



Conference on  
Landscape Architecture  
November 19-22  
Nashville, TN

MON-A04

# Embrace the Lake: Partnering for Equity and a Resilient Future in Cleveland

// November 22, 2021

## Session Overview

**Monday, November 22, 2021**

**8:30 - 9:30 AM**

**1 PDH, LA CES/HSW, AIA/HSW, AICP, FL, NY/HSW**

What makes a Great Lakes community resilient? See how collaboration, engineering, design, and creative engagement strategies shape a community driven and equitable plan for Cleveland's eastern lakefront that protects critical infrastructure, expands community access to nature, and mitigates the impacts of climate change on Lake Erie and adjacent neighborhoods.

## Learning Objectives

- 1 Promote landscape architecture as key to leading a complex, multi-agency partnership, consultant team, and public process to retrofit and expand a public waterfront as a foundational and resilient community amenity.
- 2 Discover the lessons learned and the challenges of conducting a community planning process that launched and was completed in the midst of COVID-19, social unrest, and political change.
- 3 Identify methods for balancing and addressing the needs of diverse communities, public agencies, stakeholders, and partner groups with competing interests and for building coalitions to support implementation.
- 4 Explore how resiliency projects align to improve public and ecological health, support community and economic development goals, and provide opportunities to bridge long-standing, historic divides between communities and underutilized assets.



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## Session Speakers



**Kelly Coffman, PLA, ASLA**

Senior Strategic Park Planner, Cleveland Metroparks

Working with communities to protect the natural environment while encouraging public access and enjoyment have shaped Kelly's 30 years as a landscape architect in both consulting and public practice. Accomplishments include coordinating a multi-agency partnership to transform a brownfield into a 120-acre urban park, developing a multi-jurisdictional water trail along the Lake Erie shore, and numerous park development projects. Her current role as a senior strategic planner at Cleveland Metroparks includes leading park and strategic planning efforts for the 24,000-acre regional park system. Kelly is the Project Manager for the CHEERS partnership, engagement, and planning effort.



**Freddie L. Collier Jr.**

Director of City Planning, City of Cleveland

Director Collier has over 20 years of experience in urban planning and community development throughout Northeast Ohio. As Cleveland's first African American planning director, he is committed to working with diverse stakeholders and community partners to implement projects and initiatives that enhance social equity, improve health outcomes, and support economic development for all Clevelanders.



**Mary Morton, AICP**

Urban Designer + Planner, WRT

As an urban designer and planner, Mary works with communities across the country to empower residents and build capacity through interactive workshops, charrettes, and meetings. She is passionate about developing meaningful and authentic spaces and working with communities to tackle issues of environmental stewardship, social justice, growth, and equity. She uses her design and engagement skills in both professional practice and as a volunteer to create positive impact in communities across the country.

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# Embracing the Lake

Community resiliency planning is arguably the most urgent undertaking of our time. The eastern lakefront sits at the intersection of social vulnerability and environmental risk. These communities have limited access to the lakefront – an underleveraged natural asset and resource – and are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. In addition to these risk factors, they have historically been left out of decision-making processes. This plan addresses current and anticipated challenges to improve the physical, ecological, and social resilience of the Lake Erie shoreline, the adjacent neighborhoods, and the larger community.

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# Balancing the needs of the Community, Nature & Water

The plan's frameworks of community, nature, water, and circulation adapt to the changing needs of the surrounding communities and the environment. Together these systems work to bolster the quality of the natural environment, physical and mental well-being, safety, and Cleveland's economic development and tourism.

The CHEERS team created goals to address physical and ecological resiliency as well as social resiliency, access, and equity concerns. Working with community partners and local CDCs, the team created flexible and approachable community engagement strategies to reach the most vulnerable residents. This strategy toolkit evolved throughout the process as we learned more about the community and found new ways to overcome challenges. It included digital tools, traditional media outlets, and limited in-person and socially distanced events that responded to the nation's three-headed crisis (COVID-19, political upheaval, and social unrest).



*The Habitat Loop will buffer infrastructure, provide nearshore and aquatic habitat and create a space that welcomes the surrounding community in to embrace nature first-hand with inclusive opportunities for birding, kayaking & exploring.*



*CHEERS connects residents to their lakefront, allows the shoreline to adapt while preserving and creating new habitat, creates a buffer to protect communities and critical infrastructure, provides more spaces for the community to enjoy nature and the lake, and establishes the eastern lakefront as an equitable destination for the east side of Cleveland.*



*The Lawn, located adjacent to the Picnic Grove, will provide a multiuse space where community members can gather, enjoy picnics, hang out with friends and family, or engage in a friendly pick-up game of soccer or catch.*

# Notes:

