



American Society of
Landscape Architects



ASLA
Fund



Collaborating with Industry Partners on Climate Action and Biodiversity

A Guide to Conversations Among
Landscape Architects, Vendors, and
Product Manufacturers

About ASLA

Founded in 1899, the [American Society of Landscape Architects \(ASLA\)](#) is the professional association for landscape architects in the United States, representing more than 15,000 members. The Society's mission is to advance landscape architecture through advocacy, communication, education, and fellowship.

Cover Image:

ASLA 2023 Professional Urban Design Honor Award.
Town Branch Commons: An Urban Transformation in Lexington, Kentucky. SCAPE.
(Image credit: SCAPE & Ty Cole)

ASLA Climate Action Committee

The [ASLA Climate Action Committee](#) leads the implementation of the [ASLA Climate Action Plan](#). The committee provides input to ASLA leadership on strategies for communicating the role of landscape architecture in mitigating climate change and increasing and protecting biodiversity. The committee develops and promotes programs, products, and services that provide research data and learning opportunities to practitioners. The committee advances the adoption of climate positive design and nature-based solutions in the practice and teaching of landscape architecture.

ASLA Corporate Members Committee

The Corporate Members Committee offers its input, ideas, and advice to ASLA leaders and staff and acts as a conduit with other ASLA Corporate Members in developing solutions. The Corporate Members Committee is composed of Corporate Members from diverse market segments of the landscape architecture industry.

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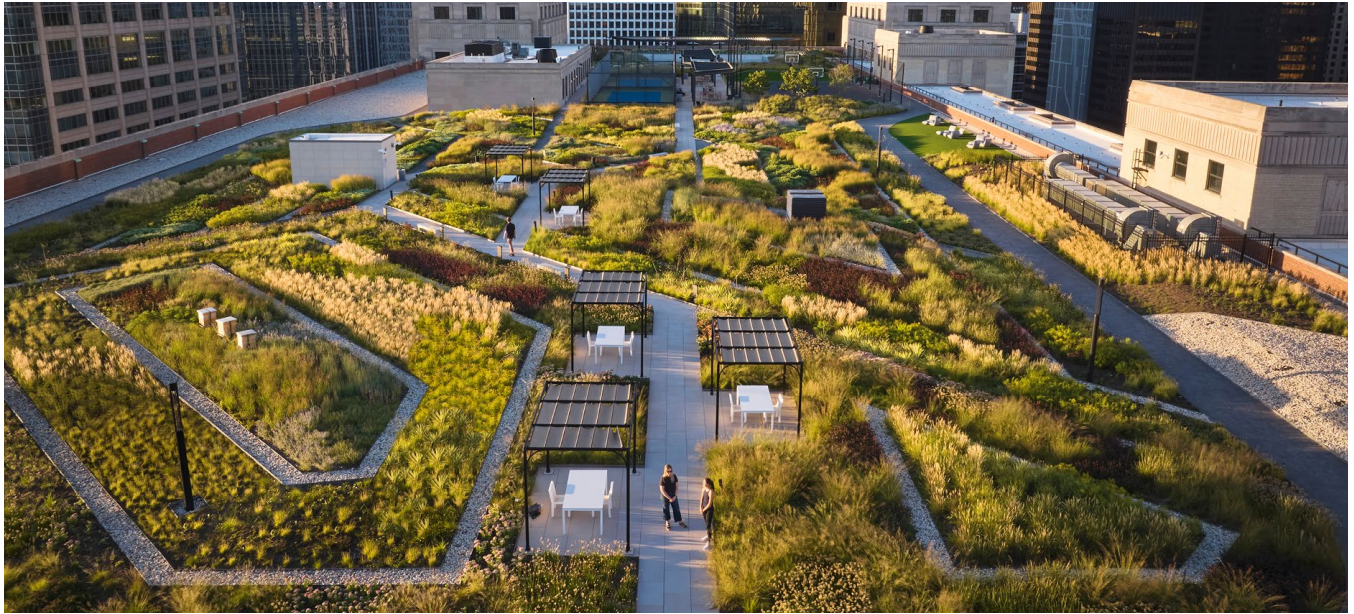
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“The products used in projects are absolutely central to landscape architects achieving ASLA Climate Action Plan goals.”

- ASLA CEO Torey Carter-Conneen

“We can only achieve our goals by working together, being more transparent about materials, and increasing our collective performance.”

