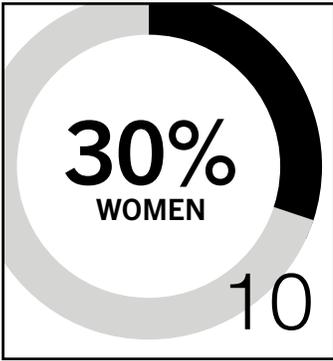


The Connecticut Landscape Architect

SPRING 2020



Women in
Landscape
Architecture



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Dana Ceva: More Than Just A Designer

I am a female working in landscape architecture. I had always wanted to work in a field that positively impacts our environment and the beauty of our surroundings. One element that comes with my career decision is that the field I chose is predominantly male. According to the American Society of Landscape Architects, around 50% of graduates from accredited landscape architecture programs are female, though 38% of ASLA members are female, and only 19.5% of ASLA Fellows (the society's highest honor) are women.

More men tend to stick with the profession than women. Professionals that landscape architects work closely with are also from male-dominated fields. According to *Professional Women in Construction*, only 7.4% of the construction managers in the U.S. are women. The architecture field is 26% female. I do not let these statistics deter me.

As a child, landscape architecture seemed like my destined career path. Growing up with two sisters, I was always the last one to come in from outside, helping my dad with the yard

work after my sisters had lost interest. He taught me how to plant azaleas, build a shed from scratch, sand, build, and stain benches, and cultivate a vegetable garden (while failing to catch woodchucks in the process). I went to school for landscape architecture at the University of Connecticut. There, I took classes in construction, design, computer software, 3-D model making, horticulture, soil science, sustainable design, grading, and drainage. To be licensed, landscape architects must study for months and pass four exams covering everything from liability, contracts, warranties, and bidding, to vegetative, topographic, and hydrological analyses, and social, cultural, and economic studies. I am currently focusing most of my efforts after the work day studying for my first two sections of the exam. Every night after dinner and before bed, I immerse myself in learning about insurance policies, construction litigation case examples, plant diseases, erosion control methods, and anything else that might be even partially related to landscape architecture or construction.



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To be successful in this career, landscape architects must be knowledgeable about a wealth of industry topics. Starting with residential design, we must have expertise in horticulture, drainage, microclimates, soil science, herbology, stormwater runoff, irrigation, pest management, and rain gardens. If we open it up to urban design, we broaden our understanding to include transportation systems, climate change, roof gardens, pedestrian circulation, urban heat index, large scale erosion, endangered species, and sea level rise. There are landscape architects who design ski slopes, cemeteries, boardwalks, hydrological parks, plazas, and anything in

The shed that Dana and her father built in the summer of 2016. "This was the biggest construction project we accomplished together."



between. Today, I work in residential design-build, which includes everything from residential design, to pool, patio, and wall construction, and an in-depth understanding of how construction details are built and function. I am intrigued by sustainable design; I read articles, attend lectures and classes, volunteer my time, and start conversations with professionals working on sustainable projects to learn as much as I can. As a landscape designer and an aspiring landscape architect, I am constantly pushing myself to make sure everything I do, I do well.

Despite all of this education, experience, and level of commitment to this industry, I still experience feelings of inferiority. Landscape architects and designers are sometimes looked down on by other construction professionals. Some say, we are “just the designers.” We create “pretty pictures.” We spend our days “coloring and drawing.” Many think our job description is to “green things up.” Truth is, when preparing a construction drawing set, we are meticulous in site construction details and specifications.

This sense of being undervalued can be compared to the way women in society, women in the workplace, and women in landscape architecture often feel.

Our industry is challenging on many levels and all of us — engineers, architects, surveyors, and designers — work incredibly hard. We are highly skilled professionals and deserve to be valued for our capabilities and high standards of excellence. As professionals in the design and construction industry, both women and men should support each other and respect all opinions, designs, and knowledge. I encourage everyone to give a female designer a chance to contribute; entrust her with more responsibility. Go to the female landscape architect for advice on a



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tricky design problem. You may find she has a solution that no one else has considered.

We all went through extensive education and experiences to get where we are today. Let’s give everyone the fair chance and respect that they deserve.

— Dana Ceva is a 2019 graduate of UConn and currently a landscape designer at Hoffman Landscapes in Wilton, CT. She can be reached at d.ceva@hoffmanlandscapes.com.



Topographic model of the capped landfill in Hartford that Dana redesigned for her senior year (2019) capstone project. “I learned how to use and program a laser cutter and, especially, a lot about how to successfully transform wasted space, such as landfills, into accessible parks.”