any development including that of the proposed recreation fields. Another major constraint was the precipitately defined locations of the fields, and initial over-clearing of the site.

### **Individual Design Development**

With the paired inventory and analysis of the site complete, I began exploring the potential of the space through ecological, social, and economic perspectives. My primary goals for the site itself was to allow interaction as a guide to understanding, to minimize the impact of the design and expand community connections. This led to me to develop a concept of “Elevating Education.” It was meant to embody the idea that to fully understand

something, we must first experience it.

The project location at a high school was a way to expand educational opportunities so that the school may offer a complementary setting for traditional classroom education that would allow for immersive, self-guided learning not only for students, but for the community as well. In this case, the idea was to give people the chance to experience the functions of a wetland along an edge ecosystem connecting a forested area to a meadow. This concept was used to guide my efforts in developing a solution to the wetland mitigation and storm water management needs of the site.

I began with a focus on how interaction with the site could be achieved and settled on a series of gravel paths, elevated boardwalks, bridges, and wetland access points. The primary loop through the site would allow for a concentrated use with auxiliary connections to existing sidewalk systems to the north and west of the school. The elevated board walk decking would be composed of a

permeable metal grate to allow for both water and light to pass through, further minimizing the impact on the space. This material would also act as the surface of the outdoor and observational platform grove located on the western side of the proposed project (see outdoor classroom graphic, page 6). Further pathway development led to ground-level gravel pathway connections to allow for intermittent flooding with minimal path damage and limited impact on the ecosystem. Minimal impervious surfaces would be used with the exception of the accessible wetland access points. The concrete or related material would provide stability and strength with the seasonal fluctuations in water levels.

The basis for the entire walkway system however was based around a constructed wetland that acted not only as a storm water management tool and habitat, but as a filter to clean and redirect the runoff from the site prior to reaching to Mill Creek. The wetland was designed to collect runoff from both the proposed recreation fields on the southern portion of the site and from the parking lot and existing practice fields to the northeast of the school. The water from these areas is channeled to the southeast corner of the site (the current location of an inaccessible detention basin) to a proposed primary basin where filtration would be performed by native wetland plants.

With a permeable soil cross-section leading to a secondary basin, water could be again be filtered as it moves downhill towards the creek. Water would finally be filtered through another permeable cross section to a tertiary basin where it would be able to infiltrate before eventually reaching Mill Creek (see wetland cross-section, previous page). Bridges spanning the site also allowed for animals to move freely through the site without interrupting any natural movement. This project provided a unique opportunity to involve a community in a multi-functional landscape while expanding the current definition of a recreational space.

*Abigail Reimel is a senior in the Landscape Architecture program at Michigan State University. Contact: reimelab@msu.edu.*



Elevated Walkway (source: A. Reimel)



# PLANNING FOR BUILDING MATERIAL REUSE-DRIVEN REVITALIZATION

Detroit, MI

BY SHANNON SYLTE, STUDENT ASLA

### Project Context

Efforts to revitalize Detroit have centered around blight reduction through mass demolition. The Detroit Demolition program, operated by the Detroit Blight Removal Task Force and the Detroit Land Bank Authority seeks to increase property and home values within the city, stimulate local minority-owned businesses, and quite literally wipe the landscape clean of blight through the expedited removal of millions of tons of building materials to the landfill or incinerator. While this process has resulted in measurable blight reduction, alternatives to demolition such as selective and partial deconstruction, offer a supportive medium through which Detroit can work toward a new future.<sup>1</sup>

Detroit has the opportunity to reconstruct through deconstruction and serve as a model for other post-industrial cities recovering from decline. This strategic land use planning project, Deconstruct / Reconstruct Detroit, details a unique alternative approach for city-wide sustainable economic development through building material resource recovery.

### Opportunities and Constraints

This approach offered several opportunities. First, in lieu of demolition and landfill or incinerator disposal, recovering and reusing materials reduces greenhouse gas emissions<sup>1</sup> and reduces the quantity of useable building materials that are landfilled. Then, salvaging and selling materials can provide jobs and job training and generate revenue for local businesses and tax revenue for the city.<sup>1</sup> Many of Detroit's most vulnerable residents can benefit from deconstruction initiatives in both the opportunities for job creation and the accessibility and affordability of locally-sourced salvaged construction

and demolition resources. The recycling of existing local resources such as building materials can enhance community economic development.<sup>1</sup> Lastly, deconstruction is an opportunity to pay homage to Detroit's architectural history. For example, Reclaim Detroit labels every piece of wood with the address it was sourced from.