- ASLA National Climate Action Committee Chair April Phillips, FASLA

The [ASLA Climate Action Plan](#) and the [Climate Action Field Guide for ASLA Members](#) chart a pathway for landscape architects to achieve zero greenhouse gas emissions in their projects and operations and increase carbon sequestration by 2040.

In 2022, the Climate Action Plan was developed by a [high-profile Task Force](#) of five landscape architects chaired by Pamela Conrad, ASLA, founder of Climate Positive Design, and a 17-member Advisory Group. It outlines a bold vision for 2040 and 71 actions to be taken by 2025.

Our Vision for 2040:

All landscape architecture projects will simultaneously:

- Achieve zero embodied and operational emissions and increase carbon sequestration
- Provide significant economic benefits in the form of measurable ecosystem services, health co-benefits, sequestration, and green jobs
- Address climate injustices, empower communities, and increase equitable distribution of climate investments
- Restore ecosystems and increase and protect biodiversity

ASLA 2023 Professional General Design Honor Award.
The Meadow at the Old Chicago Post Office. Hoerr Schaudt.
(Image credit: Dave Burk)

ASLA also has clear goals for global biodiversity. [ASLA has committed to advancing the global movement](#) to protect and restore at least 30 percent of terrestrial, coastal, and marine ecosystems by 2030 (30 x 2030).

And to acknowledge the biodiversity crisis, the [ASLA Climate Action Committee](#) will be renamed the ASLA Climate and Biodiversity Action Committee in 2024.

Deeper collaboration between landscape architects and industry partners is key to achieving these goals.

To support that collaboration, the ASLA Corporate Member Committee and Climate Action Committee have produced this guide for landscape architects. It is meant to inform conversations with industry partners and offers a range of questions to ask.

This guide can help landscape architects talk to industry partners about ways to advance collective climate and biodiversity goals.

The guide is organized according to the three goals of the ASLA Climate Action Plan:

Practice

Scale Up Climate Positive Approaches

Equity

Empower Communities to Achieve Climate Justice

Advocacy

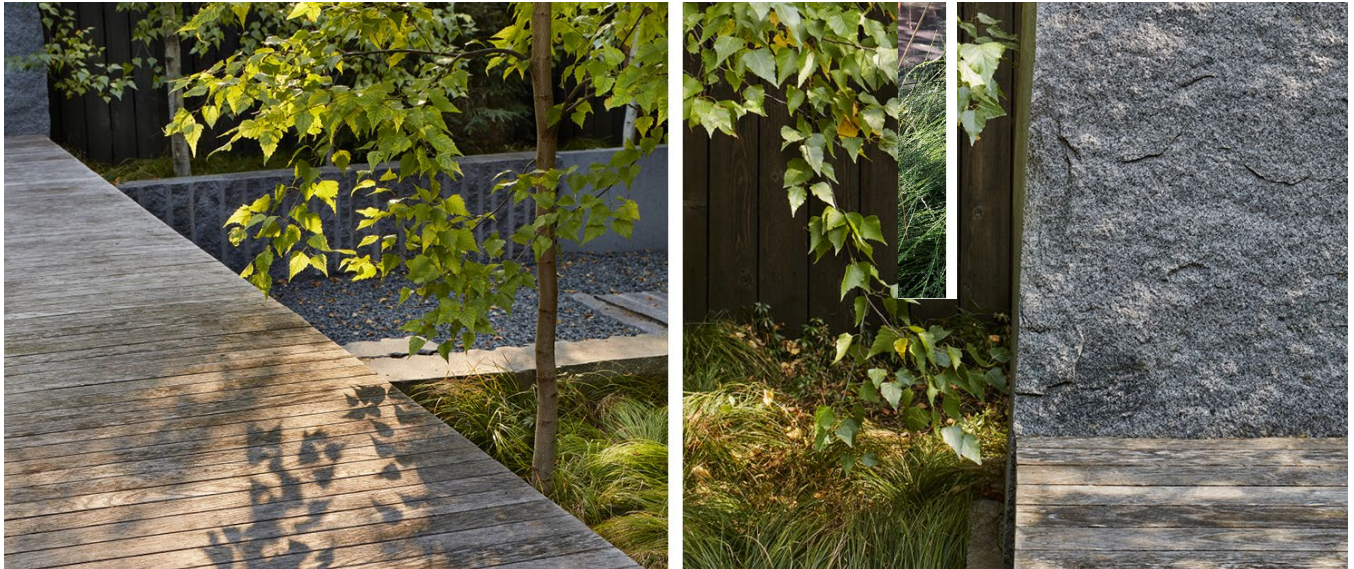
Build Coalitions for Climate Action

Suggested questions are derived from a range of sources:

