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VOLUME 20, NUMBER 2



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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is hard to believe how quickly this year has passed. As we reflect on the accomplishments of our chapter, I am incredibly grateful for the dedication, enthusiasm, and volunteer efforts that continue to make our organization thrive.

One of our biggest highlights is this year's Annual Conference in East Lansing. Building on the successes and improvements introduced last year, our Conference Committee and Steering Committee have worked diligently to enhance the experience for all attendees. Their commitment to continuous improvement helps ensure this conference remains an event our members look forward to and are proud to support.

We also celebrate the outstanding achievements recognized through our Awards Program. Congratulations to all of this year's Professional, Student, and Presidential Award winners. Your work exemplifies excellence within our profession. This year, we had the opportunity to exchange awards programs with Iowa and juried their submissions in September. A special thank you goes to the Awards Committee for their hard work coordinating the process behind the scenes.

Another memorable event was our first CEU Park Tour at Ralph C. Wilson Centennial Park. We were thrilled by the strong turnout and the opportunity to explore the project's design process, construction challenges, and final outcomes alongside key stakeholders. The positive response has inspired us to continue offering similar educational and networking opportunities in the future.

Finally, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our new Board Members and express my sincere appreciation to those completing their terms. Your leadership, service, and dedication are the foundation of our chapter's success.

If you are interested in becoming more involved, we encourage you to explore one of our many subcommittees or learn more about the work of the Executive Committee. Please feel free to reach out to me at danahernalsteen@gmail.com. I would be happy to connect with you.

Thank you for being part of our chapter. I look forward to all we will accomplish together in the coming year.

Dana Hernalsteen, PLA, ASLA
President Michigan Chapter of ASLA

ON THE COVER: Special Edition Cover. Image credit: Stephanie Onwenu

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SPECIAL THANKS!

Special thanks to the Michigan Chapter Awards Chair Stacey Tobar and the Awards Committee for coordinating recognition, and to the Iowa Chapter ASLA for jurying the awards of 2026.

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GENERAL DESIGN - LARGE PROJECT - HONOR

RANNEY PARK

LANSING, MICHIGAN | Wade Trim

To enhance stormwater control and mitigate pollution into the Red Cedar River and nearby neighborhoods in Lansing, MI, Ranney Park was transformed into a multi-use community park and green infrastructure site. The park is located behind the Frandor Shopping Center, which was built in 1954 amidst massive development that contributed to environmental challenges. The project is a significant achievement within the Ingham County Drain Commissioner's larger network of environmentally driven, sustainable stormwater improvements as part of Montgomery Drain's 270-acre watershed. Aesthetic, recreational, and stormwater features are showcased throughout, but the biggest success of the project is water quality testing results, revealing pollution levels have decreased 90% since the project's completion.

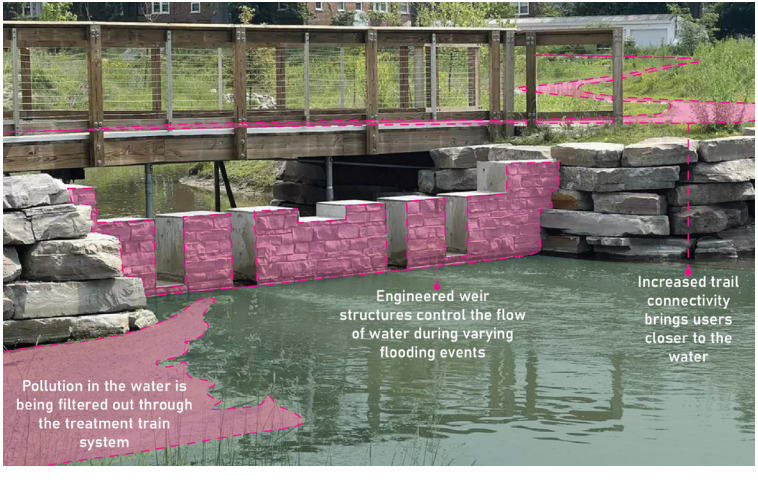
Confined to 11 acres, Ranney Park features a complex series of detention basins, channels, waterfalls, and wetlands, as well as a water quality wall, a multifaceted network of accessible paths, and wildlife habitats. A key concept involved the Treatment Train, a sequence of integrated stormwater practices that mimic natural hydrologic processes. Together, these elements create a nature-based stormwater solution that simultaneously addresses flooding, pollution, and public space needs.

Landscape architects advanced the project's core vision through thoughtful site design and interdisciplinary collaboration. Key design elements include circulation routes and sidewalks, stormwater management and specialty water features, boardwalks, landscape enhancements, and ecological restoration. Now a valued community destination, Ranney Park responds to the challenges of urbanization and growth with a sustainable, restorative solution and serves as both a beautiful recreational space and an essential component of stormwater control and treatment. •




BOARDWALK, TYP.
ISLAND GATHERING SPACE
SLEDDING HILL RUNOUT AREA
CONCRETE STAIRS, TYP.
DECOMPOSED GRANITE GATHERING SPACE
WATER WALL
FLORAL CLOCK
CLOCK PLAZA WITH WATER CHANNEL
SLEDDING HILL
BUNNY HILL
NORTH POND
CENTRAL POND
CENTRAL POND
SOUTH POND
BABBLING BROOK OUTFALL
GRAND STAIRCASE
STEPPING STONE WALKWAY
CONCRETE SIDEWALK, TYP.
SEATING AREA, TYP.
BOARDWALK AND WEIR WALL
BABBLING BROOK
CULVERT, TYP.
30 15 0 30 60
N
30 15 0 30 60
N


OVER 130 SPECIES PLANTED


Engineered weir structures control the flow of water during varying flooding events
Increased trail connectivity brings users closer to the water
Pollution in the water is being filtered out through the treatment train system

