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VOLUME 16, NUMBER 1 MICHIGAN CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

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2022: VOLUME 16, NUMBER 1 MICHIGAN CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

Here we are: it's already September and I'm left wondering where has the time gone? The excitement of school beginning, cooler evenings and shorter days are definitely signs that fall is on its way. On behalf of the Executive Committee and our amazing MiSITES committee, we are excited to bring you this latest issue of MiSITES. We have a lot to catch you up on!

First up, we are looking forward to seeing many of you again in person at our Annual Meeting on September 29 at the Lansing Center. Our conference content includes a diverse group of dynamic professionals that we are excited to have on board. The Annual Meeting will be highlighted by our Keynote Speaker, Kofi Boone, FASLA who will be speaking on Jobs, Justice and Decarbonization: Radical Imagination and on the Ground Transformation. If you've never heard Kofi speak, you don't want to miss this opportunity. In addition to the conference agenda on the 29th, we will also be hosting our annual SketchCrawl on the 28th, the LA Ride on the 30th, and our Over the Edge event on Oct. 1.

Our Michigan Chapter ASLA Foundation has really been making waves this past year. We awarded the first two annual MIASLA Foundation Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Scholarships in March of this year. Members of our DEI Committee teamed up with a group of local professionals, the City of Southfield, and Lawrence Tech University to host our first ever "Introduction to Landscape Architecture Summer Camp" in June, where 7 local high school students attended a 3-day camp to learn about landscape architecture. The creativity and excitement these high school students exhibited was contagious and they all left camp with an excitement for the breadth and importance of our profession.

We had another great turnout for our Annual Golf Outing at Mystic Creek in late July. Through the participation and sponsorship of our great members and member firms, the fundraiser was a huge success – thanks to all who participated in spite of where the golf balls went. We look forward to presenting the monies raised to the landscape architecture programs at the University of Michigan and Michigan State University in support of their professional development.

Finally, we are very excited about our 2022 fundraising event for the MIASLA Foundation. We are going over the edge this year to support our foundation. On October 1, we will be hosting an urban rappelling event at the Boji Tower in Lansing (the tallest building in Lansing). I want to send a personal thanks to all of our Michigan Firms and members that have already sponsored the event and/or signed up to rappel. We still have spots left for sponsorship, volunteers and rappelers – please share with your network. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity – you don't want to miss it.

I look forward to seeing you on the 29th in Lansing!

Best wishes.

Kyle Verseman, ASLA
President-Elect, Michigan Chapter of ASLA
President, Michigan Chapter ASLA Foundation

ON THE COVER: *The Grand Circus Park Master Plan re-envisions the park to reflect its historic role in the city while enabling it to better serve the needs of today's downtown community.* Image credit: SmithGroup.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

9/29-30	Michigan ASLA Annual Conference, Lansing, MI
10/1	Over the Edge Fundraiser, Lansing, MI
11/11-14	ASLA Conference on Landscape Architecture, San Francisco, CA

STUDYING FOR THE LARE?

To sign up for our LARE study groups, please email Allison at education@michiganasla.org.

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Michigan Chapter of ASLA

www.michiganasla.org

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The design creates strong visible connections to surrounding destination. A cafe serves as the front porch for the park, drawing activity out to Woodward Avenue and enlivening the space with active daily uses. Image credit: SmithGroup.

