LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE FOUNDATION

Onward – Landscape Architecture Leaders Contemplate the Year Ahead
Live webinar 01/14/21 at 3pm ET
Transcript

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Hello, everyone. Well, it's 2021 and as much as we wanted to say goodbye to 2020, I think it's safe to say that much will be the same for the time being But here's to 2021 and the best for all and welcome to our new year webinar to help get it started. I'm Barbara Deutsch, CEO of the Landscape Architecture Foundation and on behalf of LAF, I'm delighted you could be here today for this conversation with four leaders in landscape architecture from our board as they reflect on 2020 and contemplate on the year ahead.

This past year was not like any we've known and much uncertainty still remains as 2021 gets underway. The new year is often a time for reflecting, setting goals, and committing to specific actions. To help us all make sense of these times and think about the opportunities that lie ahead we brought together these leaders from a breadth of practice types to share their unique perspectives.

To start, I'd like to make some acknowledgments, first that I am coming to you from the lands of the Piscataway peoples and almost 500 of you registered today are joining from somewhere in the United States and are doing so from the treaty land of indigenous peoples. I ask that you join me in acknowledging the Native American tribes their elders both past and present as well as the future generations and their native lands.

Second, about half of you are -- a little bit about the audience here -- about half of you are landscape architects or landscape designers and the other half are a combination of students, educators, allied professionals, and the landscape industry. A third of you work in landscape architecture firms, 21% of you are employed by colleges or universities, and the other half of you work in interdisciplinary firms, the government sector, the non-profit sector, landscape industry, or are self-employed or retired. So I love the range of sectors and perspectives and practice types which will make for an interesting conversation today so thank you all for joining us.

LAF invests in research, scholarships, and leadership initiatives to increase your influence -- and others as landscape architects or other allied professionals -- and impact to create a more sustainable, just, and livable future. Our work is made possible through the support of those in our community. So today's webinar is sponsored by Vectorworks and Maglin Site Furnishings, and I'd like to thank them for their support in bringing us all together today and for being partners with LAF and strengthening the discipline of landscape architecture.

Webinars are just one of the many ways that LAF provides resources to share thought leadership to build your capacity and foster innovation and connection in the discipline and beyond. We make resources like this webinar free and accessible to all, and it is the support from our individual donors as much as our corporate sponsors that allows us to develop and deliver these resources. You can find other resources and opportunities like scholarships -- deadlines coming up in February --, fellowships, and research grants on our website which help you increase your influence and impact to create a more sustainable and just future, LAF's mission. If you find our work compelling and today's webinar of value please consider making a donation to LAF on our website.

All right, just a few housekeeping items before we begin. This webinar is being recorded and will be posted on our website by tomorrow. You'll receive a follow-up email with a link. We have a conversation format today with our panelists responding to prepared questions that were informed by what you told us you were interested in hearing about when you registered. The final 10 to 15 minutes will be for your audience questions, and you can use the Q&A window to type them in. Please feel free to use that Q&A window at any time during the webinar. LAF staff will be monitoring and synthesizing this list for the Q&A

session at the end. There's also a chat area, which is fun, where you can post messages but our panelists will probably not be watching that during the webinar, so if you want them to see something, please use the Q&A window.

All right now I'd like to introduce our panelists and get started, and I'll introduce them and they can each share briefly a bit about their organization and their role. All right, let's start with Sierra Bainbridge. Sierra is Senior Principal and Managing Director of MASS Design Group, a non-profit professional practice in Boston. Sierra.

SIERRA BAINBRIDGE: Hi. Thank you, Barbara, for having me representing MASS and also LAF and so excited to be here and chat with everybody. Yeah, I'm excited because I think our group is across broad disciplines. I'm coming from one where we are interdisciplinary in our office. I'm an architect and a landscape architect but I'm mostly a landscape architect. And we work both in Africa and in the United States and so it's been really interesting to see the impacts this past year across those many places.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Great thanks, Sierra. Alexa Bush. She is an urban designer, the Director of Urban Design for the East Region in the City of Detroit Planning Department. Alexa.

ALEXA BUSH: Thanks, Barbara, and good afternoon, everyone. It's really great to be here to have this chance to chat with you all this afternoon. I work for the City of Detroit, as Barbara mentioned, in our planning department and oversee a team of planners and designers who do a lot of neighborhood and industrial planning on the east side of the city. I've been with the City for about 5 years now, and a really big focus of our work is on thinking about inclusive reinvestment in our neighborhoods across the city.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Great, thank you. Next up: Po Chen who is Vice President at BrightView Landscapes in Irvine, California

PO CHEN: Thanks, Barbara and I'll just begin by saying happy new year to everyone. Hope everyone is having a safe and sane time so far in 2021. As Barbara said, I've been with BrightView now for going on 12 years. I've been in the industry for about 25 years, predominantly in general management roles in design, construction, and now in maintenance. For those of you not familiar with BrightView, we are a national design, planning, construction, and maintenance company, the largest in the country -- about $2.5 billion publicly traded. And it's great to be here with you all. Thanks, Barbara.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Thanks, Po. I'd like to acknowledge that Po also serves as our Vice President of Finance and has been working overtime in 2020 and probably continue in 2021. All right next up is Diane Jones Allen. She is the Program Director and Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture at UT Arlington in Texas and Principal Landscape Architect at DesignJones LLC and also our incoming VP of Education. Thank you, Diane.

DIANE JONES ALLEN: Thanks, I'm excited to be here. I'm sure I'm going to learn a lot so I'm excited about that. I just want to make a slight correction: I'm actually a full professor -- that happened last year.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Thank you, congratulations.