GENERAL DESIGN - LARGE PROJECT - MERIT

SEITZ PARK

SOUTH BEND, INDIANA | SmithGroup

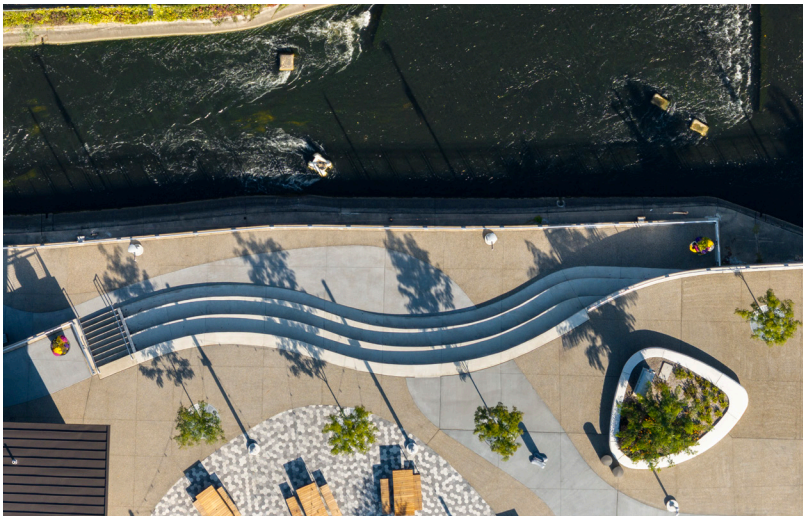
Seitz Park, a two-acre riverfront destination in South Bend's downtown, has been reimagined as a vibrant gathering place balancing complex infrastructure constraints with diverse public use. The redesign addressed an unprecedented challenge: integrating the University of Notre Dame's hydroelectric facility beneath the park with a full restoration of the city's most beloved public space.

The design team developed a flexible, contemporary park that incorporates new programmatic features and recreational elements while disguising critical infrastructure in plain sight. A new bandshell anchors the southern tip of the park as a venue for concerts, while a paired pavilion houses concessions, restrooms, and park programs previously relegated to temporary structures. The park provides linkages to two multi-modal trails, the East Bank Trail and North Riverwalk, that connect to the city's broader non-motorized network. Park spaces are oriented to enhance views and access to the river. Tiered seating and flexible furnishings allow visitors to engage as they choose – be it quiet reflection, social gatherings, or dynamic River Lights displays.

Dozens of large shade trees in raised planters are located strategically above the hydroelectric infrastructure. A native palette of plants offers seasonal interest and helps shape gathering spaces while supporting local pollinators, reducing urban heat island effects, and improving maintenance efficiency.

The design process, rooted in sustained collaboration between diverse partners, was key to the transformation of this beloved community asset. The creative work to retain a vibrant park atop heavy infrastructure showcases landscape architecture's transformative power to shape dynamic environments that sustain and perform. •





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GENERAL DESIGN - MEDIUM PROJECT - HONOR

BRENKE FISH LADDER MUSIC PARK

LANSING, MICHIGAN | VIRIDIS Design Group

The Brenke Fish Ladder Music Park transforms an underdeveloped riverfront site into a vibrant public destination in Lansing's Old Town District. Located on the Grand River, the project reimagines the previous Fish Ladder and Burchard Park as a permanent, unique performance space that encourages public events, fishing, and appreciation of the river.

Landscape architecture brings a unique perspective that integrates ecology, accessibility, and public experience into a cohesive site-specific design. This approach was essential in shaping how the fish ladder functions simultaneously as environmental infrastructure and a welcoming community space. Through thoughtful site interpretation and community engagement, the design team responded to local needs, ensuring the park reflects the community it serves.

The project builds on the fish ladder's iconic architecture to create an amphitheater-like setting unlike any other public space in the region. Improvements include a new stage, ADA-accessible seating, performance audio and power, colorful lighting, art installations, and a gas fireplace overlooking the dam— ensuring all individuals can use the park and experience the river up close.

The design gives new purpose to a dormant portion of the fish ladder while preserving its essential ecological function. By combining environmental sensitivity, inclusive access, and cultural programming, the project enhances Lansing's riverfront and creates a place where people can gather, learn, and experience the river during events and as they enjoy the Old Town District on a daily basis. •



GENERAL DESIGN - MEDIUM PROJECT - MERIT

PLAY MICHIGAN!
ALL INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUND

LANSING, MICHIGAN | VIRIDIS Design Group

Play Michigan! All Inclusive Playground transforms a vacant riverfront area into a regional destination for recreation, play, and connection in downtown Lansing. Designed as the region's first universally accessible playground, the project creates a completely barrier-free environment where children of all abilities, along with parents and grandparents with physical limitations, can play side by side.

The design reflects a strong commitment to inclusion, health, and community. It goes beyond minimum accessibility standards to provide wheelchair-accessible play equipment, specialty swings, ramps, sensory play areas, barrier-free parking, and wide accessible routes throughout the park. A picnic deck, pavilion, boardwalk, and dock extend the experience beyond the playground itself, allowing visitors to gather, rest, and engage with the Grand River.

Landscape architects brought a unique perspective to the project by shaping a space that is both functional and welcoming, while responding to community input, accessibility needs, and the regulated floodway environment. Their role helped ensure the park supports children with physical, sensory, and developmental disabilities, while also creating a setting that normalizes differences and encourages shared play. The design builds on Lansing's broader riverfront vision and reflects a clear public desire for parks that are more accessible and inclusive.

By combining universal design, riverfront placemaking, and community-informed planning, Play Michigan! creates a meaningful public landscape, unique to the region, that serves local families
and sets a model for other communities to follow. •





GENERAL DESIGN - SMALL PROJECT - MERIT

BRADEN STREET POCKET PARK

DETROIT, MICHIGAN | JIMA Studio

The Braden Street Pocket Park is a premier example of “low-cost, high-impact.” When the design team was tapped to translate a conceptual design into an outdoor gathering space, it was clear that the vision was large but the funds and partnerships were limited. Taking this into consideration, the design team worked with local vendors to provide the best quality products and services for a total all-in budget of $60,000, including both hard and soft costs. The outcome is a beautiful gathering space on the corner of Wagner and Braden Streets in the Chadsey Condon neighborhood in southwest Detroit.

As a place of respite, the Braden Street Pocket Park uses native flowering perennials and evergreen shrubs to fill the site’s understory with a lush background. The protected existing tree canopy maintains shade and comfort, and minimizes unnecessary demolition. The crushed stone path and the metal edging minimizes maintenance. A local project partner designed and built customized chess tables and benches to offer comfortable places to sit, gather, and play. Understanding the charge of “low-cost, high-impact” they used recycled gym flooring from the vacant school next door to make the furniture.

