



Department of  
Landscape Architecture  
College of Fine & Applied Arts  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

# Strategic Plan 2025–2030



# Land Acknowledgement

Our Department of Landscape Architecture recognizes and acknowledges that we are on the lands of the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Piankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Chickasaw Nations. These unceded lands were the traditional territory of these Native Nations prior to their forced removal. These lands continue to carry the stories of those Nations and their struggles for survival and identity.

As a land-grant institution, the University of Illinois has a responsibility to acknowledge the peoples of these lands, as well as the histories of dispossession that have allowed for the growth of this institution for more than 150 years. We are also obligated to reflect on and actively address these histories and the role that this university has played in shaping them. This acknowledgement and the centering of Native peoples are a start as we move forward for the next 150 years.



**As** we look to the future, our Department of Landscape Architecture will help lead our profession through interdisciplinary efforts and consequential innovations that address the complex challenges facing our world. The profession of landscape architecture has never been more relevant and essential, given its unique capacity to address manifold social and environmental problems through creative and evidence-based approaches that enhance health, equity, and resilience. We commit ourselves to manifesting the value of our work and boldly demonstrating its critical importance to communities, policymakers, and the broader public, ensuring that we maintain exceptional standards for education, research, and public impact.

Our strategic plan for 2025–2030 builds upon our department’s mission statement while drawing on values, histories, theories, and systems-based practices specific to the discipline of landscape architecture. It foregrounds our priorities of equity, engagement, exchange, and the creation of new knowledge. The plan articulates strategies for supporting and coordinating all aspects of the work of its faculty, staff, students, and alumni to advance the profession’s impact amid turbulent societal and ecological change.

In our delivery of professional degrees, our plan aligns with the education standards of the Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board (LAAB), supports the newly revised uniform licensure standard of the Council of Landscape Architecture Registration Board (CLARB), prepares students for critical practice and mission areas of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), and draws from the educational community of the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA) and others. At an institutional level, our plan aligns with the strategic priorities of the College of Fine and Applied Arts, of which we are part: namely, to “Teach to liberate,” “Research and create for the benefit of all,” and “Build care for people into all that we do.” As the college builds out its own strategic plan next year, our department will continue to align our activities to make the best use of the college community and the resources devoted to those shared priorities. Our departmental strategic plan also connects with the most recent university plan, Boldly Illinois 2030, with specific emphasis on collaboration, inclusion, and empowerment.

### **Developing the Strategic Plan, A Collective Process**

Our Strategic Plan for 2025–2030 was developed during AY 2024–2025. A committee guided faculty, staff, students, and alumni through a six-month process to define the department’s key priorities, goals, and strategic actions over the next five years. The strategic planning process started with assessing the department’s mission statement as a foundation for affirming both existing and new priorities for the department. Through a questionnaire, information sessions, feedback forums, and individual and group meetings, input was collected from the whole department. The feedback affirmed a collective interest in six key priority areas that are interrelated in their mission but distinct in their forms and needs for resources and administrative support. In mid-March, senior leadership met to discuss priorities and to further refine the plan, including proposed actions, responsibilities, resources, timeline, and assessment procedures. Responsibility for overseeing the annual monitoring of plan progress was assigned to the Department Advisory Committee, with input and participation from faculty and staff. The draft plan was made available to the department faculty, staff, student leaders, and select alumni for feedback. A final version was adopted in May 2025.



