Optimize Urban Environments Through Design, Green Technology, and Community Engagement

- Improve the design and performance of built environments to optimize resource use and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Encourage development, access, and adoption of green technology.
- Build capacity for communities to meet self-identified needs related to nutritious food, clean water and air, safe shelter, and other social justice issues.
- Establish a broad coalition of stakeholders to tackle issues and problems related to urban environments.
- Train and prepare the environmental and agricultural workforce for the unique challenges and complexities of urban environments.

OUR AREAS OF FOCUS

The University of Maryland’s (UMD) College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (AGNR) will be a facilitator for inclusive, collaborative partnerships that develop and disseminate trans-disciplinary technologies and solutions to the complex, multi-faceted, and interconnected problems created by the built environment—problems that have often been exacerbated by historic disinvestment and institutionalized injustice. Through community engagement and empowerment, these efforts will be integral in the development of environmentally, socially, and economically resilient communities and healthy ecosystems.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2019, our team produced a video and short survey to share across the university. The video helped visually express the diversity of work encompassed by our strategic initiative so that students, faculty, and staff throughout UMD who identify their work with the video would take a survey. The video also doubles as a promotional piece for the larger strategic initiative effort. The primary goal of the survey was to generate a database of UMD faculty and staff involved in related, ongoing projects and programs. The secondary goal of the survey was to help our initiative reach more potential team members.

With increased university-wide awareness of our initiative—as well as our connection to individuals, projects, and programs working on shared goals—we released a request for proposals for a mini-grant program. The request, evaluation rubric, and review committee were all finalized before the end of the year.
In 2020, our team is focused on advertising the request for proposals, accepting and reviewing proposals, and awarding the mini-grants to four outstanding projects or programs. We will also be analyzing the survey results collected and creating a database. This database will be managed by the initiative team and used to identify opportunities for collaboration both on and off the UMD campus. It will be housed on AGNR’s new website. Lastly, the team will begin planning for hosting the AGNR 2021 Cornerstone Event.