

Can Street Graphics Rewrite Urban Futures?

Not just decoration—supergraphics as tools for collective memory and action.

Swipe for insights →

Chicago neighborhoods

Case Study Locations

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign researchers used three Chicago neighborhoods as real-world laboratories for reimagining public space.

Altshuler and Thomas applied graphic design not as ornamentation but as a structural force—transforming sidewalks, plazas, and intersections into participatory environments. Their work reveals that graphics can reconfigure how communities move, remember, and belong. This shift from passive signage to active spatial storytelling is foundational for future AgTech AI systems that must interface with human meaning, not just data.

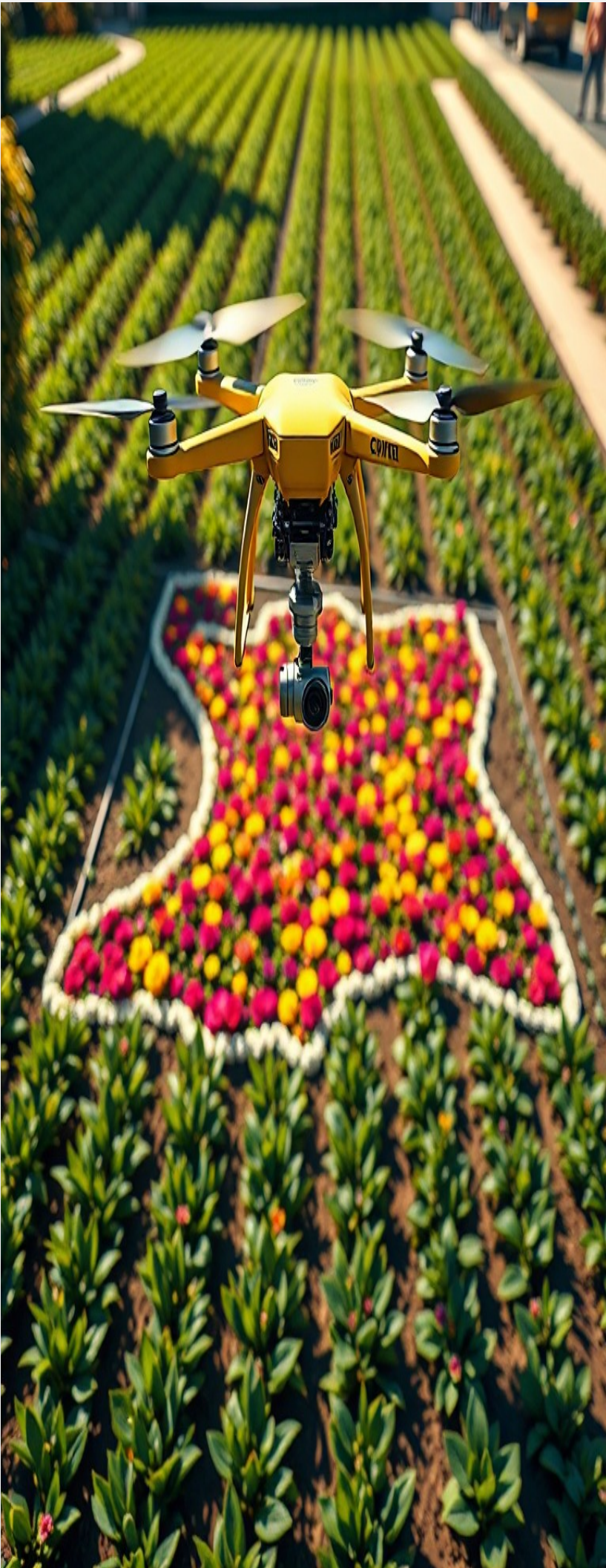
Source: University of Illinois News Bureau • Published October 03, 2026
<https://news.illinois.edu/illinois-researchers-look-at-how-graphic-design-can-transform-the-built-environment/>



01

Graphics as World-Building Tools

The researchers argue that graphics don't just convey information—they construct environments. In AgTech AI, this means that data visualization isn't just about output; it's about shaping perception, memory, and collective behavior. For example, AI-driven soil mapping could be rendered as a 'supergraphic' across a field, where visual cues guide not just machines, but farmers' embodied understanding of land health. This transforms data from a report into a lived experience.



02

From Sign to Landscape

The authors emphasize that when people walk on letters—like the Black Lives Matter mural in D.C.—they inhabit the message. In agriculture, this suggests that AI-generated field patterns shouldn't just be digital overlays; they should be physically integrated into the land as tactile, sensory experiences. Think of drone-sown crop patterns that form visible, walkable narratives—reminding farmers of past yields, climate risks, or community stewardship. This is not just precision agriculture; it's precision memory.

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