DIANE JONES ALLEN: And I feel really fortunate because as a professor I get to work with, learn from, and help to shape I feel like the future. And then also I have a small practice, DesignJones. So I feel lucky because I get to actually be in practice and in academia.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Great, thanks so much. Thanks to all of you for being here, our panelists and you, the audience. And we wanted to get a sense of where you, the audience, were before we begin the panel. It always helps panelists to answer -- there's so many ways to answer -- so we just want to get a sense of where you're at. So we're going to do a quick poll for our audience members, so please take a moment to respond. And that should be coming up right here. So two quick questions: Which best describes how you're feeling about 2021? And then: Given your experiences of the past year, everything

that's happened in 2020, what do you think is most the most important issue or opportunity for the discipline right now?

All right, should we close the poll? See the results?

All right how you're feeling about 2021. It looks like two-thirds of you are ready to meet it whatever it brings and optimistic and hopeful for the future, although almost a quarter of you are uncertain. I know many of us are weary and tired, too -- I hope you had some time off over the holidays. And a few of us just want to start over 2021. Thank you. Given your experience of the past year, what do you think is the most important issue or opportunity for the discipline right now? So these look pretty even with 30 to 40 percent climate change, improving diversity equity inclusion within the discipline, supporting social racial equity and justice, and rethinking our built environment in response to the pandemic.

All right, well thank you. That is very helpful. And now we'll get on with the conversation. And to get things started, I'm going to reflect on 2020. A lot happened. The pandemic accelerated, Black Lives Matter and racial justice movement, greater inequity in health, wealth, education, and the public realm, presidential election and greater political divide and civil disruption, and continuing urban-rural divide. So panelists, here we go, what are your key takeaways from 2020 with respect to your area of the landscape architecture discipline? I'm going to start with Sierra.

SIERRA BAINBRIDGE: All right. Should have been unmuted. I kind of distributed all my takeaways into all of the questions we're gonna go through, so I'm just gonna land on one for this. But I think for me -- it's maybe because this is one of the more personal questions -- but for me, in our discipline and in the work that we do but also, I think, what we've all had to grapple with in the past year is that the surfacing of the hard truth of who we are as a country and where we're divided, I think, is a huge challenge. And I think also though I believe through the work that we've done and the opportunities that we've had to create design conversations amidst groups and communities that have divisions, if not these same but others. That I do think design can be a really powerful tool for peace, for reconciliation. And I think in landscape, in particular, its ability to surface sublimated histories and to create the space to make visible the things that have heretofore been invisible, and I think both in a positive way but also to face the truth of who we are and how do we bring those to the surface so that they aren't hidden anymore and that we can have these conversations more openly. And I think landscape actually provides that opportunity, especially if we think about commemoration, memorialization, but even telling the stories of the landscape, the stories that are held there, that we can see of the infrastructure that we've built, of the spaces and their -- even public parks and how they start and what were they designed for and how are they functioning now. I think all of these have traces of these divisions and also opportunities for how we can use those places to come together and have conversations that actually can help to bridge those divides. And I do have -- I think design is really powerful in that way and in ways that a lot of other methods might not be or don't have the same accessibility because I think people can talk more easily about concrete things that they can do together than sometimes by approaching some of these issues directly. So I guess that's the thing that gives me hope about coming face to face with what we've learned in this past year about ourselves.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Thank you. That's a great reminder when we get distracted by other things, so thank you. Next up: Alexa. Let's hear from you from your perspective in the City of Detroit.

ALEXA BUSH: Definitely. And I think as a landscape architect sitting in the public sector, I definitely want to build on some things that Sierra talked about. I've been thinking a lot this year really about the role of public space and public spaces of all kinds, so not just our parks but our streets. I think for both in terms of what that's meant for health, I think a lot of what we felt in Detroit early on in the pandemic were some of our most vulnerable populations are those that have all the underlying conditions -- it was like the perfect storm of things where when cases started to tick up, it was like, I think, a lot of us had a lot of fear of oh no like quick let's shut down and not have it hit here. And for us we were hit quite early and it felt like ah, it's too late. Where I think the reality of thinking about a lot of our public space infrastructure and the design of our cities as our public health infrastructure I think has been a really big takeaway and something that we've talked about for a long time. And I think as designers, people were like what do you mean design, public health -- those don't go together. I think it's really opened people's eyes to a different

conversation not only about things, you know, I think a lot of cities across the country saw park usership up this year, having access to those outdoor places to be safe, to recreate, to move, to gather with others. But really just the entire built environment. If you live in a neighborhood without a grocery store that's not very walkable where as an essential worker maybe you're really reliant on transit that's going really far. I think a lot of the vulnerability that people have had in the pandemic relates a lot to the built environment. I think probably many of us in the discipline have talked about that, but I think one of the things that's really opened up is to have that conversation in a wider way with a wider range of professionals. And I guess the dual piece of that for me is just thinking too about these public spaces and the role they play really as part of our democratic infrastructure, as a place for people to meet and get to know each other. I'm really hopeful to see us take that challenge on pretty seriously moving forward as landscape architects to think about how does how does public space relate to this type of social infrastructure I think we really need to think about rebuilding as a country.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Yeah, great perspective and yeah, looking at public space infrastructure as public health infrastructure and also social infrastructure. I feel like I've actually met more of my neighbors since the pandemic out walking around and getting a dog, too, helps, uh magnet. But yeah, meeting people because you're out and the importance of that. So thank you. All right, next up: Po. Key takeaways from 2020 from your perspective in industry.

PO CHEN: Thanks, Barbara. You can hear me okay?

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Yep.