Constraints to this approach include the financial constraints related to city-wide deconstruction program startups. Reclaimed materials compete with virgin building material prices, which continue to be artificially low when considering the carbon footprint of new versus used material. And current low-tipping fees for construction and demolition waste incentivize demolition over deconstruction. Furthermore, demand for salvaged building materials is currently low and mainly purchased by a niche market of artisans and renovators. And there is a lack of communication and collaboration between built environment professionals and deconstructionists.

### Programmatic and Specific Objectives

The objectives of this assignment were to explore how different scenarios could manifest in different landscape patterns in the future. The scenarios, and the assumptions and drivers embodied by the chosen topic, were used to generate alternative future landscape models and show what the results of these scenarios might look like.

The specific objectives of Deconstruct / Reconstruct Detroit were to identify building material sources and sinks in the city and identify optimal locations for salvaged building material dispersal (storefronts, storage, and warehouse).

This second objective was based upon three goals:

1. Maximizing blight reduction and quantity of salvaged building materials through expedited deconstruction and material distribution.
2. Maximizing accessibility to employment centered around building material reuse operations: deconstruction, processing, retail, etc.
3. A fusion of material dispersal, access to employment, and maximizing tourism opportunities to create a post-industrial park corridor connecting Detroit's Packard Plant redevelopment project and building material reuse centers.

### Identifying Sources for Reclaimed Building Materials

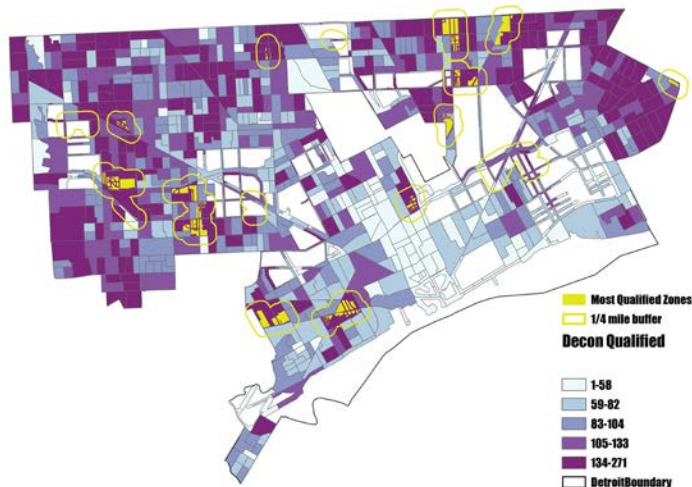
The planning process entailed aggregated building data in Detroit to identify deconstruction-qualified structures. The combined data included buildings slated for demolition within Detroit's Demolition Pipeline, contracted

demolitions, buildings in need of major repairs, structurally unsound buildings, and buildings with open dismantle permits.

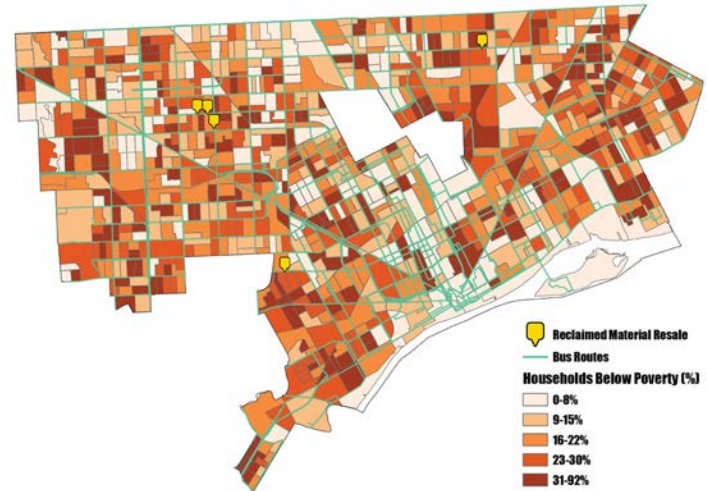
A weighted analysis of these data resulted in a value approximating number of structures qualified for deconstruction per census block. The census blocks with the largest number of deconstruction-qualified structures were aggregated with Detroit Future City 10 year projected land use patterns to hone in on most appropriate areas for building material reuse processing and resale locations. Qualified parcels and buildings were identified according to their zoning designation. (See Decon Qualified Map, previous page.)