(SITES) - [Sustainable Site Initiative](#)

(CAP) - [ASLA Climate Action Plan or Field Guide](#)

(ILFI) - [International Living Future Institute](#)



PRACTICE

According to [Climate Positive Design](#), approximately 75 percent of landscape architecture projects' greenhouse gas emissions result from embodied carbon. These are the emissions released from products' sourcing, manufacturing, transportation, installation, and construction.

The other 25 percent is associated with operational emissions, which are released by powering and maintaining landscapes.

In landscape architecture projects, there is a need to:

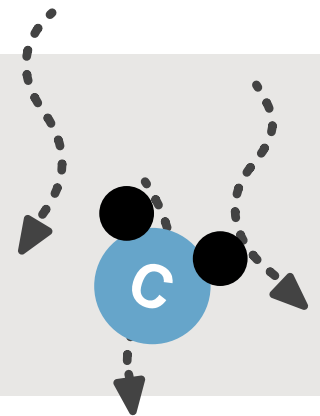
- Reduce the use of materials with high embodied carbon
- Increase the use of native trees and plants and other materials that sequester carbon
- Use more locally sourced products, which means lower transportation emissions.

Ask product manufacturers and vendors for transparent, third-party verified data on their products.

This enables you to more accurately measure the climate and biodiversity impacts of your projects.

Note: Responses to these questions are voluntary. Industry partners are not required to answer these questions.

ASLA 2021 Professional Residential Design Honor Award.
Quarry Garden. TEN x TEN.
(Image credit: TEN x TEN, Gaffer Photography)





Products and Materials

Carbon Data

Do your products have Life Cycle Assessments (LCAs)? (CAP)

Does your products have Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs)? (CAP)

Are these documents peer-reviewed or third-party verified? Do they follow standards systems? If so, which? (CAP)

Does your company have an industry-wide or product-specific EPD? (SITES) (CAP)

What other data does your company have on the greenhouse gas emissions of your products? (CAP)

Low-Carbon Material Content

Does your company offer products that contain low-carbon materials? (CAP)

Does the metal in your products contain at least 50% recycled content? (CAP)

Do your products include cement substitutions, such as slag, fly ash, silica fume, glass pozzolan? (CAP)

ASLA 2023 Professional General Design Honor Award.
Hood Bike Park: Pollution Purging Plants. Offshoots, Inc.
(Image credit: Peter Vanderwarker Photography / Offshoots, Inc.)

Do your products include natural fibers from plants, wood products, or bio-char, sourced from certified sustainable farming or forestry services? (CAP)
Note: this may be considered carbon sequestered.

Recycled Material Content

Do your products contain recycled material? If so, what is the percentage of recycled material? Is it post-production (pre-consumer) or post-consumer recycled material? (SITES)

Are your products derived from salvaged goods? (SITES)

Hazardous Materials

Do your products contain any [Red List](#) chemicals, materials, and elements? (ILFI)

Has your company disclosed your products' material chemistry and any hazards? (SITES)

Has your company completed chemical hazard assessments following [BizN-GO's Chemical Alternatives Assessment Protocol](#), [GreenScreen for Safer Chemicals](#), [U.S. EPA's DfE Alternatives Assessment Criteria for Hazard Evaluation](#), or U.S. EPA's Sustainable Futures tool suite? (SITES)

Do your products contain finishes or chemical additives? (SITES)

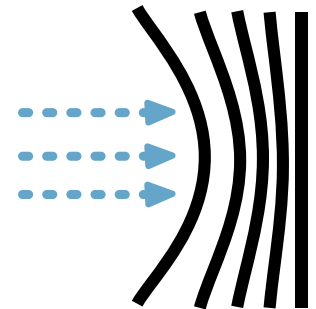
Biodiversity Protections

Do your products contain wood materials from known endangered and threatened species? See [Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species \(CITES\) Appendix I and II lists](#). (SITES)

Do your products contain wood materials listed by CITES as requiring trade controls in order to avoid use incompatible with their survival? (SITES)

Does your company select materials from manufacturers and suppliers that support sustainable practices and avoid extraction from critical ecosystems? (SITES)