PO CHEN: So yes, Sierra and Alexa's opening comments really resonated a lot with me. I mean, I'm excited because I think our country is finally being forced to face some incredibly hard truths. It's really what I call a national scale intervention of sorts about who we are and what we want to be when we grow up, right, not just as professionals but as a country. And when you think about it in that context, the outdoor environment --- when you think about how we heal as a nation, the outdoor environment has never been more vital towards keeping us connected and happy, inspiring hope and health. And in that context, I think about -- just even on a very simple scale -- how much the physical world has changed and how we look at it and how we use it. Streets and parking lots have become entertainment venues, more so than ever before. Backyards and garages have become home gyms and Peloton staging areas. And as a profession, this has created even more pronounced opportunities for us to merge really kind of the key domains of our lives: the work domain, the home domain, the community domain, and the personal self domain. And for all those things to merge, I think in a way that as landscape architects and landscape affiliated professionals we have the opportunity and really the responsibility to help not only heal the nation but also take a center direction for our wish list of things that we've always wanted to do to make the outdoor space even more relevant, becomes more pronounced.

So, that's one point. The second quick point that I do want to make is that for me personally, and just thinking about as a married father of four and leading a number of folks at BrightView through this, the leadership that we display as people, I think, has become more pronounced than ever. And the importance of the human connection and how important a hug is, the simple handshake, being able to show affection, or just being in a room with other people without being masked and six feet apart. I've just consistently learned from people who have been directly touched by this and have been in quarantine that it's the human interaction and connection that they miss the most. And so, it really has me thinking a lot about how we take that and make it something positive going forward. So my initial thoughts.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Yeah, thank you. I think you're right. We learned as human beings we need to be outside and we need to be with other people. And so that bodes well for what we do. All right. Diane, key takeaways from 2020 with respect to your perspective at UT Arlington and having your own practice.

DIANE JONES ALLEN: So from the last year my key takeaways are: One, that often it takes something really devastating to shake us up. And I think not just the country but particularly our profession finally has been shaken up in some aspects. So in a way, I guess what's happened was positive in that it shook us out of our malaise. And related to that is, I think, the other takeaway is that we realize that yes, we have

to be -- that all these things are related and we have to be more collaborative and cross-disciplinary in practice and thinking and teaching. And what I mean by that, ok, so if we have the paradigm of economic, social, cultural, environmental. So some of us are doing kind of large developments, large parks and plazas, some people are working in communities, and some people are focusing on the environment. But we realize that we we have to -- all those things are related in order to be effective. I mean, a quick example when I think of the COVID thing, what we woke up to was that when people don't have access to transportation and parks and housing and health, then those are the people that were most affected by the health crisis. And so we realize as landscape architects, we have to be more cross-disciplinary, not just with other disciplines but within the silos that we've created within landscape architecture. So I actually think that -- and I see from listening to my colleagues, being fortunate to be on here and listen, and just listening -- that as the profession this year, we've kind of had a jolt and we're getting this understanding and seem to be ready to face these things in a new way.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Thank you, Diane. So, good insights. And yeah, I often think, you know, sometimes things need to get really messy, right, before a crisis or rock bottom or before change or transformation can emerge and cut through. So I think we seem to have several of those, so we're not quite getting the message or it keeps building on each other. So we'll -- I hope we'll get there. I think we will. All right. We will.

Next question. So what are some of the lessons that you or your organization has learned from all of this that happened in 2020? I'll start again with Sierra.

Or do you want me to start -- do you want me to mix it up?

SIERRA BAINBRIDGE: I'm just getting a hair out of my thing but sure, yeah.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Ok, the question again is: based on all that happened -- you know, some of the takeaways everyone just talked about -- what are some of the lessons learned from what happened in 2020, either you personally or your organization?

ALEXA BUSH: Yeah, I'm happy to jump in. I mean, I think the point that Diane made about sort of the interconnectedness of everything, I think is so crucial to the lessons that we are really taking and building from this year.

Early on in the pandemic, actually our mayor, Mike Duggan, sort of made a joke like -- Don't worry in Detroit. The team that we've got at the City has been doing economic recovery for five years. We've come out of a great bankruptcy in the City of Detroit -- which was sort of both comforting and really heartbreaking because we're like oh we were making so much effort in terms of thinking about what does economic recovery look like in neighborhoods in Detroit. But on the flip side, I guess it really hit home, I think, a lot of things that we've been thinking about when it comes to what does more equitable development look like in our cities, especially in a city like Detroit that is majority black, we've got over a third of our residents in poverty. These are really intractable challenges where I don't think design fixes every problem, but to that point of interconnectedness, the built environment and the way it functions does touch on all these different pieces. I think the framework of the social determinants of health is a really good way to shape that together and sort of give it a frame of: Yes, it matters if you have doctors. Yes, it matters if you have hospitals. But walkability, quality housing, social cohesion -- all these things also really impact health and vulnerability.

The other big takeaway that I've been mulling on is: I think sometimes it's easy to think about some of these things in the realm of policy. If we think about the role that segregation has played in this country for a really long time, I think it can be easy to say well, you know, those were laws on the books, those were banking policies, those are things that don't touch landscape architecture. But in reality even though we might have changed laws and lending practices, we never actually changed the built environment. People are still segregated. They still have mortgages that maybe they've had for 30 years. I think we're still seeing the physical implications of that policy, and I think it's a really big call to both landscape architects and to professionals across all the disciplines that touch the built environment to actually think about how

do we address that segregation, that lack of access to opportunity that is truly encoded in the built environment even though we might have changed the policies on the books. So thinking about you know what does that mean for the design of place, for transit, for how we invest in communities, for where we choose to invest. I think a lot about that interconnectedness and the systems of creating walkable, high quality places for Americans of all incomes and backgrounds.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Great insights. Thank you, Alexa. Other lessons learned from 2020?