With a limited budget and a rapid timeline, the design team transformed two previously vacant overgrown parcels into a destination for the neighborhood, plugging into other long-range efforts to improve connectivity and placemaking throughout the area. The result is a small, comfortable, and scenic pocket park, open for all to enjoy. •





GRAND RIVER COASTAL CORRIDOR CONSERVATION PLAN

DETROIT, MICHIGAN | VIRIDIS Design Group

The Grand River Coastal Corridor Conservation Plan demonstrates how landscape architecture can translate complex ecological challenges into actionable, design-driven strategies that enhance both environmental performance and human experience. At the confluence of the Grand River and Lake Michigan, this regionally significant landscape—composed of dunes, wetlands, forests, and waterways—demands adaptive responses to fluctuating water levels and increasing development pressure.

Grounded in stakeholder input and spatial analysis, the plan establishes a clear design framework organized around four integrated strategies: protect, manage, restore, and engage. This structure transforms broad conservation goals into implementable actions across scales, from regional planning to site-specific interventions. Design-forward recommendations include living shorelines, wetland restoration, native planting systems, and green infrastructure that improve water quality, stabilize coastal edges, and enhance biodiversity.

Equally important, the plan expands design value beyond ecological function to include access, education, and stewardship. It promotes the creation of parks, trails, and restored public landscapes while empowering private landowners and local governments to participate through conservation easements, low-impact development, and habitat protection practices.

By prioritizing high-value ecological zones and providing flexible tools for implementation, the plan ensures feasibility while maintaining a strong design vision. It positions landscape architecture as a unifying framework—bridging science, policy, and community—to deliver resilient, accessible, and ecologically rich environments along Michigan's West Coast. •



FIGURE 1.6: SAND MIGRATION CYCLE
LOW WATER





2014 LOW WATER
Photo Credit / Ottawa County

WILDLIFE AND PROTECTION

The GRCC contains a wide array of river, dune, wetland, and upland habitats that are home to numerous fish, reptiles, birds, mammals, and amphibians. The interconnectedness, size, and diversity of the dunes, wetlands, and uplands makes the corridor a hotbed of wildlife biodiversity within the Great Lakes.

The unique nature of the GRCC provides home to certain plants and animals that are afforded special state or federal protections. Typically classified as threatened or endangered, populations of these species are considered regionally or nationally rare. The biorarity index map identifies areas where rare species are likely to occur, guiding the report's proposed priority conservation



Photo Credit / Becky Matsubara

BALD EAGLE
Haliaeetus leucocephalus

The bald eagle (Special Concern) experienced historical declines in population levels primarily due to wetland degradation and loss, toxic pollutants, and poaching.



Photo Credit / Jeff Whitlock

SPOTTED GAR
Lepisosteus oculatus

Because of siltation, dredging, filling, and loss of aquatic plants, habitat for the spotted gar (Special Concern) has been greatly reduced.



Photo Credit / Kurt Sopnicki

PURPLE WARTYBACK
Cyclonaias tuberculata

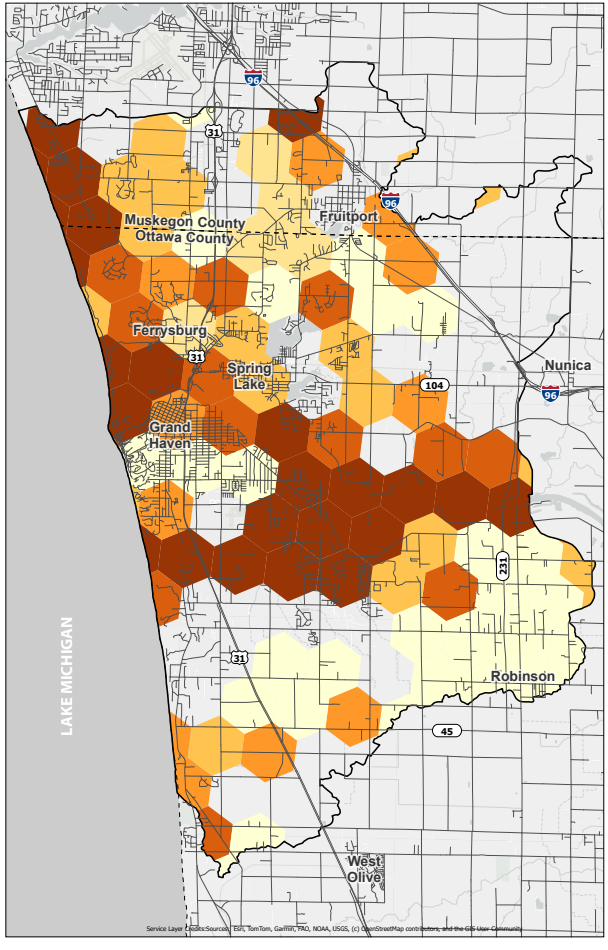
The purple wartyback (State Threatened) is threatened by heavy metals, fertilizers, pesticides, dredging, increased sedimentation, and the invasive zebra mussel (Dreissena polymorpha).



Photo Credit / Andrew Sabas

AMERICAN LOTUS
Nelumbo lutea

American lotus (Special Concern) is negatively impacted by agricultural runoff and invasive species, particularly non-native phragmites (Phragmites australis subsp. australis).



BIORARITY INDEX MAP

LIKELIHOOD OF OCCURRENCE OF RARE SPECIES TO OCCUR BASED ON MAKEUP OF ENVIRONMENT/ HABITAT QUALITY

LEGEND

HIGH LIKELIHOOD

LOW LIKELIHOOD

STUDY AREA BOUNDARY

NORTH

0 1 2

SCALE IN MILES

PLANNING & ANALYSIS - HONOR

FARWELL REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN

DETROIT, MICHIGAN | JIMA Studio

The Farwell Park 10-Year Master Plan reimagines a 90-acre regional park within the Detroit Regional Park System through a planning process informed by neighborhood voices and regional analysis. Led by a multidisciplinary team of planners, landscape architects, and engagement specialists, the plan balances recreation, environmental stewardship, accessibility, and wellness.