# Our Mission Statement and Values

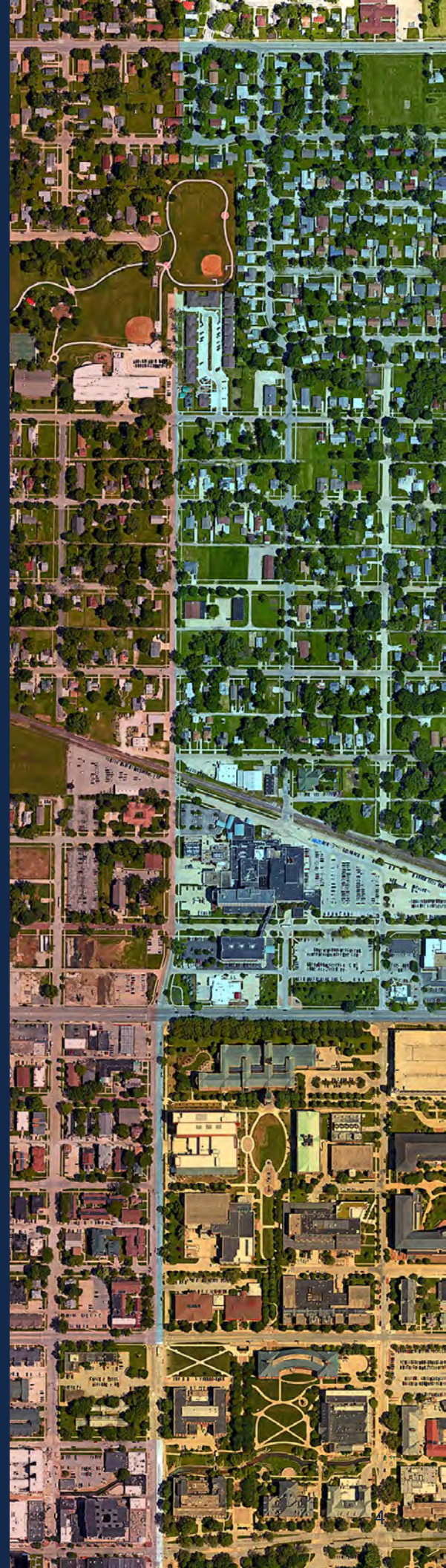
Our strategic plan extends our department's mission statement (2024) into an actionable set of priorities and goals. As we fulfill the strategic plan over the next five years, we will further our mission to distinguish our department and address our unique place within the University of Illinois, the Midwest, and the nation. The plan makes explicit the department's focus and expertise, demonstrating how it can strategically act upon key issues of concern in landscape architecture and evolve the state of knowledge in our field.

## Mission Statement

At Illinois, we prioritize public-facing creative practices that critically address complex global challenges to improve outcomes for society and promote stewardship of environmental systems. We are committed to cooperative learning spaces where people with diverse backgrounds, viewpoints, and voices are heard, respected, and supported in ways that counter systemic racism and discrimination in all its forms, including in the regional context of the University of Illinois. By recognizing the field of landscape architecture's participation in discriminatory land use development modes and practices, our department works actively to build standards countering those legacies.

Our department's work is informed by the tensions inherent in including all perspectives and experiences, and it is enriched by our position in a land-grant research university and the College of Fine and Applied Arts. We provide a foundational experience that enables powerful and relevant new ideas to emerge through two accredited professional degrees—a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (BLA) and a Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) – as well as a Ph.D. in Landscape Architecture and a Master of Sustainable Urban Design (MSUD). These programs prepare students to collaborate with others across disciplines in pursuing innovative research and creating equitable and responsive landscapes that address complex threats of the climate emergency through the lenses of green infrastructure, urban design, geo-design, water systems, habitat stewardship, productive landscapes, cultural and historical inquiry, quantitative analysis, and human and ecosystem health.

Our graduates work in wide-ranging local and international practices including design firms at all scales, urban parks districts, community development organizations, government and non-profit agencies, education, and the arts. For some, the study of landscape architecture leads to further research and careers in related fields such as planning, architecture, and heritage management. We aspire to increase equitable access to the profession of landscape architecture and to foster graduates to become leaders in the field who will make positive contributions to the environment.