DIANE JONES ALLEN: Well, a couple. One is the main one, and actually this is for -- in academia as my role as a professor and a director of a program -- is that the lesson I learned, the big lesson, was being flexible. Being flexible and agile. And actually I think it's something that we definitely want to take forward. And when I think about that not only in delivery but also in terms of --pedagogy and delivery -- but in terms of content. Being flexible enough to like realize that things are changing and we kind of in academia -- we have our standards that we have to meet for accreditation and we have standards that, you know -- but this, what's happened has made us realize that ok, we have to be flexible and open to new content because things are coming at us, and flexible to let students have more leeway into shaping that, and shaping all three aspects of that: how things are delivered, what is the content. And also in terms of practice, the same thing. I mean we had to be more agile, which actually turned out to be a positive thing because the fact that when you kind of realize that we're really global because this allows you to kind of be anywhere. And also with FD, I mean, it allowed us to access the people I would have had to pay to fly in. I could Zoom. So a lot of this stuff I feel like there are lessons that I don't want to lose. We talk about going back, but I want to say when this kind of quarantine, online thing ends and we go back into the classroom that we don't go back, that we bring this agility with us. In terms of practice too, that we don't go back, that we go forward. I think there were great lessons in how to be agile, how to be more open to new ideas and ways to deliver things that we learned this year.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Thank you. Yeah, being flexible. I know especially in academia for so long we said no, we cannot teach studio online. And there are trade-offs, but I hope that we got better at it from the spring semester through the fall semester and the next semester and that, yeah, hybrid. Take the best of both moving forward. Let's see, Po. Lessons learned.

PO CHEN: Yeah, Diane, I love what you just covered. I think I'd like to speak to the attendees here with us who are early in their careers -- either you're in school and you're anxiously wondering what in the world kind of a profession are you going to be walking into, and those who've been in the profession for, let's say, 3 or 4 years, still trying to find your footing. Big learning for us. Our organization is 22-23,000-some people, and going into the pandemic I'm pleased to say that we immediately acted. We assigned roles within environmental health and safety and within local safety roles to make sure that we had protocols in place and we were going to respond quickly to what was going to be a evolving pandemic. The cool part about that to Diane's point was that it drove a lot of versatility in our thinking that even I really wasn't expecting, especially when you're this large an organization, to be able to make those kinds of changes and force that kind of accountability. And what was very cool was that we very rapidly moved away from the traditional idea that everyone's got to be in an office, everyone's got to be at their desk in order to function, and that collaboration is not possible. Well guess what, the good news is we're the human race, we are highly adaptable, we know how to evolve, and we've figured out through Zoom and through whatever the Google version of Zoom is and Skype and everything else, we've figured out how to make this work. We figured out how to make the audio work on our computer during a call.

And I'm really encouraged to say that two really positive things came out for us. One was when we took it out of people's hands that they had to kind of clock in and clock out of offices, it really forced them to be out and about with customers and with teammates more. So that just naturally drove more collaboration and more face time with the customers and with our partners. That was a huge positive. The other big positive is that, as Diane said, we're never going to go back to the way that it was. We've already started to give up office spaces. We've already started to blow away the idea of cubicles. And for the time being, we'll have space shields and things of that sort but when everyone gets vaccinated and it's safe to go back, we'll go back in a different way. And that's a big learning for us because if someone had proposed

that in a meeting, we probably would have been too busy to seriously consider that kind of a thing. And today we're being forced to do that, and that's another enormous opportunity for innovation.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Yeah, that's interesting, like it forces you to think differently. Like oh, we can't teach studio except in person, we have to work in an office together, we have to do it this way and now it's like -- I guess necessity is the mother of invention -- and we're like yeah, you know what? We can do this a different way, and some of it's better. Yeah, thanks. All right, Sierra. Did you have something to add to this question?

SIERRA BAINBRIDGE: Yeah, I think it's picking up on bits and pieces of what everyone has said. I think in terms of -- and also one question that came up in the chat from one of the viewers is poverty being kind of at the root of all this. And I think one of the things -- and this is a question of accessibility in some ways, your access to bandwidth limits that perhaps but in other ways this has opened up so tremendously our ability to access each other through Zoom and to be able to bring expertise. I mean these webinars and the proliferation and ability of people to visit other universities to come in very quickly and give talks, and the kind of reduction of time commitment to do that I feel like has allowed for such a proliferation of contact that otherwise would not be had between not only people who have certain expertise in certain areas with people who are kind of yearning and learning but also even in our teams. I think that Zoom and these virtual areas are both isolating in some sense but they're also very intimate and can be utilized in a very different way to create really important conversations that sometimes actually -- once we get used to it and once we kind of figure out how to manipulate -- can actually create a sense of kind of openness that is even harder sometimes in the public realm. And to build those conversations a little bit at a time and in smaller groups and then allow that to come into larger arenas, I feel like has been quite a learning. And seeing the creativity which people are bringing to that. And I think that's been a learning for us is that it can create trust and that we can learn from each other even in this environment.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: That's a great lesson. Yeah it's both more physically distant but more connected or more accessible to each other, and you mentioned, gave some great examples. Thank you.

All right, for the next question: What changes in the discipline do you see coming as a result of the year we just had? So five years from now when we look back on the norms and expectations we had before 2020, what are the major shifts that we're going to see? And I think all of you in that last question alluded a bit to well, we don't want it to go back to exactly the way it was before. But maybe you could just emphasize, punch out those main points or any others that you've thought about in terms of what will be different as a result of what's happened in 2020 that we might look back on in five years and say oh, that was a turning point and changed things.
Ok, anyone in particular want to start this time? I could start with Diane.

DIANE JONES ALLEN: So I think when we look ahead, one of the greatest changes in the discipline I feel is the awareness by others in the public realm, the policy and development community of our profession. And in government of our profession because I think for a long time there's been little awareness or a misconception that other professionals did what we did with things like that. And I think that for a couple of reasons the fact a) with COVID that the necessity of parks, which kind of has been around and now people realizing the necessity of that, governments and you know, and then also the fact that what's happening, you know, the climate change issues. The things that are actually really important in making the world better and for us to actually go forward as a civilization are things that landscape architects really have been doing for a long time. It's just that now I think people are becoming aware of it. And so I think as we go forward that awareness of others is going to make our profession really shift, and either we're gonna step up to it or not, but I think we will.