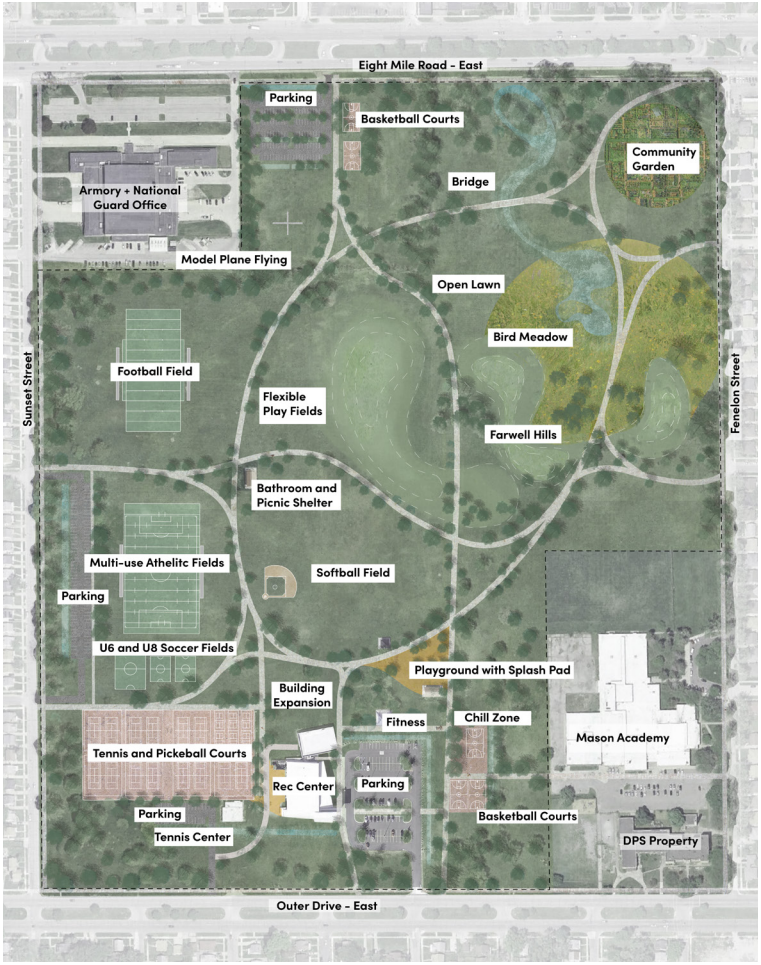
Recognizing that residents and stakeholders hold invaluable knowledge about the park's history, challenges, and opportunities, the team built an inclusive strategy reaching a broad, diverse audience across ages, backgrounds, and levels of park use, fostering real ownership over its future. Engagement included public workshops, targeted focus groups, one-on-one conversations, and an online survey, giving participants opportunities to share lived experience, identify priorities, and evaluate emerging design concepts, so the plan reflects the community's own aspirations.

The Master Plan translates these priorities into a phased framework for investment, enhancing recreational opportunities, improving accessibility and connectivity, strengthening ecological systems, and creating spaces for gathering, play, wellness, and cultural expression. By aligning physical improvements with community-defined goals, maintenance requirements and year-round programming, the plan offers a roadmap for equitable park development that adapts over time while preserving its distinctness.

The Farwell Master Plan demonstrates how collaborative planning builds trust, strengthens community ownership, and creates a resilient vision for public open space -a replicable model for inclusive park planning in Detroit and beyond, where authentic engagement guides design decisions and produces outcomes that are both responsive to local needs and transformative in long-term impact. •






Eight Mile Road - East
Parking
Basketball Courts
Community Garden
Bridge
Armory + National Guard Office
Model Plane Flying
Open Lawn
Bird Meadow
Football Field
Sunset Street
Flexible Play Fields
Fenelon Street
Farwell Hills
Bathroom and Picnic Shelter
Multi-use Athelitc Fields
Softball Field
Parking
U6 and U8 Soccer Fields
Playground with Splash Pad
Building Expansion
Fitness
Chill Zone
Mason Academy
Tennis and Pickeball Courts
Rec Center
Parking
Parking
Basketball Courts
Tennis Center
DPS Property
Outer Drive - East





DEARBORN MIDTOWN DISTRICT

DETROIT, MICHIGAN | MKSK

Midtown Dearborn reimagines one of southeast Michigan's most recognizable regional shopping malls as a vibrant mixed-use district and the future civic heart of Dearborn. Centered on the 330-acre Fairlane Town Center property, the plan demonstrates how landscape architecture and urban design can transform an aging suburban superblock into a connected, resilient, and walkable neighborhood that strengthens community identity while positioning the city for long-term economic, environmental, and social success.

Rather than treating redevelopment as a collection of individual projects, the district plan establishes a comprehensive framework that reconnects the district to surrounding neighborhoods, the Rouge River, regional institutions, and major employment centers through an integrated network of streets, parks, trails, public spaces, adaptive reuse, and mixed-use development. Extensive site analysis, market research, mobility studies, stakeholder engagement, and precedent research informed a flexible vision capable of adapting to changing market conditions while preserving a clear long-term direction.

The plan embraces adaptive reuse, ecological restoration, multimodal mobility, housing diversity, and phased implementation to transform a predominantly auto-oriented landscape into a complete neighborhood where residents, workers, students, and visitors can live, work, and connect.

As communities across North America confront the decline of enclosed malls and expansive suburban commercial centers, Midtown Dearborn provides a replicable model for reinvesting in existing places rather than expanding outward. The project demonstrates the unique ability of landscape architecture to organize complex systems into a cohesive vision that balances environmental stewardship, economic revitalization, and exceptional public realm design. •



GREAT LAKES REGION CLIMATE ACTION SEMINAR: REFRAMING THE GREAT LAKES AS CLIMATE COUNTERPOINT

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN | Lisa DuRussel

The Great Lakes Region Climate Action Seminar (GLRCAS) is a cross-border communications and educational initiative that has established a regional platform for climate knowledge exchange across the Great Lakes basin.

