

Overview of Proposed Revisions to the Constitution and Bylaws

Over the past two years, the Chapter has experienced a significant change in the makeup and model of our Membership. The headcount for Full and Associate Members has fallen by over 50 Members, with an average of 3 Members declining to renew each month. We are at risk of falling below 200 Members for the first time since the year 2000.

The pandemic alone has not caused this decline: employment in landscape profession is robust and billable hours are up. Rather, the nature of practice is changing. ASLA is no longer the only source for industrywide news, continuing education, and other resources. Lack of recognition and representation with the Society have alienated long-time Members. Others have departed for perceived lack of value for the cost of annual dues.

How might we regain these former Members? How can we grow a robust, fulfilling organization that delivers on the promise of representing, educating, and advocating for landscape architects?

The Executive Committee believes that we must broaden our audience of potential participants by engaging nonmember practitioners, allied professionals, and interested Members of the public. To do so, we must revise our Constitution and Bylaws to make this possible.

1. To enable such persons to become recognized with standing in the Chapter.
2. To levy Chapter dues for such persons.
3. To name such offices that they may hold and such positions in which they may serve.

The proposed changes to the bylaws and constitution reference the current document which is available for viewing [here](#).

Here's what these changes mean:

1. To enable such persons to become recognized with standing in the Chapter.

Currently, the Society administers the process of Membership by collecting dues, updating Chapter rosters, and setting the eligibility criteria. While we can vote to adjust our Chapter dues, we have no control over national dues and eligibility criteria. Members are limited to practicing landscape architects, emerging professionals, students, and limited other individuals.

The Chapter has heard from multiple sources that local vendors, allied professionals, and members of the general public would consider actively participating if they had an option to remit only local dues. Furthermore, a number of former Chapter Members (and actively-licensed practitioners) would consider getting involved again if they could so the same.

As a separate corporate entity from ASLA, the Chapter is empowered to choose how it recognizes members. **We propose creating a title of Affiliate to describe such persons who desire to participate in the Chapter and contribute local dues to support its mission.** Individuals who have standing with ASLA as a Member will continue to be recognized with that title.

Having Affiliate status would confer no status with ASLA, but the Chapter would not distinguish between Members and Affiliates for the purposes of providing benefits, programs, and other services. Removing disqualifying language in our current bylaws about eligibility status with ASLA will make it clear that affiliating with the Chapter is a wholly separate entity.

2. To levy Chapter dues for such persons.

At present, the calculation for annual dues is a two-part sum. ASLA establishes its own rate, then imposes a local rate for Chapter dues based on the home address for the Member. This approach doesn't leave any wiggle room for extenuating circumstances, and it's not open to any negotiation.

Under the Affiliate status, the Chapter would be empowered to directly invoice such individuals to assess local dues. Additionally, we would have the ability to amend or waive such dues in such cases when doing so would be to the benefit of the Chapter or remove a barrier to meaningful participation by a potential Affiliate.

This change would not affect Members, but it would give us a flexibility in recruiting and administering a robust Affiliate program.

3. To name such offices that they may hold and such positions in which they may serve.

Ask any old timer, and they'll tell you our organization has always needed to cajole and/or hornswoggle a few capable volunteers to fill the open positions on the Executive Board. But this year has been exceptional in that our board will still have vacancies to fill after the election. The loss of 50 Members in the last 18 months has greatly diminished the pool of available candidates.

We propose allowing Affiliates to serve in positions that have no direct reporting duties to ASLA:

- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Members-at-Large

Affiliates would NOT be eligible to serve as President or Trustee because these positions are expected to perform duties associated with administering the Chapter on a national level.

Members would continue to be eligible for offices and positions currently described in our bylaws and constitution with no changes made.

Smaller Changes to the Bylaws

There are multiple instances where the term Members is used in the bylaws. In most of those instances, the idea will apply equally to Affiliates as well. Where the distinction is important and matters, we've revised the language to make it clear.

The current audit requirement in the bylaws implies that the Chapter must conduct a thorough independent

verification of every expense and payment at the end of every fiscal year. In practice, this has not occurred due to the effort and expense of arranging for this to be performed. Instead, the Chapter relies on the independent expertise of both a bookkeeper and an accountant to identify potential issues throughout the year. Revising the language to “may” will allow the Executive Committee to order an independent audit in the event of defalcations by the treasurer or other parties entrusted with Chapter funds.

The change to the fiscal year reflects how financial records and reporting have been conducted in recent years. By changing the dates, we are merely recognizing that our books operate on a calendar-year model.

How These Changes Will Work (If Approved)

Upon ratification, the Chapter will begin the Affiliate recruitment process from existing prospecting lists. This includes lapsed and former Members; continuing education program attendees; and Chapter advertisers. The Chapter does NOT intend to offer this program in competition with ASLA Membership or to advertise it as an alternative thereof.

The Approval Process

Amendments to the Constitution require an initial approval by the Executive Committee prior to being put up to a vote (Article 1302). This approval was made on June 14, 2021 with unanimous consent by the Executive Committee. The changes are only deemed to be accepted and in force if voted upon by Members.

In order to pass and become effective, two-thirds (67%) of all ballots returned must be in favor of the entire slate of changes proposed. **If fewer than two-thirds of returned ballots are in favor of these changes, then the entire proposal will be deemed to have failed and the Constitution will remain unchanged.**

For this reason, it is critically important that you do vote in this election.

Thank you for your attention to the materials we’ve provided. We look forward to receiving your ballot by the deadline of Friday, September 17th.