So I think just the awareness of others because of what's happened and because of the kind of rapid shift in climate change issues, we're going to have a new administration that really wants to address that. Because of the health and equity, access, all those issues -- things that landscape architects have been doing quietly because a lot of people didn't know that's what we did. And because of those, because of that, that awareness is really going to shift how landscape architects are going to have to address the fact that we're going to be more in demand or not, and it's going to change the profession, I think.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Right, I like that change. All right, Sierra.

SIERRA BAINBRIDGE: Yeah, mine is very similar. I think the extent to which, especially being in architecture and landscape, that COVID -- and not for us as a profession because I still think architects are coming to terms. But I think if we look at schools, people who use schools and are now using all of the outdoor space around schools, which up until now has just been space around. It's been like landscape that skirts a building, but now it is like an active utilized space. And I think in places where we've designed where we have a different climate like in Rwanda, we've always thought of landscape as actually carrying key components of programming. That we share the programming of a project and of a partner across interior and exterior space, and that there are things that you can do outside that are much better than doing inside. Like it's much more pleasant to have an auditorium meeting in an outdoor amphitheater than it is in a dark room like in the bottom of the building. But I think now that people are being forced to do that that relationship is for sure underlined, as Diane says, by users and I think will allow us to kind of push into those areas and show landscape as having the capability of holding programming and complementing architectural programming really beautifully through more utilized exterior space. It's not just the grass running up to a building and the parking and everything else. These are places that people can use in a way. And I think also people have gotten used to being outside in all different weathers and experiencing that. And I think our attendance to -- which we, I think, do better -- I love the way that we do it as landscape because I think the sensory experiences that you have as part of your landscape experiences are just so vast in comparison from our design perspective. And I think people are much more open now to being all-weather people in the out of doors, and so we can kind of push that even further and bring to proximity that experiential aspect. So those are some fun changes I'm hoping to see in all these exterior spaces going forward.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: That would be great. So landscape more -- yeah, more programming and also integration with the building and place and context. Thank you. Love it. All right, Po.

PO CHEN: Yeah again, I'll...

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Five years from now what do we look back and see has changed?

PO CHEN: Yeah so, I'll take again a little bit of a different angle in that, you know, I just think a lot about the future of the profession and think about the people who are looking at our profession as -- the young people who are thinking that this is what they may want to do. Earlier there was a mention regarding the fact that in landscape we still tend to bucket the different parts of our profession. There's a lot of stratification. There's design and then there's construction and there's budgeting and there's maintenance. And particularly in our organization, within BrightView, we're constantly thinking about how to engineer and create a culture where all those things come together. And I think it has to because projects as they continue to become more complex, as funds get tied up, as complexity, like I said, continues to rise, being able to integrate design, construction, and maintenance of the landscape not only allows us to be far more efficient than we are today -- so thinking about constructability when we're designing, thinking about what the budget is when we're putting together a pro forma for maintenance -- for maintenance that's not going to occur two to three to four to five more years down the line. And I just think that just makes us better landscape architects, as a profession.

The other part of it, too, is that as a community you think, you know, let's just say by a conservative account we believe that there's somewhere between 15 to 20,000 landscape architects. And if you add in there those who are in the other sectors of the landscape profession -- landscape construction, landscape maintenance -- now we number in the hundreds of thousands. And that to me is relevant because when you think about our place in today's world and pushing forward and really being real about diversity and equity and inclusion and thinking about the DEI initiatives that so many of us are trying to create meaningful programs about. To be able to have that reach across hundreds of thousands, and integrated hundreds of thousands, as opposed to 14, 15 to 20,000-some people is so much more meaningful. And it really then begins to immerse itself in a meaningful cultural, national way in the work that we do. So to me, that's something that I'm starting to see a shift in. I know that's something that we as BrightView are

very committed to. And in the midst of the chaos today, I think we have an opportunity to kind of sharpen the pencil on that and really activate. So those are my thoughts.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: They're great thoughts. It struck me from your previous question response if BrightView's got 25,000, 24,000 employees and that's how many landscape architects in total there are, so really to bring in -- to really put that in perspective and context with the reach of a larger landscape architecture community and what the opportunities are there for more integration. And certainly, wanting to learn more. At least LAF's been working in performance, landscape performance, and maintenance being part of that and related to design and how it all works together is, I think, a key hopefully change that we'll see as a result of recognizing the value of these outdoor spaces and building that framework. Thank you.

Alexa, closer on question three. In five years looking back, what do you see would be the major shifts that would have happened?

ALEXA BUSH: Yeah, I just want to pick up on a thread that I think Diane and Sierra talked about in terms of the awareness of the profession. I think coupled with that, and partly why I love this panel too, is I think we all work in different ways as landscape architects. I would love to see our discipline really take that on in a more deep, meaty way. I know coming out of school, most of the model that we talked about was very much the designer-consultant model where you work on behalf of a client and you're predominantly a designer, as opposed to working through the world that Po is looking at in terms of ongoing maintenance and management of landscapes, a role like mine where I'm almost like a client of sorts, where as the City we have a huge portfolio of public space, parks, streets -- all these things that designers touch. But you can really move the needle on some of the issues that I think are important to us by having a different seat at the table. I would really love if people can sort of take the urgency of this moment and some of the things that have really come to light this year to say: I might approach the practice of being a designer or a landscape architect in a different way, or a more expansive way, that really leverages the impact of climate change, these issues around equity, the role of design, and all this. I would love to see our field really grabbing some of those other ways of practice as a way to amplify our impact as well.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Great responses. So yeah, many ways to practice this awesome profession, opportunities to grow the community looking beyond design but also the other professionals in maintenance and construction. Looking at landscape as more integrated and a key component of programming, so it's not just inside the building. And then back to what Diane said about -- I was intrigued with the shift with policy and the awareness issue, greater awareness in policy and government and the needs to look at health equity and access from a landscape perspective and the opportunities therein. So hopefully that's what -- those are all changes we hope to see and so we'll be working to -- with all of you to help make those changes and advance the discipline.