# Our Degree Programs

*The Department of Landscape Architecture offers four degree programs.*

- The Bachelor of Landscape Architecture\* is a 4-year LAAB-accredited<sup>^</sup> professional undergraduate degree program. Information on the BLA Program is located here: <https://landarch.illinois.edu/programs/bachelor-of-landscape-architecture/>
- The Master of Landscape Architecture\* is a 3-year LAAB-accredited<sup>^</sup> professional graduate degree program, with advanced placement options for students with design-related undergraduate degrees. Information on the MLA Program is located here: <https://landarch.illinois.edu/programs/master-of-landscape-architecture/>
- The Master of Sustainable Urban Design is a one-year, post-professional degree program, preparing students for advanced, contemporary urban design practice. Information about the MSUD Program is located here: <https://landarch.illinois.edu/programs/master-of-sustainable-urban-design/>
- The PhD in Architecture & Landscape Architecture is one of eight doctoral research programs in landscape architecture in the United States. Information about the PhD Program is located here: <https://landarch.illinois.edu/programs/phd-program/>

\*Our LAAB-accredited BLA and MLA Programs are STEM-designated according to U.S. Homeland Security. See here for details on the STEM-designation: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/07/12/2023-14807/update-to-the-department-of-homeland-security-stem-designated-degree-program-list>

<sup>^</sup>LAAB-accreditation reflects the highest standard in landscape architecture education in the U.S. and satisfies the experience requirement for U.S. state-based licensure and under the new Uniform Licensure Standard of the Council of Landscape Architecture Registration Board (CLARB).





# Our Strategic Priorities and Goals



## Equity & Access

*Reinforce and accelerate departmental efforts to broaden and diversify landscape architecture education at the University of Illinois.*

- Promote inclusive pedagogy by integrating broadly diverse perspectives into curricula and programming.
- Understand and minimize barriers to education while structuring achievable pathways to degree completion.
- Cultivate a welcoming and inclusive culture where divergent views are actively sought and explored.



# Community & Public Engagement

*Ensure that our work builds strong partnerships with community and public stakeholders.*

- Expand and deepen research and design collaborations with communities, organizations, public agencies, and individuals beyond the university.
- Create knowledge through reciprocal, ethical, and mutually supportive exchanges with external partners from broadly diverse, local to international, and rural to urban contexts.
- Seek identifiable and measurable outcomes that benefit the public directly.







# Research Excellence

*Strengthen and promote our department as a regional, national, and international leader in mission-driven research.*

- Renew and expand department-based dialogic practices centered on research.
- Prioritize research rooted in our mission and values.
- Foster innovative research through enhanced access to traditional, advanced, and novel resources, practices, and perspectives.



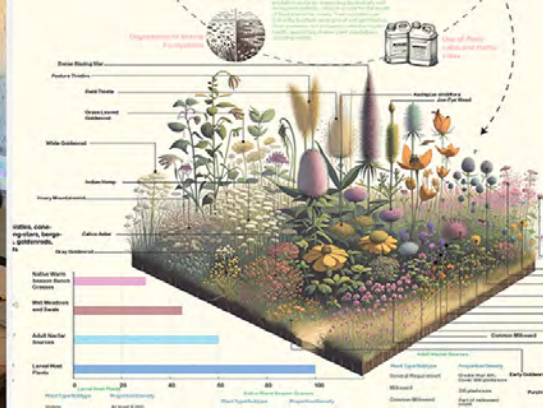
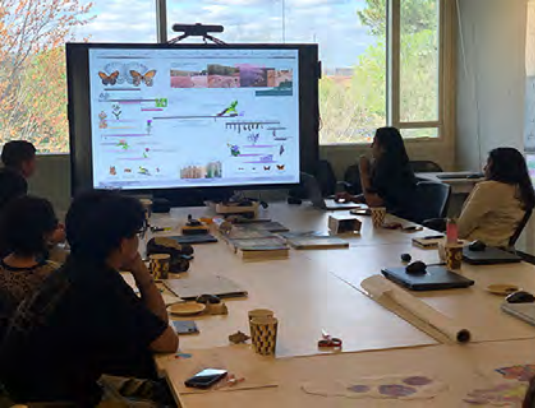


# Professional Practice & Licensure Preparation

*Prioritize education, research, and programming that connect students with experts, professionals, networks, and opportunities.*

- Ensure that curricula and programming prepare students for critical practice, pertinent specialization, and—for professional students—timely licensure.
- Energize and advance teaching and learning through regular, internal sharing and assessment of course content, pedagogy, and learning outcomes, mindful of contemporary standards and priorities, and future possibilities.
- Structure events that link current students directly with disciplinary leaders.