GRAND CIRCUS PARK MASTER PLAN

Lori Singleton, PLA | SmithGroup

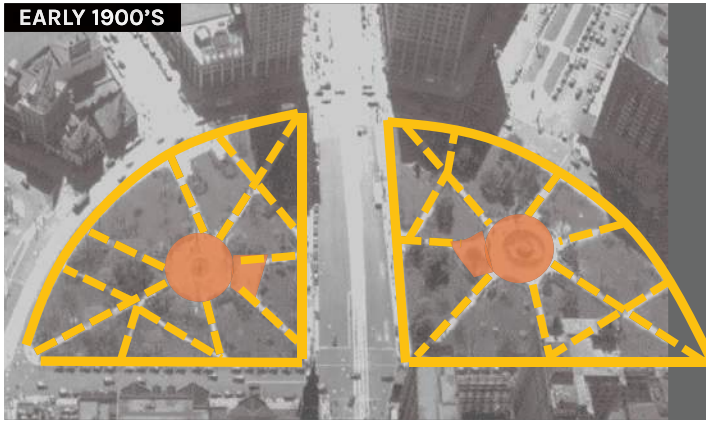
Built in 1867, Grand Circus Park is an anchoring landmark in Downtown Detroit. It serves as a quiet, green respite from the city and a retreat for residents and downtown workers. In 1957, the park was demolished and rebuilt to make way for underground parking and access ramps and, while it was roughly reconstructed to reflect the original plan, it became more fragmented, with fewer entrance points and path choices and a lack of perimeter sidewalks. In the 1990s, a renovation of the park placed monuments at the Woodward Corners that blocked clear access and views into the park at its main entrances. As a result, the natural desire lines through the park to reach destinations across the city are obstructed and informal neighborhood use is limited. The renovation also encircled the historic fountains with plazas surrounded by seat walls and hedges, which disconnected the center plazas from the surrounding lawns. The lack of people passing through and restricted access to the informal lawns led to a park that feels unused and unsafe.

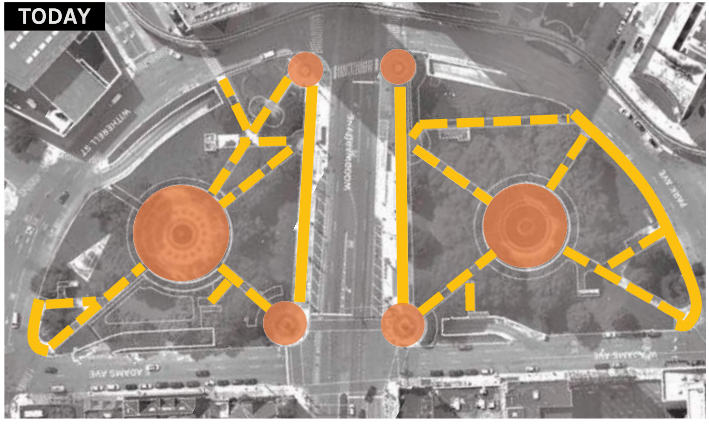
The design team collaborated with the Grand Circus Park Conservancy, Downtown Detroit Partnership, and the Detroit Theatre District Association to develop a master plan that accomplished three main objectives: reflect the park's history, reconnect to the surrounding context, and improve flexibility for neighborhood programming. Today, the City of Detroit is restoring vibrancy through revitalization projects in its neighborhoods and downtown. Through implementation of this master plan, Grand Circus Park, a historical landmark of Detroit, will also be renewed as a vibrant people's park.

An oasis of green in the city, the park distinguishes itself by the significant presence of open lawns and mature trees. To maintain this legacy, the design preserves most existing trees, some as large as 24" caliper, and makes green spaces more accessible, tracing direct paths through the park and placing plazas and lawns in the spaces between. The design goes beyond preserving historical fountains and statues and also re-interprets the historic framework of the original park, featuring multiple points of entry and clear paths across the park to nearby destinations. The design is based on a simple parti – identify the intuitive points of entry and connect them with direct travel paths, thus framing the central fountains rather than aiming straight toward them. This creates strong visible connections to surrounding destinations, redefines the sense of arrival, and opens clear views to historic buildings, the stadium, district storefronts, new high-rise apartments, and the Detroit skyline.

The materiality is reflective of classic urban parks, with detailing that lends modernity and timelessness. Stone or cast stone curbs and walls have clean lines with softened, rounded edges to add warmth and refinement. Low ornamental railings define entries and enclose outdoor rooms and recall traditional designs while reinterpreting them with playful geometries. Walks are surfaced in hexagonal unit paving, adding texture and richness to the simple patterns. Site furnishings restore old patterns, lining walkways and entrances, but with a more modern design expression.

