

ASLA 2021

# EQUITY IN NATURE

TRANSFORMING NEGLECTED URBAN LAND IN  
BALTIMORE INTO A SACRED PLACE AT BLISS MEADOWS

NOV 2021 // PREPARED BY NATURE SACRED

## Session Overview

While it is a fact that cities across the nation and world are becoming more green, it's also a fact that many communities within these cities are being left behind. Baltimore is a perfect example. In this presentation, we'll share essential lessons on community-led design from Nature Sacred and specifically the evolution of Bliss Meadows and the Sacred Place therein. Bliss Meadows is a 10 acre plot of land within an area of Baltimore that is home to a predominantly Black population. We'll talk lessons learned and also look at issues, questions and steps landscape architects should be asking and taking when working with diverse communities.

## Learning Outcomes

- Keys to cross-cultural nature-based collaboration in an era of racial reckoning
- Lessons learned from 25 years of community-rooted design
- Community-driven and centered greening — creating fruitful collaborations when a community is the client
- How to build broad and diverse coalitions for large community-driven projects



## SPEAKERS



*Alden E. Stoner, CEO, Nature Sacred*

Alden E. Stoner has led Nature Sacred as CEO since 2019, transforming it from a grant-giving organization to an operating foundation. She served as a member of the foundation's Board for the preceding decade-and-a-half. During that time, she held executive roles at Participant Media and Quantified Ventures and has an expertise in story-telling. She brings together private, non-profit, academic and government entities to change attitudes, behaviors and policy.



*Atiya Wells BSN, RN,  
Executive Director, Backyard Basecamp,  
Program Director, BLISS Meadows*

Atiya Wells is a pediatric nurse, nature educator in Baltimore City and the Executive Director of Backyard Basecamp, Inc. Their innovative social justice project, BLISS Meadows, creates equitable access to green space in their community, and preserves 10 acres of land in order to connect Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), to African-American agricultural history and culture.



*Vernon Hustead, MLA,  
Hustead Landscape Architecture*

Vernon Hustead is the founder of Hustead Landscape Architecture, and an active ASLA member for the last 25+ years. He has served as a landscape architect on multiple Nature Sacred Sacred Place sites, including one at the Maryland Correctional Institution in Jessup. At present, he is the Nature Sacred Design Advisor for a Sacred Place at BLISS Meadows.