Since 2021, GLRCAS has brought together landscape architects, researchers, educators, agencies, students, and community leaders from across the United States and Canada to advance climate adaptation through recurring dialogue, interdisciplinary exchange, and visual storytelling. Organized collaboratively by eight ASLA chapters and the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects (OALA), the seminar provides a shared forum for exploring the climate challenges and opportunities unique to the Great Lakes region.

Rather than functioning as a series of independent events, GLRCAS has evolved into an expanding body of knowledge. Across four seminars, the initiative has documented emerging practices in shoreline resilience, biodiversity, natural infrastructure, environmental justice, carbon sequestration, climate migration, and community stewardship, connecting projects, people, and ideas that extend well beyond the annual event.

A coordinated communications strategy, including a cohesive visual identity, social media campaigns, speaker spotlights, and public storytelling further expands the seminar's reach, translating complex climate topics into accessible narratives for professional and public audiences. More than a seminar series, GLRCAS has become a durable regional platform for climate learning, collaboration, and professional leadership, demonstrating how communication itself can catalyze climate action across a shared freshwater landscape. •



Submission 3.A: Great Lakes Region Climate Action Seminar

2026 MiASLA Awards Program

PRESIDENT'S AWARDS

The Michigan Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects has established an annual tradition of presenting professional honors. These awards recognize Chapter members who have shown dedication and made significant contributions to the profession or to the Chapter in the past year.

CHAPTER HONOR AWARD

This award recognizes people other than landscape architects whose achievements or influence have provided notable service to the profession of landscape architecture.

CHAPTER DISTINGUISHED MEMBER AWARD

This award recognizes a significant current or past chapter member that makes contributions to the Society and to our profession through volunteerism and education. This individual gives time and resources year after year and encourages others to volunteer within the Society and the community to spread the profession of landscape architecture.

CHAPTER EMERGING PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

This award will honor a landscape architect in the first ten years of their career for significant contributions or significant works of design.

LICENSING COMMITTEE, LED BY BOB DOYLE

CHAPTER HONOR AWARD

In September of 2025, the Michigan House of Representatives introduced a bill that would deregulate the profession, initiating the Licensing Committee who successfully advocated for the bill to be paused. The committee, consisting of ASLA members supported by CLARB, ASLA National, and KDA, acted promptly to communicate the importance of the profession in shaping public places and protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Landscape architecture is key in promoting accessibility and safety of public places, but also creating place as a tool of economic development.



Bob Doyle, Ben Baker, Vanessa Warren, Bob Ford, SuLin Kotowicz, Dana Hernalsteen, Stephanie Onwenu, Jason Wadara, Jessica Soullierre, Keenan Gibbons, Paul Kissinger, Pam Blough, Scott Black, Bill Sanders, Matt Solak, Lauren Gass, Zach Druga, Bradley Rawls *(pictured left to right, top to bottom)*

CHERYL ZUELLIG
CHAPTER DISTINGUISHED MEMBER AWARD



Cheryl's 40+ year career reflects the profound impact landscape architecture has on people, communities, and the environment. A nationally respected leader in the profession, she has dedicated her work to restoring natural systems, expanding equitable access to public spaces, and designing places that supported physical, mental, and social well-being. Public service was central to Cheryl's design philosophy, where she often described landscape architects as "a pen for the people," giving form and voice to community priorities. Beyond her professional achievements, Cheryl remained deeply connected to her alma mater and mentoring the next generation of designers.

STACEY TOBAR
CHAPTER DISTINGUISHED MEMBER AWARD



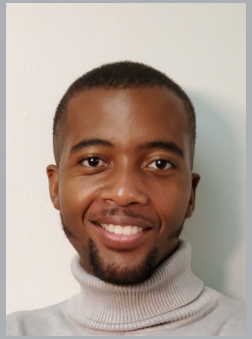
Stacey's involvement with ASLA began as an MSU student, and most recently has included being the Chair of the Awards Committe for the last 8 years. Notable accomplishments include seeing projects evolve from a master plan into construction documents to built works, and ultimately being recognized through Michigan ASLA awards, such as Brighton's Main Street Streetscape. Most impactful to her professionally was working on the various phases and systems of the Michigan Central Station and collaborating with numerous firms to develop the vision.

ANGELA DEAN
CHAPTER EMERGING PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR



Angela believes the strongest designers are those who actively seek insight and perspectives from their colleagues, and she applies this by serving as a mentor for landscape architecture students during their summer internships at GMB A+E. Angela has been involved in MiASLA throughout her career, including being the current VP of Marketing and previously serving on the Annual Conference Committee. A significant milestone is the new playground design at the Hudsonville Early Childhood Center, where Angela took the lead and remained involved through the construction.

JOSEPH POWELL
CHAPTER EMERGING PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR



Joseph is a landscape designer at Williams & Works and has been involved with ASLA for almost 4 years beginning in the University of Michigan student chapter and now joining the MiASLA Executive Committee. He has significantly contributed to chapter efforts by producing marketing materials and informational booklets for events, such as the Annual Conference and LA Ride. As a designer, he has had the chance to work on a number of projects including illustrative plans and perspective renderings including the City of Belding's Master Plan.

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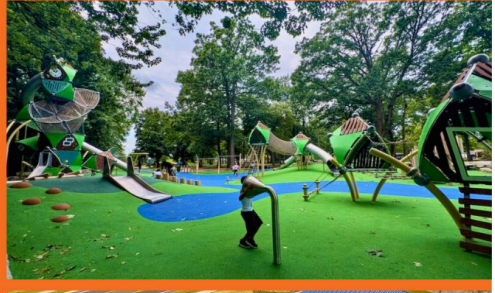








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STUDENT AWARDS - GENERAL DESIGN - HONOR AWARD
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HARPER PRESERVE: AGRIVOLTAIC RESEARCH PARK + COMMUNITY CENTER

Dani Cruciani, Zhiyu Guo, Kate Perazzo, Kayla Vaccaro, + Yunjia Zou, University of Michigan

As renewable energy infrastructure expands, decarbonization has become a significant landscape challenge. Solar development is land intensive and can compete with farmland, ecosystems, and rural identity. This project reimagines Harper Preserve as a 4 MW agrivoltaic solar system and living laboratory, demonstrating how renewable energy can support farming, ecological health, research, and community resilience. Owned by the University of Michigan's School for Environment and Sustainability, the 375-acre preserve in Argentine Township includes agricultural fields, wetlands, forests, and Murray Lake. Its varied landscape reflects rural Lower Michigan, where utility-scale solar can generate concern among farming communities that see few direct benefits and view development as an intrusion on the landscape.