Woodward Avenue is the central spine through the length of the entire city and splits the park into two halves. The perimeter streets operate as an enlarged roundabout with oversized, high-speed streets on all sides and four access ramps to underground parking that create barriers between the park and surrounding buildings. The road diet planned as part of the design eliminates parking lanes, reduces lane widths, and introduces a new median to replace the existing turn lane on Woodward Avenue. This allows for safer pedestrian





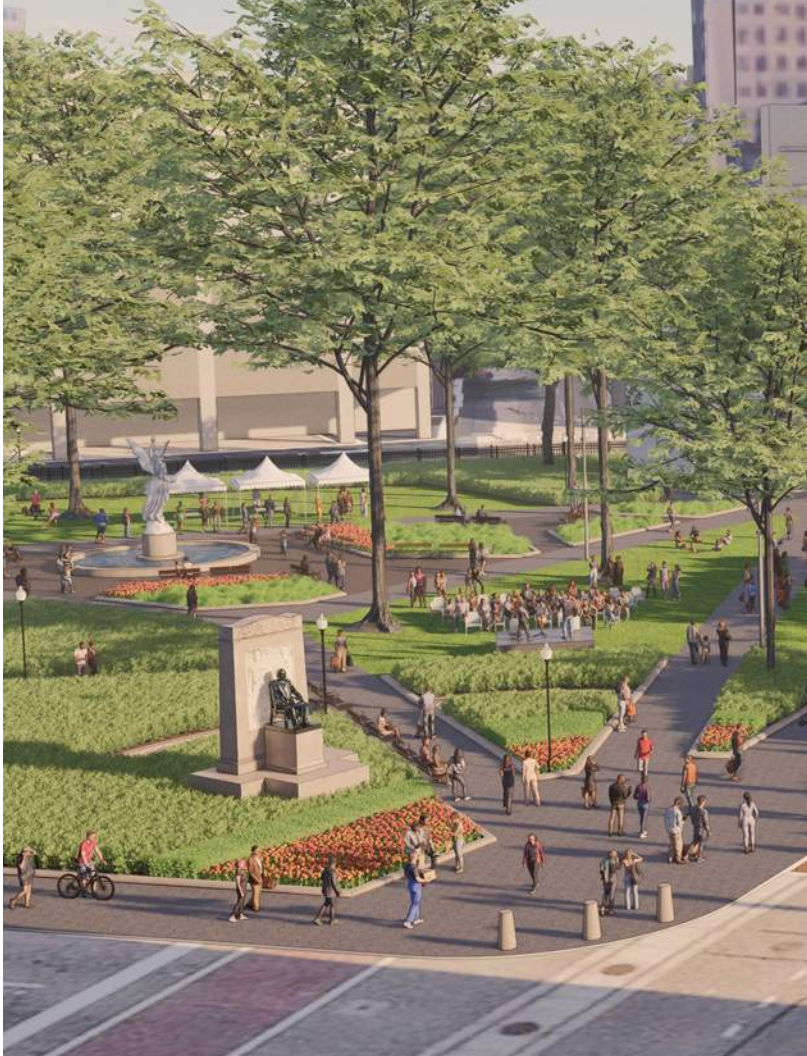
Grand Circus has always been a quiet retreat for downtown residents. The original design had an informal network of paths that linked each entry point to the central fountain plazas. When the park was reconstructed in the late 1950s, the path network became fragmented and entry points were removed.

Master Plan for Grand Circus Park. Image Credit: SmithGroup.

crossings and connections to the restored perimeter walkways. Landscaped street edges with shade trees and multiple park entries create a more comfortable and dynamic experience along the park's perimeter.