I think in our closing question, we want to make sure we have time for audience Q&A, so I'm going to ask you to answer this closing question -- and some of you have mentioned it already but just let's punch it out -- in like 20 seconds. What gives you hope? And I'm going to start with Sierra.

SIERRA BAINBRIDGE: Oh god, I was holding all the good stuff for the end.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Oh well, go ahead.

SIERRA BAINBRIDGE: No no. I think the ability to turn on a dime. That, to me, gives me so much hope. The fact that I think we've been shown through COVID through dramatic shift in our lifestyles that has been forced in response to this particular threat, I think, just shows us that if we choose to do that, if we perceive a threat such as climate change more tangibly, we actually can change things very quickly, like a third of all emissions going down worldwide within this time period. We can actually do that if we can understand that thread is not some far off in the distance but is imminent. And as well, I just love the resilience of the natural world and wildlife that has been able to kind of respond and show itself as responsive and resilient in that space that's been opened up because of our changes in mobility.

So that's one thing, but the other piece I just -- picking up what Diane said earlier, I think these times provide a real soft spot for -- and also Alexa -- for policy change, for sure. This is a moment when there is openness to: How do we do things differently? How do we have leadership in both our municipal realms but in our offices, in our work, on our teams that we create for projects that reflect the communities that we're working with because so many of us are working in communities that are minority communities, that are black or brown or native, and we, ourselves, the discipline need to reflect that but also it's an opportunity. And I think you can see it. Policy is shifting, leadership is shifting. And I think it's so tremendous to see that, and gives me so much hope. So those are my two things.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Great, thank you. All right, who wants to go next? Po?

PO CHEN: Yeah, I'll go. So 20 seconds or less. So first of all, I'm incredibly hopeful. I just think revolution and invention, legitimate invention, is really born out of chaos. And 2020 seriously cracked the egg and 2021 is where we figure out what in the world to do with it. And so I'm anxious. I'm excited for the next generation of landscape professionals because the overall industry just needs to continue thinking about a much more integrated and holistic way to approach our profession and what we leave with those that we serve. And the way we move our craft into the future is by teaching our next generations to design and plan in a way that really takes the full life cycle of the property into account and look at it as a property that should live on for generations, not just a project that has a start and an end date. So those are my thoughts.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Thanks. All right, Diane? Or you're on mute. Alexa.
Diane, you can be the closer.

ALEXA BUSH: So I want to pick up on that. I agree. I mean, I think as difficult as so much of this year has been, what makes me hopeful is some of the conversations that we're having inside the profession, outside of the profession, as a country. These really, really challenging centuries-long challenges that we faced as a country, we can't really fix them until we bring them into the open. I think the opportunity to say, out of this crisis we can make a change to the status quo, that we're not coasting along pushing against the tide of business as usual. I'm really excited for our ability to respond to this crisis and actually build something better as opposed to thinking to going back to where we were before.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Awesome. Thank you. And, Diane, closer.

DIANE JONES ALLEN: So what gives me hope is landscape architecture. And based on a lot of the things that were said today, I was working on a little model. You know, thinking about healing so you have the little circle where you have the overlaps of environmental, social, cultural, and economic and so there's a little blank in the middle of that thing. And so then I have put injustice because when I think of the things that are happening this year in the world, I think of economic, environmental, and social injustice. So I had that, and then on the other side, I had that same little model but inside I had sustainability. And in the middle, I put landscape architecture because I felt if you add landscape architecture -- the things that we do, the things that we care about, the things that we're about -- if you add that to economic, social, cultural, and environmental injustice, you get economic, social, cultural, and environmental sustainability. So that's why what gives me hope is landscape architecture. I found it in kind of a crazy way, and I'm so glad I did.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Awesome.
All right. Well, that was inspiring and we'd like to take some questions from the audience. So I'm looking for them right now... Ok, here's some questions. Just give me one second.

This one's from Peter Hummel. Where do you see climate change, social and racial justice intersect and how can our profession address and contribute to these issues?

Where do we see climate change, social and racial justice intersecting and how can landscape architecture address and contribute to these issues?

DIANE JONES ALLEN: I can answer that.
Because actually, I see that intersection a lot and it's been a focus of a lot of my work because often people that are the most vulnerable -- the most economically, access vulnerable --are located in bottomlands, in floodplains, even in the places where there are more fires. And you can look at that and see the connection between where people are located -- and where people are located in our country has a lot to do with race and economics. Where people are forced to live or move to has a lot to do with that. And those places tend to be the most climate vulnerable. In Louisiana you look at the Houma Indians, who just had to be moved or, like I said, you look at in the California fires there were a lot of people that really ended up in those areas because they couldn't afford living in San Francisco in the city, so a lot of those people were poor actually, which is surprising. A lot of Black communities have been located across the railroad tracks in the bottoms in the flood plains, so those things definitely intersect. They definitely intersect. And because landscape architects are really good at collecting data, really being able to analyze those situations in kind of a really scientific way, which makes it easy to make change, you know, policy changes and to bring forth the information so that we can make changes. So I think we're well suited to dealing with that because we can do it in kind of an analytical way because those things -- I mean, it's no question that they intersect.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Right. Absolutely. All right.
Here's a question from a non-landscape architect. How can landscape architects influence -- this is from Clifton Crump --How can landscape architects influence where money is invested for communities? My understanding is that architects typically respond to the investment and don't often direct it.

How can landscape architects influence where money is invested for communities? My understanding is that architects typically respond to the investment and don't often direct it. So how can landscape architects direct investment in communities is how I'm interpreting that question.