Genesee County is also navigating a generational transition. Although nearly 80% of its land remains agricultural, an aging population and declining interest in farming create uncertainty about future land use. The proposal explores how agrivoltaics can maintain productive cropland while providing farmers with supplemental income. A multiuse resiliency hub would extend these benefits to the surrounding community. Located across from a mobile home neighborhood, the center would support gatherings, education, and research while providing emergency shelter and cooling during severe weather.

The project combines spatial design, an implementation strategy, solar performance analysis, and community-centered planning. Harper Preserve offers a scalable model for aligning renewable energy production with environmental stewardship, rural economies, and resilience—showing how working landscapes can accommodate energy transitions without displacing the communities and ecologies that define them. •



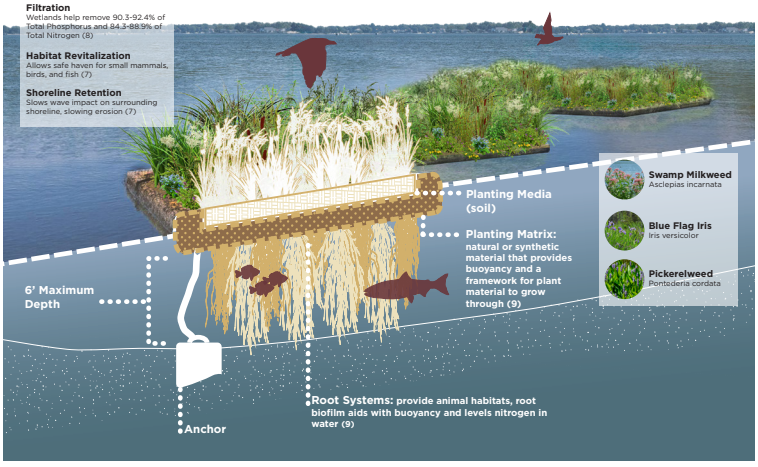
SHAPING RESILIENT SHORES

Nina Dunigan, Christopher Nosek, + Ava Yon,
Michigan State University

Holland State Park is one of Michigan's most visited recreational destinations, receiving over two million visitors annually. While this level of use generates significant economic value, it places substantial pressure on fragile coastal systems. This project addresses three interconnected challenges: coastal dune degradation, declining water quality in Lake Macatawa, and the ecological impacts of intensive recreation.

The design establishes an integrated framework that links ecological restoration with public access. Floating wetlands along the Lake Macatawa shoreline filter pollutants and improve water quality while also supporting environmental education and public engagement. Strategic berming reinforces dune resilience by guiding natural sand movement and reducing erosion, strengthening one of the region's most critical protective landscapes. A system of elevated boardwalks directs visitor circulation through sensitive dune areas, minimizing vegetation loss while maintaining access and enhancing the visitor experience.

Together, these interventions shift the park from reactive maintenance toward proactive landscape management. By leveraging natural systems alongside targeted infrastructure, the design improves ecological function while accommodating sustained recreational demand. The result is reduced maintenance burden, improved environmental performance, and a more structured relationship between visitors and sensitive coastal processes. The project presents a scalable approach for balancing ecological protection and public use in high-demand shoreline environments, demonstrating how design can mediate between natural systems and recreation without compromising either. •





STUDENT AWARDS - GENERAL DESIGN - MERIT

FROM VULNERABILITY TO VITALITY:
WEAVING SOCIAL IDENTITY THROUGH WATERWORKS PARK

Kaitlin Schiller + Odera Igwe, University of Michigan

Across the country, vulnerable communities face increased social vulnerability when their public spaces and resources do not fully support resilience, connection, and wellbeing. Despite sitting in a rich and vibrant network of parks, green spaces, and public amenities, Waterworks Park, as it stands today, lacks the clear identity and community-centered design necessary to fully serve residents. From Vulnerability to Vitality: Weaving Social Identity through Waterworks Park highlights how celebrating and uplifting communities and their cultural identities can help mitigate the impacts of social vulnerability using Waterworks Park in Ypsilanti, Michigan, as an example.

The redesign of Waterworks Park reimagines the site as a resilient social hub that reflects on, celebrates, and strengthens Ypsilanti's identity. Taking inspiration from hair braiding and weaving, the design takes four distinct themes - Unite, Cultivate, Engage, and Restore - and winds them throughout the site to create spaces for recreation, gathering, reflection, and community growth. Park elements serve to highlight Ypsilanti's history in a way that is engaging and meaningful, while providing opportunities and activities for all ages and abilities. Moving beyond mere park improvement, the redesign of Waterworks Park uses design as a tool for community resilience and honors Ypsilanti's past while simultaneously creating an inclusive, meaningful, and adaptable public space for its future. •





STUDENT AWARDS - GENERAL DESIGN - MERIT

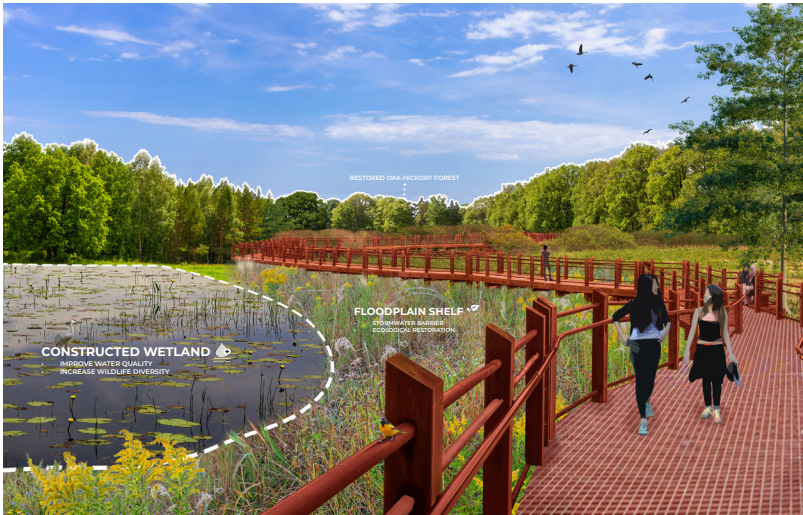
RIVER CONNECTIONS IN REPAIR:
TRANSFORMING WATERWORKS PARK INTO A LIVING FILTER

Elise Baker + Rachel Frederickson, University of Michigan

River Connections in Repair: Transforming Waterworks Park into a Living Filter addresses large-scale water quality issues through a design framework that re-establishes ecological functions, stabilizes physical systems, and enhances both water quality and soil health. Understanding the cumulative impacts of hydrology, land cover, and water chemistry, this design proposes key strategies that reshape how water moves through and interacts with the landscape. The proposed strategies turns Waterworks Park into a high performing ecological system that serves as a living filter to improve water quality for both people and the environment.