Grand Circus Park plays a balanced role in the downtown park network, emphasizing community-based programming for year-round daily activities rather than the high-frequency event programming found at other downtown parks and plazas. As a people's park, Grand Circus stands out as a landmark in the city without compromising its role as an important neighborhood amenity. The design arranges various daily experiences - cafes, civic plazas, flexible lawns, dog park, gardens, family spaces, and casual outdoor rooms - to improve the quality of life in and around the park. A cafe serves as the front porch for the park, drawing activity out to Woodward Avenue and enlivening the space with active daily uses. Smaller occasional events, like lunch concerts, yoga classes, and food trucks will foster regular community use, while dog and pet festivals, an annual Gala fundraiser, Thanksgiving Day Parade spectating, opening day activities and more will engage the nearby entertainment and sports venues. To support this range of uses, well-designed and maintainable infrastructure and amenities are key to the park's success and high-quality park experiences, so the design incorporates accommodations for event power and audio, lighting, water, waste management, snow removal, and more.

The Grand Circus Park Master Plan re-envisions the park to reflect its historic role in the city while enabling it to better serve the needs of today's downtown community. With simple elegance it reconnects the park to its edges and context and restores vibrancy through a wealth of opportunities for intimate, quiet use, social engagement, and neighborhood programming. •



A planned road diet for Woodward will create space for a new planted median that will help visually connect the two sides of the park. Image Credit: SmithGroup.

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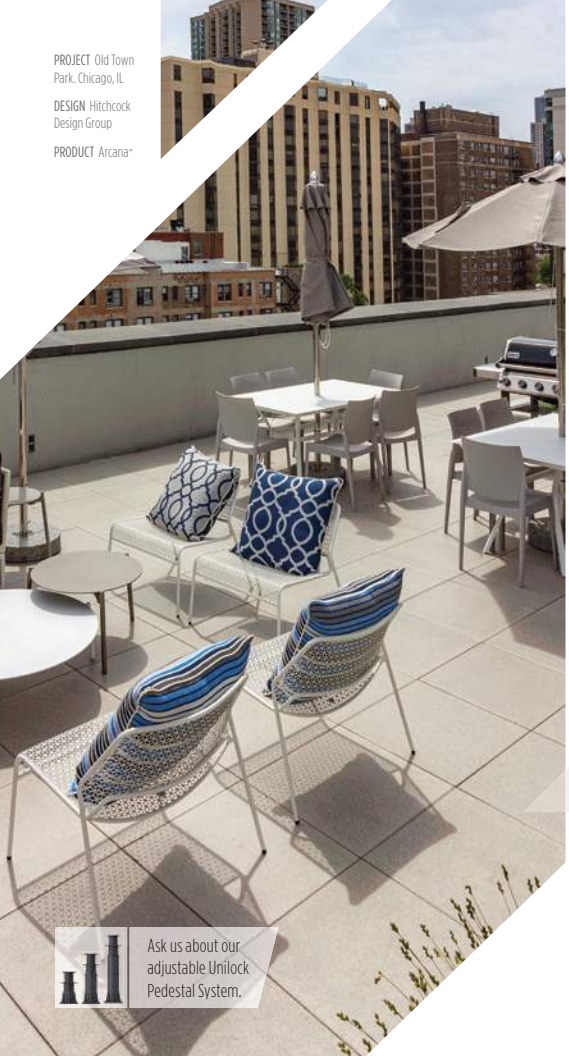

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Image credit: Nassauer, et al.

ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC INEQUALITIES IN GREENSPACE

Joan Nassauer, Professor Emerita, University of Michigan

This project, led by Joan Nassauer of University of Michigan, won a 2021 ASLA Professional Honor Award in the Research category. To access the research paper *Care and safety in neighborhood preferences for vacant lot greenspace in legacy cities*, visit https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2021.104156.

This multi-year transdisciplinary research project in Detroit, MI, USA, addressed the relationship between greenspace and residents' well-being in neighborhoods struggling with widespread vacant property. Leveraging green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) investments by the water utility to create new neighborhood greenspaces, it investigated which design elements were essential to well-being, and which had the greatest effect on well-being of residents.