ALEXA BUSH: So I could see that in a couple different ways. I think one of the things we've all talked about is: there is a role of policy. And I think in addition to being designers, it's good for us to also be good citizens. I think we talk a lot about design and how to do it. We should also be really good about talking about what is the physical implication, what's the physical outcome of policy. I think that's somewhere where we can add a lot of value, which isn't exactly a space we claim but we should be the experts as well on: what are the spatial implications of a policy? Whether that is advocating with your own community, whether that's sort of the expanded mode of practice I think I was alluding to, I think designers can also play a role at all levels of government as well -- be that park service, city government parks departments, street departments, departments of transportation -- and really being the ones who are driving those decisions and helping mayors and elected officials make those choices about where resources get distributed. So I think beyond -- I'm not quite sure on the question if that was more of a within a contract or between a prime and a sub, but I think we can really do a lot to go further upstream and talk to those decision makers and elected officials about making the right policy moves and the right investments to make the changes that we see.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: I love it. Anyone else to add to that? Sierra, are you?

SIERRA BAINBRIDGE: Yeah, yeah.
So I think as a nonprofit, one of the things that we have to do, and especially working with communities often that don't necessarily come to projects that they need to have with funding, we think a lot about how do we get the funding there. There are also a lot of other groups that think similarly, and I think landscape architects are no exception. And I think that's where you can get funding to do what you want. One of the great examples of this is EPA funding for stormwater, for sure. We can build -- figure out where do we need stormwater work in our cities and we can build it there, but if we can actually overlap that with socioeconomic information and data, and as well places of less tree canopy, places of less access to outdoor space, we can align so many needs with the funding that's coming and make that funding do so much more. So that's multi-use green infrastructure. It's not necessarily a new thing, but it's one of the great examples of how you can take funding for one thing but make it serve so many more objectives potentially and so many more people and so many more needs.

And then structurally as designers, as a nonprofit I think we put ourselves in the position to also try to use and bring philanthropic funding to projects again that otherwise wouldn't necessarily have access to things like that. So if the EPA is funding stormwater, who's gonna fund an outdoor growing space for a native community to be able to grow their own food again when they've only now had access to -- all their land was taken away and they only have access to Costco foods or something. How do you get the funding in to get that land purchased and then prepped for that kind of use? And so I think we can think outside the box, and actually our model allows for that, but I think everybody -- it is possible to incorporate that even alongside a for-profit model to be able to try to direct those funds and partner well with communities so that they can access that kind of funding. So anyway, yeah, I think there's so many ways to get around just going and answering the RFPs, which is the downstream, the opposite of what Alexa was talking about. Generally RFPs come when you know that you have the funding already and you know what the project is going to be and there's already a group of people, of designers who can respond to those. If we can get around that, then we can provide more services to many more communities.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Great thanks so much. So showing value, working upstream both as a designer or as a citizen, really understanding the implications or outcomes of policy and informing them because that drives everything down, and looking at different types of partnerships. Great, great advice.

I want to get one more question in before we wrap it up, and this one is from Brianna Perkins. How do we -- and we could spend a whole webinar on this but let's try to take the highlight answer -- how do we create public spaces that add social value without a lot of monetary value? Many public spaces gentrify the surrounding communities in low-income or marginalized neighborhoods. How do we create spaces without gentrification?

ALEXA BUSH: I have so many thoughts on this one, but I can let someone else go first if they would like to.

DIANE JONES ALLEN: Yeah, I was just going to give a quick answer. That's where you really need engagement. You need transactive engagement for that to happen so that the people who, like you say, that the space is for have a real say in what happens there and that it's also connected "to the community" becomes "for the community" so that there isn't displacement, so that people have a real say in how the space gets built, what happens there, how their neighborhoods connect to it. I think that's having not the check your box engagement but having real engagement throughout the whole process. So that's my quick answer.

ALEXA BUSH: Yeah, I think that's critical like having the community at the table, but I just want to unpack this idea of the gentrification because I think the issue that we want to be sure that we're avoiding is really displacement, specifically. I think one of the challenges I see is if you think about the wealth gap in the U.S., that's majority driven by homeownership. So I think there's a real point of conflict there of, you know, we do want to add value in neighborhoods where there are low-income people, where there are Black homeowners who've lost a ton of value through redlining, the Great Recession, etc. So I don't know that we should always be afraid of creating wealth for people and creating equity for people versus being really careful not to displace people. And I think it's important to unpack the two. There may be policies you want to put in place, working with partners around rent affordability, vouchers, ensuring that people who are renting and vulnerable don't get displaced, but I do think it's important for us to take on the fact that we can actually build equity that pushes against the wealth gap and not to be afraid of that but to be very, very rigorous about what you need to do to avoid displacement.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Wow, this is probably... we need... or Po are you going to say something or...

SIERRA BAINBRIDGE: I have some, too. This is a good one.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Ok, go ahead. That's why we need landscape architects and all kinds of practice to help solve these problems. Go ahead.

PO CHEN: Yeah, I just want to say one quick thing which is -- and it speaks again to the integration that I was speaking to earlier -- is, you know, so many times we are trying to get a seat at the table very early on in the process. And to the point I think Alexa was bringing up, that by the time an RFP goes out, half the time they've already decided who the team is. They're just putting it out there. And so part of the way that we can work our way further upstream, in our experience at BrightView, has been when you can bring all the associated parties. If you say, we're bringing the landscape architecture, we're bringing landscape construction, we're bringing pro formas for maintenance, we're bringing scientists, we're bringing engineers and you can bring all that to the owner-developer or to the agency, immediately they say, wow, you probably just cut two years and $2 million out of what it's going to cost to do this project. And that really is only possible when we really integrate our thinking and integrate and collaborate at a very, very early stage, which is very different than saying along the way we're going to tuck in all these associated principals. No, it's got to all come in at the same time, at the forefront, to be attractive enough for people to say, you have a seat at the table. So, just wanted to add that.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Great.