The strength of the design lies in its ability to serve as a broader example for how to restore degraded urban riverfronts. By integrating ecological restoration, flood resilience, and public engagement into a single landscape, the new park demonstrates how landscape architecture can reconnect people with natural systems while improving watershed health. Waterworks Park becomes more than a destination, as it is transformed into a model for resilient riverfront design across the broader Great Lakes region. The park not only repairs ecological connections within the Huron River corridor, but also the relationships between people and the river, by creating opportunities to experience, understand, and steward a renewed landscape. •





RE-ALIGNING WITH WATER:
A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR CLIMATE ADAPTATION

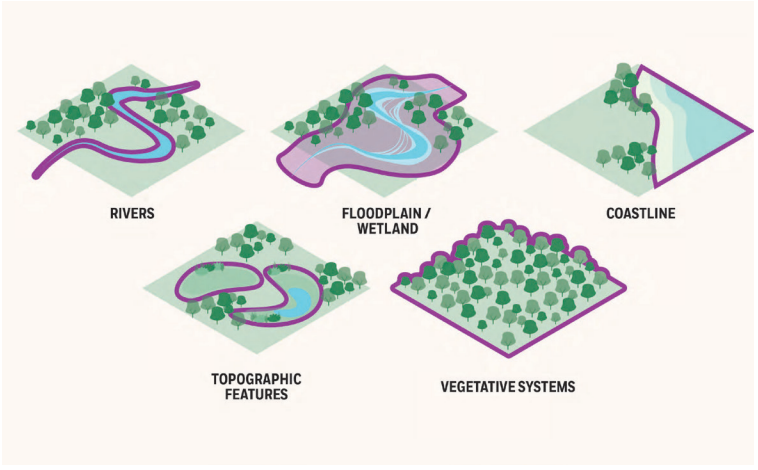
Jamie Conner, University of Michigan

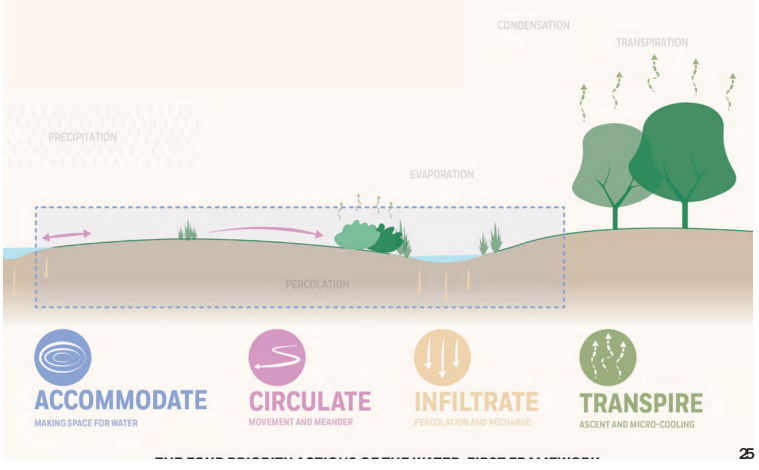
This line of inquiry began with water—as all things do—traced from a falling raindrop to the point where human 'progress' diverges from natural form and flow. Across the contiguous United States, our built environments have manipulated landscapes into places out of balance, treating water as a threat to defend against rather than a system to emulate. This project establishes a scalable, "Water-First Framework" that untangles the shifting needs of cities facing an impending climate-changed future.

By analyzing watershed boundaries and patterns, historical gray engineering failures, and escalating crises like land subsidence and urban heat islands, this planning tool identifies where human demands have broken the hydrologic cycle. It targets the restoration of lost functional elements—rivers, floodplains and wetlands, coastlines, topography, and vegetation—shifting the paradigm from defensive engineering to intrinsic, nature-based integration.

The framework synthesizes complex ecological processes into four actionable design pillars: accommodate, circulate, infiltrate, and transpire. Supported by a transferable component matrix, it guides designers from national and regional analysis down to site specific, place-based applications. Demonstrated through a proof-of-concept in Detroit, the project demonstrates how vacant urban infrastructure can be re-activated into resilient rain garden networks and softened coastlines.

This project is uniquely award-worthy because it elevates regional analysis into a provocative, visionary planning tool. It moves beyond standard stormwater management to offer a profound, scalable methodology. By beginning with the simple path of a single drop of water, it empowers future landscape architects to restore ecological equilibrium and design with nature once again. •





STUDENT HONOR AWARDS

The ASLA Student Honor and Merit Award program, administered through the ASLA chapters, is designed to recognize academic achievement, design competence, and interpersonal skills. Nominees must be in their final two years of study, truly outstanding by their program's long-term standards of excellence, and have demonstrated the highest level of academic scholarship, personal qualities, and skills. The number of faculty-nominated students is based on the number of students in the program, and awards are selected through a juried presentation and interview process outside of the academic program.

The Michigan Chapter ASLA congratulates all awardees for their outstanding achievements and encourages long-standing relationships and partnerships with these emerging professionals.

ADAM HERSHNER

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY, BLA '26, MED '27



With one year left at Michigan State University until graduation, Adam is passionate about sustainable, eco-focused site design, with his master's thesis focused on the use of phytoremediation for brownfields within small and underserved communities. He has gained professional experience from summer internships at OCBA and Troyer Group. He believes in using the landscape as a way to both heal the past and prepare for the future, setting a green foundation for tomorrow.