Detroit, like many legacy cities, has a history of deindustrialization, racist housing policies, and years of disinvestment contributing to depopulation. Poverty and property vacancy disproportionately affect disadvantaged residents in some neighborhoods. These residents' experiences with vacant property undermine their well-being, personal safety and property values. Greening of vacant lots may promote well-being, depending upon how residents experience the qualities of greenspace landscapes. However, maintenance to ensure that vacant lots are well-cared-for is challenged by budgetary limitations of legacy cities. For this reason, understanding how to select GI design elements that can be maintained over time and that will make a difference in residents' well-being is essential to landscape architecture's capacity to address systemic inequities in legacy cities.

RESEARCH GOALS

The overarching goal of this research was to inform design strategies that can address inequities in the quality of neighborhood greenspace, especially where property vacancies and inadequate maintenance have changed neighborhood landscapes in legacy cities. Quality of greenspace may affect the well-being of residents. Well-being is known to be associated with access to greenspace, and inequitable greenspace distribution is understood to be a driver of health disparities. However, health disparities research has not focused on greenspace quality: the small scale design elements that landscape architects routinely select. This is particularly important in neighborhoods characterized by widespread property vacancy, which undermines perceptions of safety and care. Neighborhood greenspace quality affects residents' experiences as they look out the windows of their home, use their yard, or walk down their block. Compared with access to large public greenspaces, these experiences more immediately confront residents with glaring disparities between their neighborhoods and others'. This project built new knowledge to help landscape architects meaningfully contribute to resolving these inequities.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Our research problem was to identify how much small-scale design elements of neighborhood greenspace that presented different maintenance requirements could enhance residents' well-being. Framing the problem in this way, we could focus on well-being of residents while also tuning results to address maintenance challenges of legacy cities. We conceived of this problem on two complementary levels, both essential to the rigor of this actionable research:

1. *Basis in practical understandings and local knowledge*: a transdisciplinary action research process that produced immediate change in a disadvantaged neighborhood. This required intensive iterative collaboration among agencies, NGOs, neighborhood residents and an interdisciplinary research team over seven years. It led us to understand

that neighborhood greenspaces in legacy cities should be maintained by agency staff rather than relying on volunteers. Accepting the limited revenues of legacy cities, we framed our research questions around design alternatives that offered a range of maintenance efficiencies.

2. *Basis in scholarly theory*: testing the effects of different landscape design elements on residents' well-being, and their related preferences and perceptions in a replicable way that was informed by thorough review of the scholarly literature about well-being, preferences, and perceptions of neighborhood greenspace. Related to well-being, we identified a need to understand how small scale landscape elements might affect residents' mental and emotional health, as well as their social and physical behavior that may affect health. Related to perceived care and safety, ample scholarly literature suggests that perceived care and safety of neighborhood greenspace affects well-being of residents of legacy cities, and many studies identify design elements that act as cues to care or safety. However, there is a need to put the pieces together to address inequity in neighborhood greenspaces - experimentally varying design elements to quantify their relationship to preferences, perceptions, and well-being.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Drawing on knowledge at both levels, we identified the following design elements for investigation as cues to care or safety that could affect well-being: bollards, low-growing vividly flowering shrubs and herbs, deciduous trees in rows, mown turf. (We operationalized the research problem with these specific questions:

- What combinations of these elements do residents most prefer for a nearby vacant lot?
- How does perceived safety, care, and attractiveness affect what residents prefer?
- How do residents expect different alternatives to affect their well-being, including mental or emotional health, interactions with neighbors, and likelihood to walk in their neighborhood?
- Considering the need to minimize maintenance requirements, which elements are essential to enhanced well-being? Which most greatly enhance well-being?

