

Department of Consumer Affairs

Landscape Architects Technical Committee

PUBLIC PROTECTION THROUGH EXAMINATION, LICENSURE, AND REGULATION

2015-2016



Strategic Plan

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Committee Members

David A. Taylor, Jr., Chair | Landscape Architect Member

Katherine Spitz | Landscape Architect Member

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Trish Rodriguez | Program Manager

Douglas R. McCauley, Executive Officer

Message from the Committee Chair

The Landscape Architects Technical Committee (LATC) is pleased to present its 2015-2016 Strategic Plan. The strategic planning process has been a collaborative effort between LATC members, staff, and the public.

2014 marked the completion of the LATC's Occupational Analysis (OA), a significant project that measures the current knowledge, skills, and abilities that are necessary in the profession. Conducted every five to seven years, the OA surveys the profession as to what tasks are required, how often they are performed, and how important they are to protect the public health, safety, and welfare. That data is then formatted into a "test plan" that is the basis for the content of the California Supplemental Examination.

The Sunset Review process was a major undertaking in 2014. This endeavor takes place every four years. It commences with the preparation of a major report, which was submitted in October 2014, describing the LATC's programs, metrics, and recommendations for improvement. The process fosters a healthy self-examination, and an opportunity to showcase innovations and learn from best-practices. LATC's Sunset hearing was March 18, 2015, and the LATC did not receive additional questions during the hearing. Written responses were submitted to the Legislature on April 16, 2015.

The outcomes from the Sunset Review will help drive future strategies. In addition, the 2015-2016 Strategic Plan reflects the LATC's second multi-year planning process. This enabled the LATC to focus on robust issues to ensure we are proactive, preventive, and a leader in consumer protection.

About the Landscape Architects Technical Committee

The Landscape Architects Technical Committee (LATC) was created via Assembly Bill 1546, which became effective January 1, 1998. The Committee was statutorily established under the jurisdiction of the California Architects Board. The Committee's purpose is to act in an advisory capacity to the Board on examination and other matters pertaining to the regulation of the practice of landscape architecture in California.

The activities of the LATC benefit consumers in two important ways. First, regulation protects the public at large. Second, regulation protects the consumer of services rendered by landscape architects. It is imperative to ensure those who hire landscape architects are protected from incompetent or dishonest landscape architects.

The LATC is one of the boards, bureaus, commissions, and committees within the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) and is part of the Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency. DCA is responsible for consumer protection through the regulation of licensees. While DCA provides administrative oversight and support services, the LATC further sets its own policies, procedures, and regulations.

The LATC is composed of five members who are licensed to practice landscape architecture in this state.

How the LATC Achieves its Mission

Regulation

The LATC establishes regulations for examination and licensing of the profession of landscape architecture in California, which today numbers approximately 3,500 licensed landscape architects, as well as approximately 1,200 candidates who are in the process of meeting examination and licensure requirements.

Licensing

A candidate must have six years of qualifying education and training experience* to be eligible for the Landscape Architect Registration Examination (LARE).

Candidates must complete the LARE prior to receiving eligibility for the California Supplement Examination (CSE). Successful completion of the CSE is required to fulfill the LATC's requirements of licensure.

* Credit for education and training is outlined in the Table of Equivalentents contained in California Code of Regulations, Title 16, Division 26, section 2620.

Enforcement

The LATC has an active enforcement program designed to ensure the laws governing the practice of landscape architecture are enforced in a fair and judicious manner. The program consists of consumer education and professional information outreach designed to prevent and assist in the early detection of violations. The LATC enforces legal compliance for licensees by taking disciplinary actions against those in violation of the Practice Act.

The LATC's enforcement program works to address three main goal areas:

1. Establishing regulatory standards of practice for those licensed as landscape architects
2. Increasing public awareness of the LATC's mission, activities, and services
3. Protecting consumers by preventing violations, and effectively enforcing laws, codes, and standards when violations occur

The LATC is responsible for investigating complaints against licensees and unlicensed individuals. The Board retains the authority on behalf of the LATC to make final decisions on all enforcement actions.

2014 Landscape Architects Technical Committee Accomplishments

1. Completed 2014 Sunset Review Report.
2. Completed 2014 Occupational Analysis (OA), including a focus group.
3. Completed 2014 Linkage Study between the Landscape Architectural Registration Examination, and the California Supplemental Examination.
4. Concluded the Exceptions and Exemptions Task Force.
5. Completed University of California Extension Certificate Program Reviews.
6. Continued success on enforcement performance measures.
7. Effectively managed fiscal resources and requested a reduction in spending authority (Negative Budget Change Proposal).
8. Improved communication through the effective use of social media (Twitter).
9. Extended candidate application filing period.
10. Created additional pathways to licensure, including early entrance to the LARE.

Mission

The LATC regulates the practice of landscape architecture through the enforcement of the Landscape Architects Practice Act to protect consumers, and the public health, safety, and welfare while safeguarding the environment.

Vision

The LATC will champion a better, healthier, and safer built environment for California.

Values

The LATC will strive for the highest possible quality throughout all of its programs, making it an effective and efficient landscape architectural regulatory body. To that end, the LATC will:

- Protect consumers, by making effective and informed decisions in the best interest, and for the safety of Californians
- Be prevention oriented, by providing information and education to consumers, candidates, clients, licensees, and others
- Be proactive, by continuously scanning the field of landscape architecture for changes in practice and legislation that may affect consumers, candidates, clients, and licensees
- Be effective, by making informed decisions that make a difference and have a positive, measurable impact
- Strive for excellence and quality, by continuously improving our programs, services, and processes through employee empowerment and professional development

Strategic Goals

1 *REGULATION AND ENFORCEMENT*

Protect consumers through effective regulation and enforcement of laws, codes, and standards affecting the practice of landscape architecture.