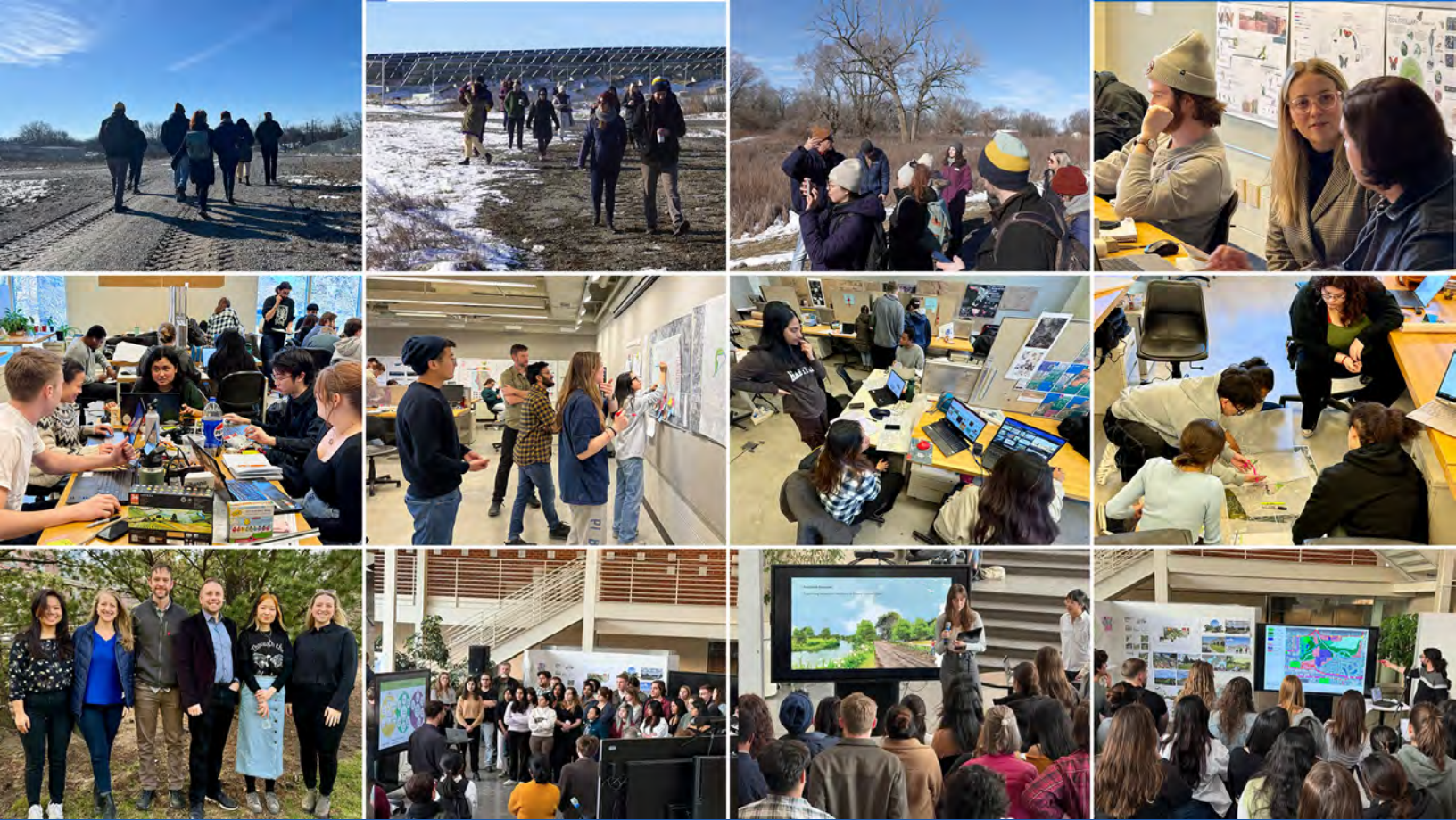
# Infrastructure & Technology

*Enhance and leverage our physical and virtual spaces, technical resources, and communications to support innovative teaching and learning, research, and community building.*