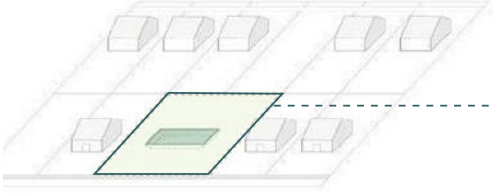
METHODS

Study area and site selection. In an area that the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) had prioritized for GSI implementation, we selected replicate study areas separated by more than 2415 m (1.5 miles) to reduce spillover effects across study areas. Each study area had a mix of occupied homes and vacant properties; overall vacancy was 39%. Each had majority black populations and a majority of households with incomes below $25,000/year (poverty level as per the US Department of Health and Human Services). Within each study area our team identified potential sites for GSI construction on vacant properties owned by the Detroit Land Bank Authority (DLBA), and a control vacant lot for "typical" management. As part of site selection, the possibility of constructing GSI on each site was vetted with nearby neighbors. Then, in 2015 our team designed and constructed two different GSI designs on two pilot sites operated by the DWSD in each study area. These pilot sites were the base sites for design alternatives tested in the 2017 census survey that we report upon here.

Development of questionnaire and design alternatives. To answer our research questions, we developed a questionnaire including visualizations of 10 design alternatives (randomly selected from among 15 developed for each study area), and items related to perceived care, safety, well-being, and residents' preferences for converting nearby vacant lots to neighborhood greenspace. The visualizations represented a factorial combination of the design elements we hypothesized to affect these outcomes. Based on insights of residents on our transdisciplinary team, we designed all alternatives to have open sight lines from the street and to discourage public entry.

Census Survey. We conducted a census interview survey of all occupied households within 250m (820 feet) of the pilot sites in 2017. Survey interviewers were current or past Detroit residents, and their local knowledge helped us determine our final area frame of occupied households (N=399). They attempted to interview each household at least three times over eight months. Response rate was 43.0% (N=171/399). This met requirements of the power analyses we

DESIGN ELEMENTS IDENTIFIED



Residents' experiences and well-being?

- *Preference*
- *Perceived care*
- *Perceived safety*
- *Attractiveness*
- *Expected effects on mental health*
- *Expected effects on walking in the neighborhood*
- *Expected effects on interaction with neighbors*

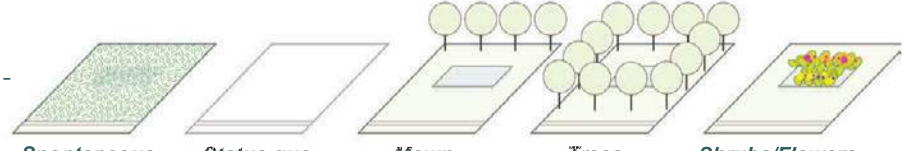
Cues to Safety

VARIED: with or without bollards
HELD CONSTANT: shallow slopes, open sight lines

Bollards ***No bollard***

Cues to Care

VARIED: vivid flowers, trees in rows, mown turf as "cues to care"
HELD CONSTANT: concrete curb around infiltration area



Spontaneous ***Status quo*** ***Mown*** ***Trees*** ***Shrubs/Flowers***

Maintenance level

Increasing →

Annual mowing	Monthly mowing	Regular mowing	Regular mowing around trees and tree care	Regular mowing and weeding

conducted prior to administration of the survey, which indicated that a sample of at least 160 was needed for detecting significant effects.

RESULTS

Considering race, education, income, and home ownership, the 171 households responding to our survey were representative of the 14 US Census Block Groups across both study areas. Survey respondents were more often female and older than in the Census, an expected result given than only a household members over age 18 was eligible to complete the survey.

Data analysis determined that:

- Residents significantly preferred designs combining mown turf with prominent low-growing flowering plants over those with trees. They preferred alternatives with bollards over those with no bollards. Many fewer preferred alternatives dominated by turf or trees.
- Residents' perceptions of the safety, care and attractiveness of design alternatives track their preferences. However, even mown turf with few trees was perceived as much safer, more well-cared-for, and attractive than a typical vacant lot in their neighborhood.
- Comparing any maintained designed alternative with a typical vacant lot or design without regular maintenance, residents expected their mental or emotional health to be better, interactions with neighbors to be more frequent, and to walk more often in the neighborhood.
- Considering the need to minimize maintenance requirements, mown turf is the landscape element most essential for enhancing well-being of residents. However, other landscape elements, especially low-growing vividly flowering shrubs and herbs significantly enhance well-being compared with mown turf alone.

CONCLUSIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE

The project immediately benefited Detroit residents by leveraging DWSD stormwater investments to design and construct greenspace pilot sites on vacant lots in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Further, it identified design elements that residents expected to measurably improve their well-being, and showed how different design elements with different maintenance efficiencies affect how much residents may benefit. Importantly, small-scale elements can make a big difference to well-being, helping to resolve inequities in the quality neighborhood greenspace that may contribute to health disparities.

This action research project tightens the relationship between landscape architecture practice and scholarship by aiming rigorous scholarship at plant and materials choices that are routinely manipulated by landscape architects. Further, it exemplifies how research with practical implications also can advance socio-environmental theory-building - by grappling with immediate human experiences and probing inequities in the design and management of urban landscapes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the Erb Family Foundation for funding our interdisciplinary research and the Director of the University of Michigan Water Center, Jennifer Read, for her important participation in project planning. For their valuable work contributing to NEW-GI documents, we thank Grace Cho, Moira Egler, Yuanqiu Feng, Rebecca Labov, Nathaniel Lichten, and Rachel Leonard. For their important assistance in carrying out the research, we thank Charlotte Burke, Sanaz Chamanara, Qiuling Chen, Kelsea Dombrovski, Jewel Everette, Rob Gibson, Tanya Hannah, Alexis Heinz, Michelle Hudson, Alexandra Kinzer, Lanfei Liu, Tianna Lundy, Dhara Mittal, Yanling Mo, Alison Rentschler, Jamie Stafford, Tangy Washington, Matthew Weber, and Xiaodan Zhou. For assistance in the production of this submission, we thank Jiayang Li and Yuanqiu Feng.

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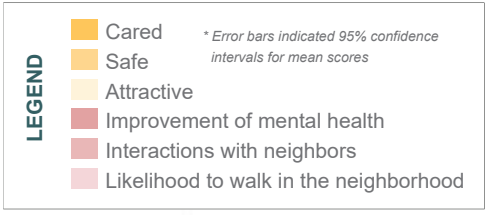
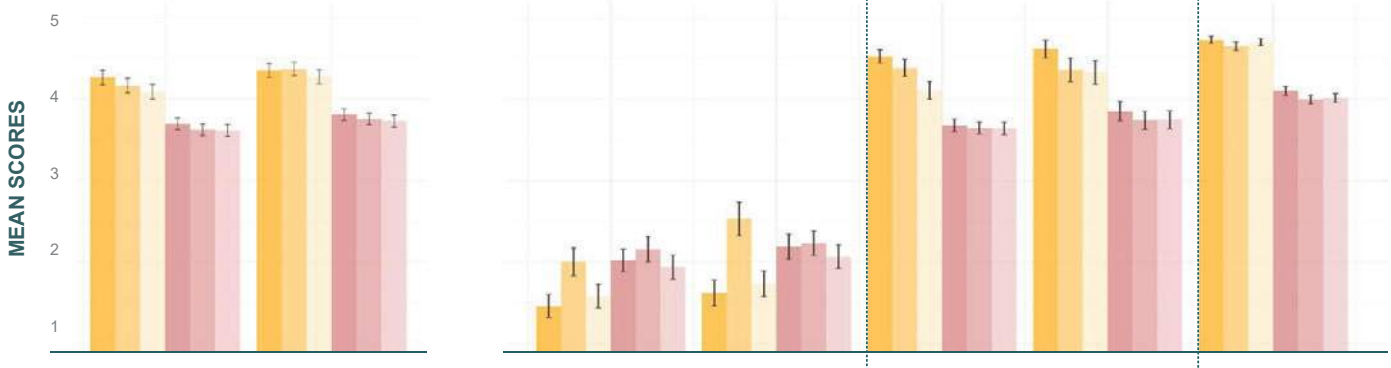
RESIDENTS' PERCEPTION AND EXPECTED IMPACTS ON WELL-BEING