SIERRA BAINBRIDGE: And I just want to jump in because it's such a good topic. I hope you don't mind, Barbara.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: If you guys don't mind hanging on, we're OT here. And, audience, hopefully you can hang in there. It is recorded but thank you for your OT. Over time.

SIERRA BAINBRIDGE: I mean, there is a small school of thought that's called "just green enough" and it's around this idea of how do you avoid displacement that Alexa is talking about by not, you know, not making it too nice because then you draw the higher-income people that displace the people who don't have the home ownership or can't afford to pay the rents there and that creates this displacement, which to me, is just such a distressing response to the problem. Everyone deserves the most beautiful, the best space, the most dignified place that they can be outside. Everybody. And so that approach, to me, is just kind of like a race to the bottom. And the way that we've been trying to subvert that is totally what Po is saying. You have to have -- and Alexa -- you have to have city sectors, not just the parks department as our collaborator in public space, but you also have to have planning, zoning,...

ALEXA BUSH: housing, homelessness...

SIERRA BAINBRIDGE: development, yes, like everybody. And they have to commit to putting the kind of policies in action that are the underpinning and the cause of the displacement. But the green space can't be the cause of the displacement. It's a lot of other things happening, and those things can be controlled and/or manipulated a little bit through policy.

And then the last one is also kind of what Po was talking about. And this is one I'm just like so excited to try to work through is how do you actually use the procurement process? When you are creating master plans for parks or even local or even design implementable park plans, how do you draw on not just women- and minority-owned businesses, but we've been playing with how do you actually localize procurement? Say we're going to get procurement from this zip code, we're going to use the construction companies, the artisans, the people who are living and working in this place, so that we're feeding the money right back into the community and help buoy them against that potential for displacement. It might not be the hugest impact, but it also creates a totally different relationship to that place to build it yourself. So anyway, those are the ones that I'm just excited to play with and working with different partners who are willing to go along that way. Anyway, thanks for the extra time. It was so fun.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Yeah well, if we wanted, there's one other question that comes up if you can hang in there for one more. And that's -- before I get there, I was just reminded by Doug Johnston of the LAF conferences back in the early 2000s about drivers of landscape change and speaking to creating wealth for all as helping to increase opportunity. So thank you, and the last question if you're okay is advice for students and emerging professionals. Wow. Sometimes there's harder times and easier times

than others to enter the workforce, and what advice do you have for students and emerging professionals to stay in practice and move forward with their careers as landscape architects?

PO CHEN: I can kick that off, Barbara.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Sure.

PO CHEN: Real quickly -- you can see my theme now -- but I would encourage students in the profession today to find opportunities then. They don't even have to be formal internships but just find opportunities to really understand the full life cycle of a project, to understand what really goes into the field and installing and sometimes, often times, things are great ideas on paper or within the conference room, not so great once you actually have to install it. And then the same thing within maintenance. And so that is to think bigger about the total picture because I do think and say as an encouragement that whether you have ups or downs in the economy, thankfully landscapes still need to be maintained. And so there's even a self preservation in this to make yourself versatile enough that no matter what the economy brings, you're always going to be valuable through the full life cycle of the project. So my encouragement would be to do a little extra credit work while you're in school to get those experiences.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: All right.

DIANE JONES ALLEN: I would say, and I tell this to my students, even though we're really lucky because we're in the DFW area where there's lots of firms, but I always tell them you really need to think broader and more flexible about how landscape architects practice. I mean, just look at this panel. You know they practice in -- because most of them think, oh we go work at the firm, the big firm. And I was like, no but landscape architects practice in all kinds of ways, you know. Some of them they're more entrepreneurial, some of them work for governments like Alexa, some of them work for bigger firms that aren't strictly, you know like Po. So I said you need to think beyond that. And, yes, through like what Po's saying, find out what, where, what you really want to do, kind of where your niche. And be willing to, as I also tell them, your first job out of school is probably not your first job. So be willing to try things. You might discover, you know, I really don't like the private firm so I want to go work in public service. So be willing to realize that right out of school, you'll probably have several jobs. Don't feel bad about that. That's a way to explore. You're young. You know, explore and think think more broadly because the profession -- that's a great thing about landscape architecture. We practice in so many different ways. So think out of the box a bit.

BARBARA DEUTSCH: Great.
Well I think that's a perfect wrap up, Diane. There are many ways to practice and many landscape architects are needed in so many ways. And I think we need to infiltrate in different areas of the decision-making process, so with the client, with the city, with the policy-making, with the practice, the nonprofit organizations. I know my world changed when my pro practice teacher brought in landscape architects who work for environmental nonprofit organizations. So there's many ways to practice and I think that's what our systems thinking and our unique skills which are so needed in many different ways that we all can create this convergence to create change from all different perspectives.

So I want to thank the panelists -- Diane, Po, Alexa, Sierra -- so much for your thought leadership. And here I'm inspired and hopeful about the things that you said, you know, learning from 2020, lessons learned, what happened, and what changes we think we can make moving forward that would be better for all. I want to thank our sponsors Vectorworks and Maglin Site Furniture for sponsoring this webinar and these conversations that help bring us together in these physically distant times and advance our thinking and our community. And I want to thank you, the audience, for your right on questions and for being here and taking time out of your day to have those kind of conversations and think about the future and work with us all to build this community. So thank you so much. I think there's a lot of ideas here. I'm gonna ask our staff to synthesize some of the key points from this webinar and then it'll go online probably shortly thereafter. The recording goes online tomorrow, but you'll have this to reference because there was so much. It was such a rich conversation and I thank you all very much.
So take care and here's to 2021!

DIANE JONES ALLEN: Thank you, Barbara.

SIERRA BAINBRIDGE: Thank you.

PO CHEN: Thanks, everyone.