- Maximize exposure to campus research and production resources and the interdisciplinary communities engaging them.
- Optimize studios, classrooms, shared spaces, and public areas for intervisibility, exchange of ideas, collaboration, gatherings, and events.
- Enhance programming and communications in publicly accessible, familiar, and convenient online and in-person venues.







# Visibility & Impact

*Grow our impact by strategically increasing public visibility for the department's research, teaching and learning, and service activities.*

- Organize and host workshops, symposia, conferences, charrettes, and other events on mission-driven topics of pressing public interest and with public participation in mind.
- Encourage faculty and student service leadership and knowledge sharing in community organizations, disciplinary associations, and public agencies related to the department's mission.
- Leverage public-facing communications to elevate faculty members, students, and alumni as public voices.





# Department of Landscape Architecture

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

101 Temple Hoyne Buell Hall  
611 East Lorado Taft Drive  
Champaign IL 61820  
217-333-0176  
[ladept@illinois.edu](mailto:ladept@illinois.edu)

## Image Credits

[Cover] Students hiking along the Lost Coast Trail, Humboldt County, CA, Design Workshop Studio Lost Coast Workshop, April 11, 2024. Photo: Stephen Sears

[Page 2] Prospect of Champaign County northeast of Urbana, IL, with Trelease Woods, a 60-acre, rectangular fragment of the Big Grove, at the lower right, July 15, 2024. Photo: David L. Hays

[Page 4] Site plan (detail), All-Department Charrette *Center Connect: Activating the Heart of Urbana-Champaign*, March 26-29, 2022. Image: Stephen Sears

[Page 5] Students in LA 241 Landform Design & Construction, LA 280 Design Communications I, LA 352 Woody Landscape Plants, and LA 452 Planting Design inspecting, measuring, comparing, representing, and reimagining spaces on campus, September 2023. Photos: Srina Desai and David L. Hays

[Page 6] Top row: Students in graduate section of LA 452 Planting Design visit 3 B Natives Plant Nursery, near Pleasant Plains, IL, October 11, 2023. Bottom row: Students in LA 352 Woody Landscape Plants visit Country Arbors Nursery in Urbana, IL, October 12, 2023. Photos: David L. Hays

[Page 7] BLA students in LA 335 Community & Open Space Studio visit Hermitage Community Gardens in Chicago, IL, with founder Cordia Pugh, October 5, 2021. Photo: Kelley Lemon

[Page 8] MLA candidate Nital Gundecha presents paper "So Kids Can Breathe: Tree Buffer Guidelines to Mitigate Air Pollution at Schools Adjacent to Highways," co-authored with Prof. Mary Pat McGuire, at 2024 CELA Annual Conference in St. Louis, MO, March 21, 2024. Photo: David L. Hays

[Page 9] Students in LA 346 Professional Practice visit Omni Ecosystems office in Chicago, IL, September 27, 2022. Photos: Alan Watkins

[Page 10] Top row: Students present final projects in Design Workshop Studio Parametric Planting, April 17, 2024. Bottom row: Students in Parametric Planting and members of Gardens Committee plant Terry Harkness Garden adjacent to Temple Buell Hall, April 29, 2024. Photos: David L. Hays

[Page 11] Scenes from All-Department Charrette *Urbana Eco-Futures: Envisioning Climate Resilience at the City's Eastern Threshold*, Feb. 19-21, 2024. Photos: Stephen Sears

[Back Cover] Students, faculty members, and alumni plant the Sofia T. Soudavanh Garden west of Temple Buell Hall, May 20, 2022. Photo: David L. Hays