### Determining Optimal Locations for Building Material Reuse Centers

Reclaimed material dispersal (storefronts), processing, and storage locations were identified based on current condition and ownership such as buildings



Most Qualified Zones for Deconstruction (source: S. Sylte)



Resale Locations Relative to Neighborhood Poverty Level (source: S. Sylte)

owned by the Detroit Land Bank Authority, in good condition, along major thoroughfares (for increased accessibility and visibility), and along bus routes. Unemployment was mapped by census block to determine optimal locations for building material reuse processing, storage, and storefronts. Optimal building locations were identified in proximity to the census blocks with highest unemployment rates for improved access to employment opportunities around deconstruction and building material reuse.

**Planning and Design Process**

The design process entailed thorough analysis of existing literature around building material reuse, review of relevant policy connected to deconstruction,

and data analysis and mapping using ArcGIS. The alternatives explored (listed under programmatic objectives) include siting building material reuse processing and dispersal centers with the goal of maximizing resale and dispersal, siting based upon high concentrations of unemployment to improve employment opportunity and accessibility, and economic development centered around building material reuse / park corridor tourism. The selected approach was taken to evaluate the various benefits related to siting building material reuse centers: the impact of the centers may differ based upon their location (in proximity to high concentrations of unemployment, in proximity to major thoroughfares, bus routes, and local large-scale redevelopment projects like the Packard Plant).





## Outcomes

The following items were identified as benefits that would occur from the results and scope of this project.

### Social

- Expanded employment opportunities around building material reuse.
- Reduced neighborhood exposure to harmful particulate matter and pollutants resulting from standard demolition practices and reduced noise exposure to heavy equipment.
- Increased community involvement in blight-removal, material reuse, and rejuvenation of vacant land.
- Preservation of cultural history and character of building materials through reincorporation into new construction.
- Increased awareness of the resource-intensive process and environmental impact of manufacturing new building materials compared to reuse.

### Economic

- Growth of environmentally friendly, civic-oriented businesses and nonprofits centered around material reuse.
- Increased tax base.
- Increased opportunity for tourism centered around artful building material reuse and preservation of the city's industrial heritage.
- Expanded employment connected to deconstruction, building material processing, and retail.

### Environmental

- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions as fossil-fuel driven demolition equipment replaced in-part by manpower.
- Preservation of high quality building materials of historic significance: hardwoods, unique architectural fixtures, etc.
- Reduced quantity of landfilled construction and demolition waste.

Ultimately, the expansion and emphasis on building material reuse and deconstruction, in addition to reduction of wide-spread demolition, can result

in community empowerment through deeper involvement in locally-based, economic enhancement initiatives.

*Shannon Sylte is an MLA Candidate at University of Michigan.*

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References: 1. Leigh Nancey Green, Patterson, Lynn M. 2006. Deconstructing to Redevelop: A Sustainable Alternative to Mechanical Demolition: The Economics of Density Development Finance and Pro Formas. Journal of the American Planning Association 72(2):217-225.



(source: S. Sylte)



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Panelists had fun talking about what each is passionate about. Alexa Bush, ASLA, City of Detroit, summarized “We’re not necessarily solving for endangered rare habitats, but trying to create more healthy habitats to give urban people access to.” (image source: SmithGroup)

## SmithGroup Hosts

# HABITAT + RECREATION PERSPECTIVES

Insights, Trends & Issues Shaping Our World

BY EMILY MCKINNON, PE, ASCE

The space, funding, and resources for both environmental and recreational projects is frequently limited. Outdoor spaces have seen added pressures to be more and do more for our communities and natural systems. This has required projects to harness creative partnerships, utilize unique funding structures, and implement a variety of project delivery methods. We have found that leveraging the resources and objectives of environmental and recreational projects together breeds success.