2 *PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS*

Ensure that landscape architects are qualified to practice by setting and maintaining equitable requirements for education, experience and examinations.

3 *PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONAL AWARENESS*

Increase public and professional awareness of LATC's mission, activities, and services.

4 *ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS*

Strengthen effectiveness of relationships with related organizations in order to further LATC mission, goals and services.

5 *ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS*

Provide accessible and responsive quality services to consumers and licensees.

GOAL 1: REGULATION AND ENFORCEMENT

Protect consumers through effective regulation and enforcement of laws, codes and standards affecting the practice of landscape architecture.

- 1.1 Create and disseminate printed document(s) to educate the public on the differences between landscape architects, landscape contractors, and landscape designers.
- 1.2 Partner with Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards (CLARB) to enhance CLARB's national enforcement database with California data to strengthen consumer protection during the licensing process.
- 1.3 Finalize and implement regulations and procedures pertaining to the extension certificate programs and the approval process to maintain consistency, as well as concurrency with accreditation standards.
- 1.4 Disseminate information regarding extension programs per the California Code of Regulations, section 2620.5 to other states to encourage reciprocity.
- 1.5 Amend regulations to incorporate the updated Disciplinary Guidelines to maintain consistent decisions in disciplinary cases.

GOAL 2: PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Ensure that landscape architects are qualified to practice by setting and maintaining equitable requirements for education, experience and examinations.

- 2.1 Inform/communicate with schools regarding areas of the LARE with low pass rates in order to recommend areas of improvement in education.
- 2.2 Establish equitable reciprocity guidelines, without altering the entry standards of the profession, to widen path to licensure.
- 2.3 Review California Code of Regulations, section 2620 to clarify credit and experience combinations and provide justification for consistent staff interpretation of exam eligibility for potential licensees.
- 2.4 Review California Code of Regulations, section 2620 to expand credit for education experience to include degrees in related areas of study, i.e., urban planning, environmental science or horticulture, etc., and credit for teaching.
- 2.5 Review California Code of Regulations, sections 2624 and 2624.1 and assess whether any revisions are needed to the regulations, procedures, and instructions for expired license requirements
- 2.6 Reclassify the CSE item bank upon the results of the 2014 Occupational Analysis (OA) in order to ensure the item content reflects the critical tasks and knowledge related to newly-licensed landscape architects as identified by the OA and to maintain relevance with contemporary practice.

GOAL 3: PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONAL AWARENESS

Increase public and professional awareness of LATC's mission, program, and services.

- 3.1 Develop a plan to communicate with licensees and stakeholders about new or revised regulations and upcoming laws to be proactive in reducing violations.
- 3.2 Establish LATC's presence at the Landscape Architects Expo and other industry shows to increase exposure and communicate LATC's mission with stakeholders.
- 3.3 Review and update the LATC website to ensure information is current, accurate, and accessible.
- 3.4 Adopt new methods and identify new resources to effectively educate consumers regarding health, safety and welfare issues.

GOAL 4: ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Strengthen effectiveness of relationships with related organizations in order to further LATC mission, goals and services.

- 4.1 Develop relationships with other regulatory boards and provide input where needed so that future legislation and regulations are compatible with LATC's mission and mandate.
- 4.2 Explore methods for developing a teleconferenced Educator's Roundtable comprised of school representatives to increase collaboration and communication for future LATC strategic plans.
- 4.3 Develop/research methods to share information with school faculty regarding issues such as newly revised language for California Code of Regulations, section 2620 and future testing.
- 4.4 Increase the LATC's participation in CLARB.

GOAL 5: ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Provide accessible and responsive quality service to consumers and licensees.

- 5.1 Identify ways, means and methods to increase office efficiencies by assessing existing workload allocation, processes and procedures.
- 5.2 Review LATC's organizational chart to identify upward mobility opportunities through promotion and education in order to increase staff retention.
- 5.3 Contract with a part-time licensed Landscape Architect Subject Matter Expert in order to encourage consistency for enforcement, regulatory and statute interpretation.
- 5.4 Partner with DCA to successfully implement BreEze¹ to improve consumer, candidate, and licensing services.
- 5.5 Complete the Sunset Review process and implement recommendations to comply with the legislature's directives.

¹ BreEZE is DCA's new enterprise-wide licensing and enforcement system that replaces legacy systems.

Strategic Planning Process

To understand the environment in which the Committee operates and identify factors that could impact the Committee's success, the Department of Consumer Affairs' SOLID unit conducted an environmental scan of the internal and external environments by collecting information through the following methods:

- Telephone interviews with Committee identified representatives of stakeholders in December 2014 and January, 2015.
- Telephone interviews with Committee members in December 2014 and January 2015.
- Telephone interviews with the Program Manager in January 2015.

The most significant themes and trends identified from the environmental scan were discussed by the Committee during a strategic planning session facilitated by SOLID on February 11, 2015. This information guided the Committee in the development of its mission, vision and values, while directing the strategic goals and objectives outlined in this 2015 – 2016 Strategic Plan.

Appendix A: Organizational Structure

The Committee's organizational structure is provided below:



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This strategic plan is based on stakeholder information and discussions facilitated by SOLID for the Landscape Architects Technical Committee in December 2014 and January 2015. Subsequent amendments may have been made after Committee adoption of this plan.

