

Out of Office @ Mill River Park

An Afternoon of Tours, Talks, and Networking in Stamford



PROGRAM PARTNERS AND DETAILS



ASLA
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DATE

Thursday, November 6, 2025, 2:00 PM to 6:30 PM
(Check-In begins at 1:30, Tour leaves at 2:00)

LOCATION

The Carousel Pavilion @ 30 West Broad Street,
Stamford, CT in the Mill River Park



Mill River Park
COLLABORATIVE

Closest parking is across West Broad Street at the UConn
Visitor Parking Lot at 1194 Washington Boulevard

UConn

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE,
HEALTH AND NATURAL
RESOURCES

PLANT SCIENCE AND LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECTURE

COST

\$80 - ASLA Member
\$110 - Non-ASLA Member



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

As cities grow denser and more complex, the need for sustainable and healthy urban environments becomes increasingly urgent. This program brings together planners, designers, academics, and park managers (i.e., boots on the ground) to explore the critical role of green spaces in shaping vibrant, resilient cities. Through a guided tour of the Mill River Park, a deep-dive seminar on play spaces in urban environments, and a macro-look at the development of the City-wide Comprehensive Plan, participants will gain insight into best practices in open space design, policy frameworks, and innovative design solutions.

This program is in collaboration with the UConn Landscape Architecture program. We are pleased to allocate a portion of tickets to students. As such, seating is limited! **Sign up TODAY!**

SCHEDULE

1:30 - 2:00 Check In

2:00 - 3:15 Mill River Park Tour

Nette Compton, President and CEO, Mill River Park Collaborative

Vincent Piselli, Senior Manager of Landcare, Mill River Park Collaborative

Through a guided tour of Mill River Park, attendees will:

- Discover how the park's original design has been adapted in response to the changes in the City and how residents use and perceive the park.
- Learn about the performance of materials and detailing in high-use spaces.
- Explore maintenance considerations for designing sustainable municipal open space.

3:30 - 4:30 Risk It! Balancing adventure, "safety," and inclusion in contemporary urban playscapes

Introduction: **Jill Desimini**, Associate Professor and Program Director of Landscape Architecture at UConn

Seminar: **Kate Tooke**, Principal at Agency Landscape + Planning

Through an historical lens of playgrounds in urban context and case study examples of urban public playscapes, this session will:

- Review the history of the playground in urban contexts and current developmental theory related to children's play and learning, focusing specifically on the benefits of healthy risk-taking and physical challenge and needs of neurodiverse users.
- Define core concepts around safety and inclusion in the context of urban playscapes, and understand how current safety and ADA standards incorporate those concepts.
- Explore urban public playscapes that support children's ability to take healthy risks, expand connection to place and provide opportunities for intergenerational interaction.
- Discuss how community process informs and elevates all phases of public park design and construction.

4:30 - 5:30 Going Big: Stamford 2035 Comprehensive Plan

Introduction: **Mariana Fragomeni**, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture at UConn

Seminar: **Siqu Zhu**, Associate Principal | Director of Planning and Urban Technology at Sasaki

- Describe current trends shaping small-city comprehensive plans, including housing diversification ("missing middle"), climate-ready streetscapes/green infrastructure, and multimodal corridor retrofits.
- Evaluate Stamford 2035 case studies to select transferable tools, including zoning/overlay mechanisms, nature-based solutions, and public-realm design standards, based on differing community, market, and infrastructure conditions.

5:30 - 6:30 Happy Hour and Networking

Stick around for a happy hour with professionals and students! One drink voucher and light snacks provided with registration, cash bar available.

SPEAKERS



Nette Compton, President and CEO, Mill River Park Collaborative

Nette Compton is the President & CEO of Mill River Park Collaborative, a world-class urban park in the heart of Stamford that serves as both a green oasis and a vibrant hub for community engagement, environmental stewardship, and learning. She assumed the role in early 2022 after eight years with The Trust for Public Land, where she served as AVP and Director of Strategy, leading strategic planning, creative placemaking, and initiatives around climate, community health, and equity. A licensed landscape architect, Nette holds a master's degree in Urban Horticulture from Cornell University and brings deep experience in public parks, green infrastructure, and organizational management.



Vincent Piselli, Senior Manager of Landcare, Mill River Park Collaborative

Vincent Piselli is the Senior Land Manager at Mill River Park Collaborative, leading a team of eight staff. As a founding staff member, Vincent has dedicated 18 years to shaping the park's natural spaces and strengthening community connections through hands-on restoration. His leadership in community engagement and natural areas restoration is a cornerstone of the park's success. Vincent holds a degree from the University of Connecticut. He is certified as an Accredited Organic Land Care Professional (AOLCP) through the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) and is an active member of the Connecticut Nursery and Landscape Association (CNLA).



Jill Desimini, Associate Professor and Program Director of Landscape Architecture at UConn

Jill Desimini is a landscape architect and Program Director and Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Connecticut. She is author of *Cyclical City: Five Stories of Urban Transformation* (UVA Press, 2022), *From Fallow: 100 Ideas for Abandoned Urban Landscapes*, (ORO 2019) co-author of *Cartographic Grounds: Projecting the Landscape Imaginary* (PAP 2016). Prior to joining UConn, she taught at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, and worked at Stoss Landscape Urbanism, Atkin Olshin Schade Architects, Wallace, Roberts, and Todd, Kieran Timberlake, and the City of New York.



Kate Tooke, Principal at Agency Landscape + Planning

Kate Tooke, a landscape architect and principal of Agency Landscape + Planning, has focused her career on the intersection of community and public space. She leverages a diverse background as an educator, an engineer and a landscape architect into a practice unabashedly passionate about connecting people to the urban environment. Kate's listening-oriented approach to project leadership as well as her strategic thinking, design eye, and technical acumen have been instrumental in the success of diverse projects ranging from master planning to site-scale work and extending coast to coast. She is a prominent national voice in the movement towards contextual adventure playgrounds.



Mariana Fragomeni, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture at UConn

Mariana is an assistant professor in the Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture of the University of Connecticut. She has a PhD in Integrative Conservation and Geography (2019) and Master degree in Environmental Planning and Design (2014) from the University of Georgia, a specialist degree in Sustainable Environmental Rehabilitation in Architecture and Urbanism from the Universidade de Brasilia (2011), in Brazil, and a bachelor degree in Architecture and Urbanism from the Universidade Federal da Bahia (2008), in Brazil. Mariana has experience in urban planning and architecture, as well as expertise in urban climatology with a focus on climate adaptation, bioclimatic architecture, and energy efficiency.



Siqi Zhu, Associate Principal | Director of Planning and Urban Technology at Sasaki

Siqi's work in Urban Technology revolves around the design and implementation of purposeful, responsible, and value-aligned technology applications in cities, with a focus on promoting sustainability, resilience, engagement, and value creation. His current projects include technology master plans for urban districts, urban data science initiatives, and the development of urban technology prototypes and pilots. This new practice builds upon Sasaki's established strengths in planning and design, creating a holistic and integrated problem-solving capacity for clients seeking to address their diverse needs across space, technology, user experience, and strategy.