



Elisabeth Haub School of Law Environmental Law & Policy Hack Competition
Inaugural Problem

Local governments are widely recognized as key actors with respect to both adaptation to and mitigation of climate change, which is forcing local governments to reimagine and reshape their communities. One important question for the forward-looking design of communities is whether and how vegetative landscapes – engineered wetlands, green roofs, parks, tree cover— should be created or managed to help communities mitigate and adapt to climate change. With respect to mitigation, vegetative landscapes can sequester carbon and lower energy use in buildings. With respect to adaptation, vegetative landscapes can aid in the management of water (particularly during extreme precipitation events) and reduce building and neighborhood temperatures.

Local governments considering policies for the management of vegetative space must, however, navigate complex considerations about the design, efficacy, and implementation of laws and policies related to the creation and management of vegetative spaces. To what extent can community vegetative space sequester carbon and how must such spaces be managed to do so effectively? By how much can they lower energy use in buildings? What are the long-term costs to manage mitigation or adaptation-oriented vegetative spaces, such as green roofs? Are there potential conflicts between mitigation and adaptation goals? For example, increased tree cover can sequester carbon but may pose a toppling hazard during extreme weather events. Are there co-benefits to vegetative spaces that local governments should consider? What obstacles do existing local laws pose to climate-friendly vegetative spaces and what new laws and policies are needed to promote and manage them effectively? Can state agencies help, how, and to what extent?

We invite you to contemplate the complex law and policy questions posed by local management of climate-friendly vegetative spaces and to offer nuanced analysis and concrete guidance for (a) specific communit(ies) facing these questions. How can and should the local government use its legal authority and financial resources to produce and manage climate-friendly vegetative landscapes that promote mitigation and/or adaptation? What local laws frustrate this objective and how should they be reformed?

Teams are invited to select a specific jurisdiction upon which to focus or to make a proposal addressed to common/typical municipal laws.

Submission requirements:

- o Participating teams must develop one or more strategies within the control of local governments to maximize the effectiveness of vegetative landscapes as a mitigation and adaptation measure and apply those strategies to one or more communities.
- o Teams must submit an implementation plan that demonstrates how the target community or communities will adopt plans, policies, laws, or financial initiatives to carry out the recommended strategies.
- o Submissions must include an analysis of relevant legal authority, the strategies that this authority permits, the barriers in current local law to carrying out those strategies, and prescriptions for removing those barriers.