SmithGroup hosted a Perspectives Panel Discussion in our Ann Arbor office on Wednesday, April 18th focused on “Habitat + Recreation: Balancing Interests to Craft Success.” Moderated by SmithGroup’s Neal Billetdeaux, PLA, ASLA, SITES AP, the panelists explored economic and quality of life benefits that are realized when urban projects embrace these concepts, understand who the players are, identify potential funding sources, and address how we can plan and design spaces in the future to capitalize on the unique advantages of balancing habitat creation / restoration and recreational opportunities to improve our communities.

The panelists, Alexa Bush, ASLA (Senior City Planner, City of Detroit), John Hartig (Board Member, Detroit Riverfront Conservancy), Laura Rubin (Executive Director, Huron River Watershed Council), David Zenk (Executive Director, MetroParks Toledo) and myself, offered a broad range of perspectives from an ecological restoration focus to natural resource preservation within public access areas and to urban integration challenges.

Several recurring themes evolved out of the lively hour and a half discussion: finding the next generation of conservationists, establishing a strong volunteer base, and new funding strategies. With over 80 percent of all the people in the US and Canada residing in urban areas, greater focus and intent needs to be brought to our urban cores regarding integration of natural resources within our communities. This is being seen in regulatory frameworks with the push – and in some communities the requirement – to implement green infrastructure in lieu of traditional gray systems. This is most prevalent when addressing stormwater management, but green infrastructure also relates to a broad range of ecosystem services. More needs to be done to educate the public about the direct and indirect benefits that they can personally experience when habitat is integrated within the urban framework. Integration of a network of natural systems within our urban centers can foster a connection to nature previously unknown to many urban residents. With a sense of connection to natural systems and appreciation for the benefits – including environmental, health, and social – such systems can provide, we can begin to see the next generation of conservationists emerge.

For our natural and public open spaces to succeed, the community must have a sense of pride or ownership in the space. This sense can take many forms from being able to actively use the space to maintain healthy lifestyles through recreation and social gatherings to having the landscape and physical features reflect the cultural history within the community. Whatever the design, it must resonate with the users. But this connection is a two-way street as Laura Rubin pointed out, “There’s a lot of talk about biophilia and human need to connect to nature. And one of the things that we really focus on is that nature needs humans to care about it to succeed.” It can start from a small, local, initial interaction – walking their dog in a park – that may spark an interest in the surrounding habitat. Through targeted education and outreach, we can hope to strengthen that interest to maintain that space through their own continued use, but also to promote its value to their friends and neighbors. This sense of ownership may lead them into opportunities to volunteer within that park or the larger connected system. And the cycle can broaden to create a stronger interest in our larger, natural systems throughout our state. Then

Milliken State Park, designed by SmithGroupJJR, was the first urban state park in Michigan providing an opportunity for Detroit residents to recreate in urban habitats. (image source: SmithGroup)





Post Panel Conversations (source: SmithGroup)

we have a large group of volunteer activists that can physically and vocally spread the word on the importance of the integration of natural systems within our communities and the multitude of benefits these spaces can bring to recreate, gather or to simply take a break from our hectic lives. The local connection must start first – and to reach the majority of our current population – this needs to start within our urban centers.

Since our usual federal restoration grants are in a current state of flux with the threat of being eliminated, we frequently need to delve into creative public-private partnerships. This requires “making the case” of the benefits the recreation and natural systems can bring. We can gain support from private entities to maintain what already exists and move forward with further enriching our communities. Several of the panelists highlighted the need to prepare economic impact studies for our natural and recreational systems. Quantifying the economic benefits seen from community greenways, parks, water trails, and natural systems has the potential to persuade local businesses to invest private funds to advance further protection and/or development of these systems. By showing the positive effect the natural recreational opportunities can have for their employee’s well-being and the draw such amenities can bring to communities that can drive spending within local businesses, we can show the success that has been seen and thus garner support from private investment.