Have product raw materials been extracted sustainably? Do you have third-party testing regarding extraction? (SITES)





Extra Questions for Plant and Tree Products

Does your company publish the carbon sequestration potential of trees and plants? (CAP)

Does your company reduce the use of potable water and other natural surface water or groundwater resources in tree and plant production? If so, how? (SITES)

Is your company reducing run-off from irrigation? If so, how much? (SITES)

Is your company composting or mulching vegetative trimmings from plant production? (SITES)

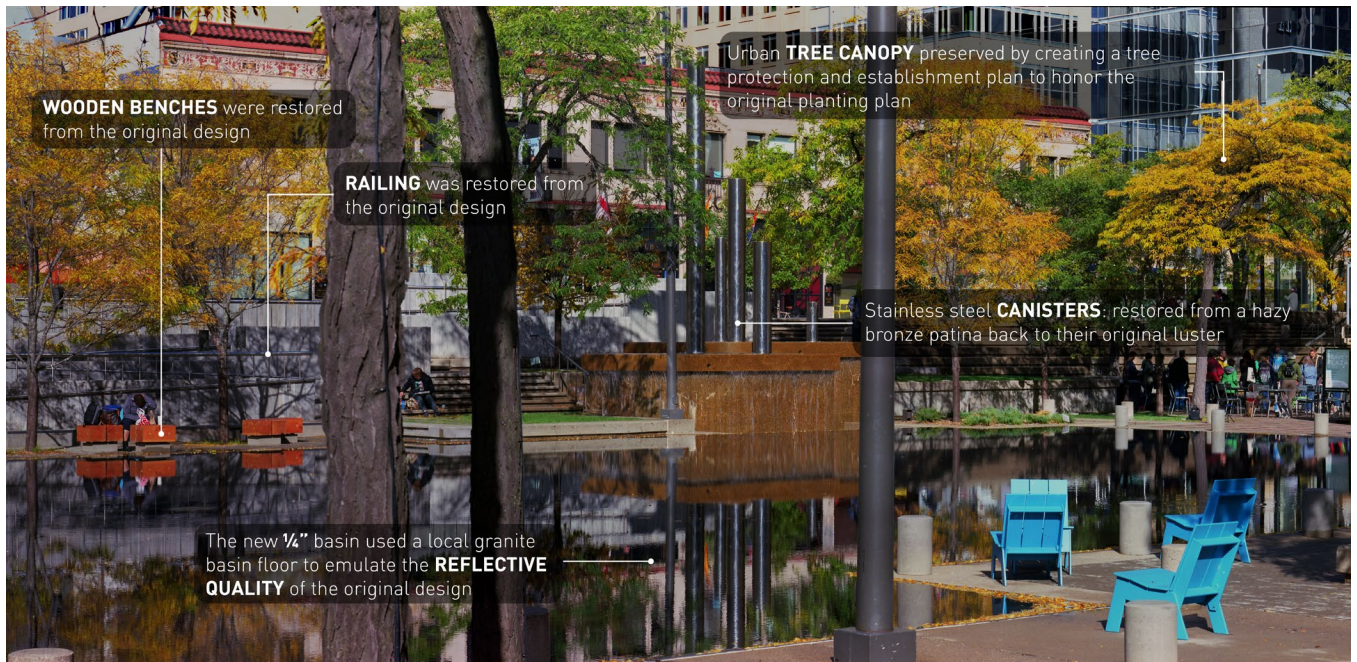
Does your company use pesticides or fertilizers? If so, what kind (e.g., synthetic) and how much? Does it have a non-toxic maintenance policy and set of practices (i.e. plant healthcare plan)? (SITES)

Does your company implement integrated pest management in plant production and maintenance?

Does your company grow species that are endemic and native to certain project locations? (CAP) (SITES)

Does your company grow or distribute invasive species? (SITES)

ASLA 2006 Professional General Design Honor Award.
Small is Beautiful. Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates Inc.
(Image credit: Elizabeth Felicella)



Use of Products in Landscapes

What is the warranty and usable lifespan of your product? If lifetime, provide details on definition of terms. (SITES)

How do your products minimize standard maintenance practices? (CAP)

How do your products reduce heat island effects? (SITES)

Are your products designed for disassembly and reuse? (SITES)

What percentage of waste is your organization diverting from landfills during construction and maintenance phases? (SITES)

Lighting companies: How do your products reduce glare, light trespass, and overall light pollution? (SITES)

Irrigation companies: Do your products provide a high level of application efficiency? Do you provide weather-based or soil moisture-based irrigation controllers? Are your products EPA WaterSense certified? (SITES)

ASLA 2023 Professional General Design Honor Award.