Perceived as most attractive, safe, and enhancing well-being

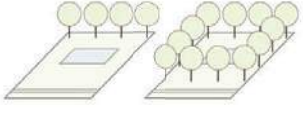
Perceived as significantly more attractive, safer and enhancing well-being than unmaintained vacant lot or spontaneous GI site



64%
Residents preferred presence of bollards

Annual mowing was virtually never preferred

Monthly mowing was virtually never preferred



13%
Residents preferred designs with regularly mown turf most

17%
Residents preferred designs with trees most

69%
Residents preferred designs with flowers and shrubs most

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INAUGURAL "INTRO TO LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE" CAMP A SUCCESS!

Members of our Michigan Chapter ASLA DEI Partnership and Outreach Committee recently developed and sponsored an "Introduction to Landscape Architecture" Summer Camp at Lawrence Tech University.

The inaugural camp was conducted this past June at LTU's campus in Southfield. High school students from seven different schools in Michigan attended the three-day camp. "Campers" learned about the profession of landscape architecture and visited completed projects in Southfield and Detroit in sessions led by local design professionals. They also had an opportunity to practice what they learned working with a small group to develop a master plan for a new teen park.

Many thanks to our volunteer speakers and instructors for helping make the inaugural camp a success!

This is just another way the volunteers on our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee are working to expand and grow the profession of landscape architecture. Want to learn more or get involved? Contact us at dei@michiganasla.org.

STUDENT GUEST SPEAKERS

Yinqxue Guo, University of Michigan
Liz Li, University of Michigan

INSTRUCTORS

Delores Flagg, Southfield Arts Commission
Bob Ford, ASLA, Landscape Architect, Landscape Architects & Planners
Mark Hieber, ASLA, LEED AP, Principal Landscape Architect, HED
Beverly Hannah Jones, AIA, Managing Partner, Hannah-Neumann/Smith
Dr. Hubert Massey, Artist
Joane Slusky, PLA, ASLA, ASID, Landscape Architect
Kyle Verseman, PLA, ASLA, Business Development, Landscape Forms

SmithGroup:
Chad Brintnall, PLA, Principal
Lauren Leighty, PLA, ASLA, LEED AP, Principal, Campus Studio Leader
Tom Mroz, PLA, FASLA, LEED AP, Senior Vice President, SmithGroup

City of Southfield:
Terry Croad, AICP, ASLA, Director of Planning
Souzan Hanna, Sustainability Planner
Sarah Mulally, AICP, Assistant City Planner (t-shirt and graphic design)
Ross Querro, Planner I

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Michigan Chapter ASLA Foundation
2022 Scholarship Awardees

NAOMI BAILEY

Naomi Bailey is a rising fourth-year African-American landscape architecture student. Prior to college, she attended East English Village Preparatory High School and later graduated as the Class Valedictorian. Naomi grew up on the westside of Detroit, Michigan and later moved to the eastside with her mother and three siblings. Since her youth, she has always had a passion for changing the way of the world and helping her community. Upon discovering the profession of landscape architecture, she decided to further her education at Michigan State University in the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture Program.

DYLAN SMITH

"Growing up, I was always artistic and creative, so when I was introduced to landscape architecture through research, I decided to pursue it as a career choice. In my future career, I want to help revitalize areas in my hometown of Detroit, MI. In addition, I would like to create beautiful landscapes all over the world while using sustainability principles to contribute to helping the earth. Studying landscape architecture has provided me the opportunity to understand the importance of the natural environment and man-made spaces, which has physical and mental effects on human health. With learning that information, I know that I am not just a designer or artist, but an ecologist, sociologist, and activist.

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