Neal Billetdeaux, ASLA, SmithGroup, opened the event quoting Professor Elizabeth Meyer, landscape architect at the University of Virginia, “Sustainable landscapes must be more than a function to perform ecologically. They must perform socially and culturally as well.” (source: SmithGroup)

In summary, we need to start at the individual level, specifically within our dense urban core. We need to make the connection personal – something that speaks to the individual – which means that we need to have a diverse mix of natural and recreational features. Once we have them hooked, we can strengthen that appreciation through education and engagement to a broader perspective of our natural systems beyond their immediate community. This in turn will harbor public support for increasing the natural connections within our communities, which will lead to opportunities for new development projects. We must provide a basis of the positive economic impact that our greenways, blueways, and natural systems can have within our communities to help drive private investment and supplement potentially threatened or



limited federal funding. Dave Zenk indicated that, “Communities are realizing that parks are not a luxury anymore, they are actually engrained in the social fabric, and in many ways, directly address the challenges that the communities all over the world are facing.”

Just outside of Toledo, Howard Marsh Metropark, designed by SmithGroup, exemplifies the integration of recreation within restored habitat on the shore of Lake Erie. The park, which converted over 750 acres of farmland into coastal marsh wetlands, opened in April 2018 just in time to host the thousands of visitors that flock to the area for seasonal bird migration. With over six miles of trails and boardwalks and six miles of deep water channels,

the wetland park boosts recreational opportunities for hiking, fishing, birding, and paddling, while providing significant environmental benefits by reducing the reduction of phosphorous load in runoff entering Lake Erie and creating valuable fish spawning habitat. There are many success stories in our communities through combining habitat and recreational systems, but we need to continue to work together to promote the synergy that this combination can have to positively impact the quality of life for all – humans and nature.

*Emily McKinnon is a civil engineer and principal at SmithGroup.*

*Contact: [emily.mckinnon@smithgroup.com](mailto:emily.mckinnon@smithgroup.com) or (734) 669-2733.*



**Winter view of Howard Marsh Metropark while still under construction (source: SmithGroup)**



# GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS REPORT

## Michigan ASLA

BY MATT SOLAK

### Legislative Day A Success

In conjunction with World Landscape Architecture Awareness Month, on April 18th, Michigan ASLA members ventured to Lansing for a legislative advocacy day and legislative reception. Nearly 20 Michigan ASLA members attended the legislative day, scheduling meetings with their legislators to discuss the important issues facing landscape architects in Michigan. The members focused on educating lawmakers on the profession of landscape architecture and the important role it plays in the community. Additionally, members expressed opposition to HB 4693-HB 4695—legislation to eliminate the licensure requirement for landscape architects in the State of Michigan. Following the legislative visits, the Chapter hosted a reception at Tap and Tavern in downtown Lansing to meet with legislators and their staff in a more relaxed setting. Approximately 40 legislators and staff members attended the reception.

### Site Visits

Michigan ASLA is interested in hosting several site visits so that legislators and legislative staff can visit a landscape architecture project in or near their districts. These tours will allow our legislative guests to learn more about landscape architecture-related issues affecting our state. If you are interested in showing off a project, contact us at 517-485-4116.

### Contributions to Landscape Architects of Michigan PAC

Finally, I would strongly encourage members to make a contribution to the Landscape Architects of Michigan PAC. The Landscape Architects of Michigan PAC is a political advocacy tool for raising and disbursing funds to candidates who embrace and support the landscape architecture profession in both legislative and regulatory affairs. Currently, the PAC has a balance of \$997. By comparison other design professions have over \$30,000 combined in political advocacy contributions. PAC contributions support candidates who support you! Contributions can be mailed to the office at 629 W. Hillsdale St. Lansing, MI 48933.

*Matt Solak is vice president of Kindsvatter Dalling and Associates, Michigan ASLA's association management consultant. Contact: [matt@kdafirm.com](mailto:matt@kdafirm.com) or 517-485-4116.*



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Want to get involved? MiASLA is always looking for chapter members to participate at a greater level. Please feel free to reach out to the Executive Committee or staff members: [manager@michiganasla.org](mailto:manager@michiganasla.org).

Michigan Chapter of the  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
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