Peavey Plaza: Preserving History, Expanding Access. OJB Coen+Partners.

(Image credit: Peter Kerze)

Location of Product Manufacturing

SITES guidelines for sourcing local products:

- 50 miles – soils, compost, mulch
- 50 miles – boulders, rocks, and aggregate
- 250 miles – plants
- 500 miles – all other materials

Where are your finished products manufactured? (CAP)

Where are your products extracted, harvested, and/or recovered? (CAP)

How are your products delivered to distributors and job sites? (SITES) Does your company use low-carbon means of transporting products?

Manufacturer Facilities

What certifications have your manufacturing facilities received?

Does your company have a plan to minimize or eliminate waste from the manufacturing process? Are there established goals?

Does your company have a plan to reduce potable water consumption through the manufacturing process? (SITES) Are there established goals?

Is your company reducing water pollutant emissions from the manufacturing process? (SITES)

Company Operations

Reducing Impacts

Does your company have a plan to reduce climate impacts and greenhouse gas emissions? Does your organization have established goals?

Does your company have a publicly available climate action plan? (CAP)

Does your company measure Scope 1,2, and 3 carbon emissions? (CAP)

Does your company use energy-efficient equipment and lighting and use renewable energy in operations? If so, what percentage? (SITES)

Does your company purchase carbon offsets? How much of your company's carbon emissions are being offset? (SITES)

Does your company support conservation or restoration efforts (carbon sinks)? If so, how? (SITES)

Does your company use fuel efficient, electric, and multi-modal transportation? If so, how? (SITES) (CAP)

Governance

What is the governing structure of your company's sustainability program?

Does your company have a dedicated sustainability or climate action lead? (CAP)

Sustainability Reporting

Do you publish a Corporate Social Responsibility report?

Has your company set goals on environmental and social impacts?

Are you reporting on your progress in achieving these goals?

Does the report follow Global Reporting Initiative guidelines? (SITES)



ASLA 2023 Professional General Design Honor Award.
Remaking a 1970's Downtown Park Into a New Public Realm.
OJB Landscape Architecture.
(Image credit: Left & Right: HDR; Dan Schwalm)



EQUITY

Choosing products that are produced through equitable business practices supports ASLA Climate Action Plan equity objectives.

And through partnerships with communities, product manufacturers and vendors can also advance climate justice efforts.

Ask product manufacturers and vendors about their efforts to advance equity through their operations, manufacturing, and community investments.

The John W. Cook Academy Space to Grow Schoolyard / site design group, ltd. (Image credit: site)



Employees

How does your organization provide safe and fair working conditions? (SITES)

Is your company compliant with ethical labor and material procurement practices?

Can your company provide a factsheet demonstrating compliance, per the [Design for Freedom Questionnaire](#)?

Does your company pay at or above a living wage for all employees? (SITES)

Does your company support on-the-job training? (SITES)

How does your company promote employee and community health and well-being through outdoor spaces? (SITES)

Does your company have a diversity, equity, and inclusion program? (CAP)

Does your company offer remote working opportunities? (CAP)