NINA DUNIGAN

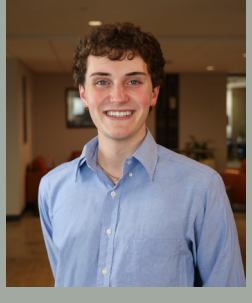
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY, BLA '26



During her time at Michigan State, Nina found a passion for creating spaces that connect people to their environment. She believes that a thoughtful design can evoke meaningful memories for users, while also allowing the natural landscape to thrive. The study abroad trip to Japan was a highlight for Nina, as she got to experience spaces that were designed with such cultural abundance and natural beauty. After graduation, she hopes to use her knowledge to uplift and revitalize communities around her as a landscape architect.

CHRIS NOSEK

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY, BLA '26, MED '27



Christopher Nosek is pursuing both his BLA and MED at MSU. Throughout his time in school, he has found a passion for green revitalization in urban areas, through community-led design. Chris has devoted his master's to finding ways urban communities can be ecologically revitalized through the use of freeway caps. His study focuses on how below-grade freeways in Detroit could be reclaimed as public parks that sequester water and reduce flooding. Chris is also an active member of the MSU Landscape Architecture club, serving as their social media chair.

XIAO CHEN

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, MLA ‘26, MS ‘26



Xiao is graduating from the University of Michigan in 2026 with an MLA and an M.S. in Geospatial Data Science and Environmental Policy and Planning. With a background in landscape architecture in China, she is interested in the intersection of design, ecology, and human perception. She is passionate about using research, spatial analysis, and human-centered approaches to support more responsive and equitable landscape planning and design. She hopes to pursue a PhD to continue her research.

PAIGE HUGHART

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, MLA ‘26



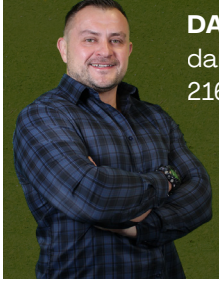
Paige grew up gardening with their grandmother who taught them that plants create space, change how we feel, and are a meaningful way to be in community. They took these lessons and participated in many urban farming projects. They are now the designer and project manager for Michiganense Natives, a nursery and design/build/restore firm. Here they work with an amazing team to strengthen the connection between people and native plants through residential and small-scale public projects, helping to build a more biodiverse future.

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derek@parkvisionplay.com
313-723-8932



STUDENT MERIT AWARDS

TIMOTHY BOHAN

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY, BLA ‘26



Tim is a fifth-year student at Michigan State University, graduating in December. He is passionate about urban parks, walkable communities, and the ways public spaces can bring people together. Through travel, Tim enjoys experiencing different cultures and observing how people interact with the world around them. He hopes to design parks and outdoor spaces that bring communities together, create meaningful connections, and improve people’s everyday lives.

SYDNEY ZACHOS

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY, BLA ‘26, MED ‘27



Sydney is passionate about designing spaces that prioritize community, public health, and ecology. She has a special interest in how landscape architecture can contribute to our psychological health through immersive, engaging, and research-driven design. She is proud of her work in school and internships and plans to pursue a career in placemaking in urban areas. Sydney’s favorite experience at MSU is studying abroad and having the opportunity to experience new landscapes that shape her as a designer.

RYAN PATTERSON

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY, BLA ‘26



Ryan is excited to graduate in December and continue his academic journey by starting grad school pursuing his master’s degree in Christian Studies. He is grateful for his time at MSU and for the people who were pouring into him throughout his academic journey. Ryan says what will stay with him the most is the people and the friendships.

DEVIN DERR

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, MLA ‘26



Devin is an emerging design professional interested in strengthening relationships between the built and natural environments. To achieve this goal, Devin has earned a Master of Architecture at Lawrence Technological University and a Master of Landscape Architecture from University of Michigan. The strong design education from LTU paired with the holistic ecological education obtained from U of M has positioned Devin well to design for human and non-human resilience.
Devin is a 2026 Olmsted Scholar.

NOT PICTURED: JESSICA SOULIERRE

MICHIGAN CHAPTER ASLA FOUNDATION

The MIASLA DEI scholarship was created to support students from historically under-represented demographics to aid in the development of a more diverse and inclusive generation of future leaders in the profession of landscape architecture. Student applications are open December to March. Awardees are selected on the basis of involvement in ASLA, resume, and their essay.

ODERA IGWE



Odera Igwe holds a BS in Environmental Science from Chatham University and is currently pursuing a MLA at U Mich. Odera recognizes that landscape design is a tool for both resistance and recovery. It can be a pathway for people of color to reclaim agency in their built environment and celebrate ancestral connections to land while forging new possibilities for resilience. Odera hopes to use landscape architecture to design biodiverse landscapes where communities of color can heal, learn, and belong.

JESS LE



Jess Le is a student at Michigan State University pursuing her BLA and MED. Her Vietnamese heritage has influenced her interest in equitable, community-centered design and the creation of inclusive, public spaces. Through her studies, Jess explores how landscape architecture can strengthen connections between people, culture, and the environment while improving quality of life for diverse communities. She hopes to continue helping to build a more biodiverse future.

2026 LAF OLMSTED SCHOLARS

AVA YON



Ava is a dual-degree student pursuing a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture and a Master of Arts in Environmental Design. She serves on the MiASLA DEI Committee and MSU ASLA Student Chapter board. Ava has supported diverse communities through technical assistance and professional experience focused on climate resilience, community health, and engagement. In her final year of school, Ava aims to combine her passion for design, collaboration, and inclusive thinking to explore mine reclamation opportunities and performance.





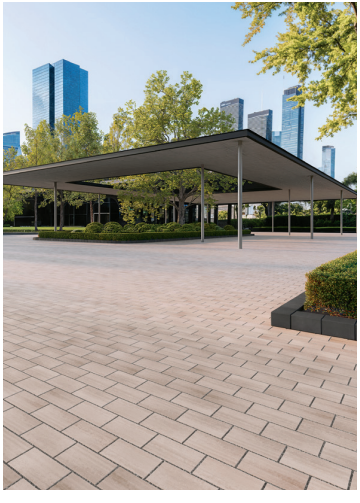




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