

PARADIGM SHIFT | LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

PREPARING THE DISCIPLINE AND THE PROFESSION FOR A CHANGING WORLD

A paradigm is typically defined as a prevailing framework that shapes how we perceive and understand the world. It represents a foundational set of beliefs, values, and methods that guide thinking and problem-solving within a particular discipline, culture, or society. A paradigm shift refers to a fundamental transformation in the core concepts, assumptions, and practices of a scientific or professional field. Design and planning disciplines—including landscape architecture—are not immune to such transformative changes.

Since its inception, landscape architecture has undergone several critical shifts in both theory and practice. The discipline has evolved from its origins in agricultural practices and garden design to encompass functional landscapes; from the development of public parks and urban reform movements to the influence of modernism; from the environmental movement to postmodernism; and from a focus on health, sustainability, and ecology to concerns about climate change and resilience. More recently, the field has expanded to emphasize social equity and community-centered design, as well as biodiversity, regenerative design and nature-based approaches. Today, landscape architecture education, and practice are profoundly shaped by digital and technological advancements, while the field is increasingly positioning itself as a STEM discipline by integrating science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

These fundamental changes, and challenges, call for deeper theoretical and disciplinary reflection, forward-looking ideas and tools, and innovative practices. At the same time, they raise critical questions: Are we ready for the next paradigm shift in landscape architecture? What lies ahead for academic and professional practice? How will discipline transform its core concepts, assumptions, and methods—particularly under the influence of digital and technological advancements?

The Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA) 2027 Conference in Denver, Colorado, calls for the latest ideas, transformative shifts, and emerging approaches in response to pressing challenges, including—but not limited to—urbanization, climate change, migration, biodiversity loss, social inequity, disaster response, and ecological degradation. The conference seeks to foster deeper reflection and dialogue, forward-looking ideas and tools, new roles for the profession, and actionable roadmaps. It places particular emphasis on innovative design and planning education, professional practice, regenerative design, nature-based solutions, and interdisciplinary and global collaboration shaped by digital and technological advancements—including artificial intelligence, machine learning, parametric and computational design, and remote sensing and modeling.

The conference also charges attendees with highlighting how these digital and technological transformations are challenging traditional practices and reshaping the future of both academic and professional practices in landscape architecture. Ultimately, CELA 2027 invites innovative, forward-thinking contributions that aims to prepare the discipline for a new era—one focused on creating

resilient, sustainable, and socially inclusive environments (real or artificial) in the context of the digital age.