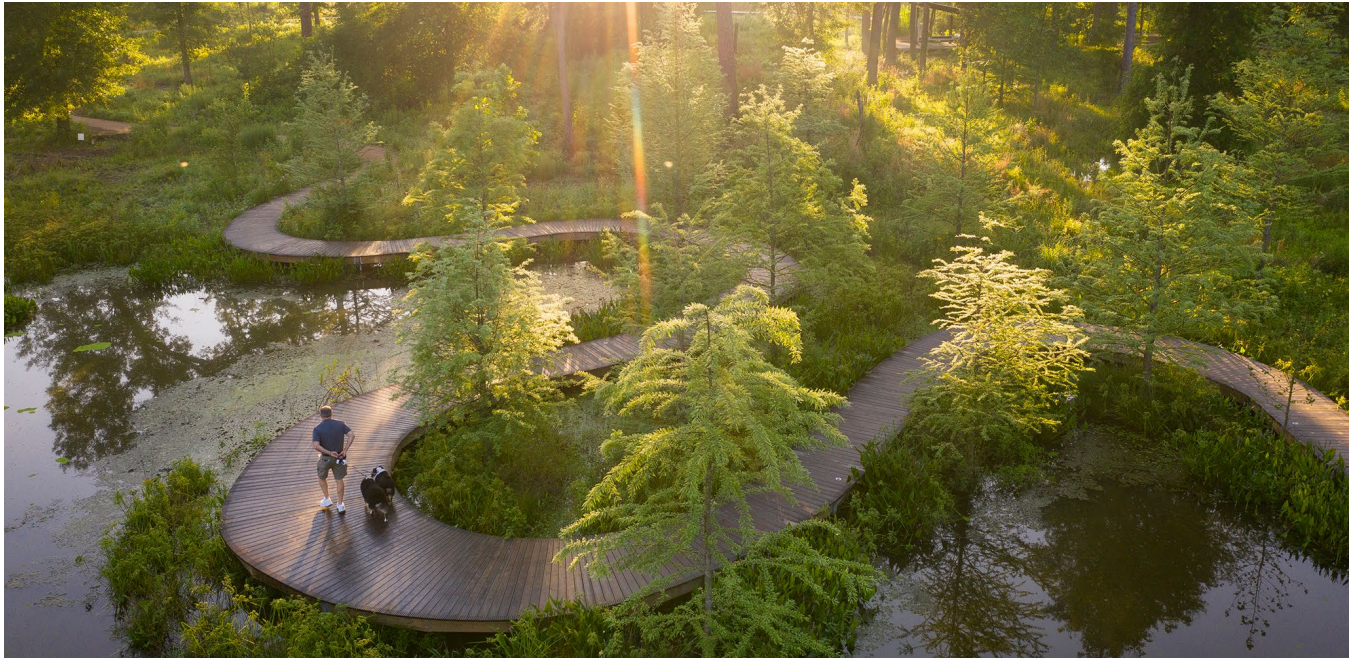
Does your company have a profit share program with employees?

Community

How does your company engage communities in which it conducts business? (CAP)

Does your company donate to local climate justice organizations? (CAP)

How does your company invest in and support underserved communities and Black, Indigenous, and communities of color? (CAP)



ADVOCACY

Advocacy at the local, state, federal, and global levels is critical to advancing climate action.

Product manufacturers and vendors may be members of advocacy organizations or conduct their own community advocacy efforts.

Ask product manufacturers and vendors about how they advocate for policies that are important to landscape architects.

How does your company communicate and educate communities on sustainable practices? (SITES)

Does your company engage local, state, and federally elected officials regarding landscape architects' priority policy issues? (CAP)

How does your company advocate for climate action? (CAP)

Is your company a member of any national professional, trade, or industry organizations that advocates for climate action?

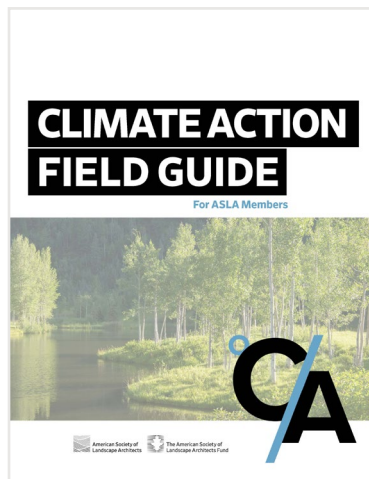
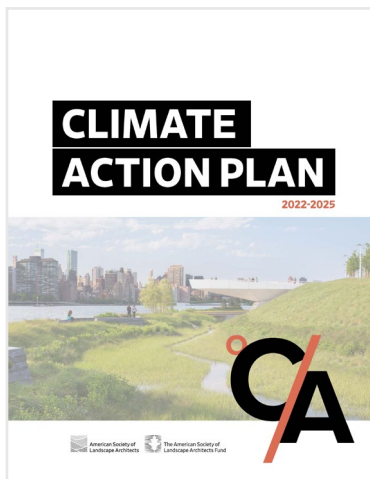
Is your company a member of community or local organizations that advocate for climate action? (CAP)

ASLA 2014 Professional Analysis and Planning Honor Award .
Houston Arboretum and Nature Center. Design Workshop and Reed Hilderbrand.
(Image credit: Brandon Huttenlocher/Design Workshop)



Have we omitted any key questions?

Please submit ideas and feedback on this guide to info@asla.org.



Download the ASLA Climate Action Plan and Field Guide at asla.org/climate