

Honorary Membership Nomination Narrative

Nominee: Mary Alice Lee

Nominee's Address: Trust for Public Land, 666 Broadway, 9th Floor

City/State/Zip: New York, NY 10012

Phone: (212) 677-7171

Nominator: Nette Compton, ASLA-NY Chapter President & Jennifer Nitzky, ASLA-NY Chapter President Elect

Mary Alice Lee has been a member of the New York City community since birth, born and raised on Staten Island. The fact that her mother, a science teacher, was always taking her children to parks on the weekends is no small surprise, given the contributions she has making throughout her career.

With an undergraduate degree from Cornell and a masters in urban planning from Hunter College, Mary Alice began to work toward her goal of adding green space to New York City. She began at the New York City Parks Department, where she helped with acquisitions for projects in Manhattan. Her next position, as an environmental planner at a private firm, gave her invaluable experience in designing parks and overseeing construction. That background made Mary Alice a perfect fit for a 2002 project manager opening in the Trust for Public Land (TPL) New York office, working to convert underutilized schoolyards into neighborhood parks.

Through this program, Mary Alice navigates a complex process with more consistent cheer and persistence than one can fathom. She plays a significant role in the many moving parts that are required to pull together a single playground with multiple municipal agencies to please. She coordinates funding sources from both private donors and public agencies - a unique combination that often enables projects that otherwise wouldn't be possible. She engages with the schools, who serve as excellent partners because they have a built-in population of users - the students who would use the site every day - and with the custodians, a built-in maintenance staff as well. It is forging this partnership where Mary Alice really shines. Her dedication to community engagement has empowered New York City students to dream big and see change before their eyes in almost 200 schoolyards across New York City, touching the lives of tens of thousands of students and community members.

For example, at P.S.38, TPL, led by Mary Alice, helped bring on board the New York Life Foundation and the Charles Hayden Foundation, and oversaw the community meetings and workshops that comprise TPL's participatory design process. Because the playgrounds are used during non-school hours by the entire neighborhood, community involvement is crucial. Input from the school children helps guide the design process and the final result is a vibrant play space that reflects the local culture and meets the needs of its users. Mary Alice has honed a process over the years that ensure quality

and in-depth community engagement and satisfaction, while producing sites for low cost and on an incredible fast timeline. More recently, her team has incorporated green infrastructure elements into the engagement and design processes, adding environmental and educational benefits to these sites simultaneously.

Getting these kinds of results might suggest that she would be a difficult client, with so many requirements and players with cost and time limitations. The reality couldn't be further from this. Every landscape architect who has worked with her has nothing but the most flattering things to say about Mary Alice, including myself. In many ways, from the importance of these projects to the pleasure she is to work with, she is the ideal client.

When you think about how many students pass through the hundreds of schools that Mary Alice has impacted, you start to realize just how many lives she has impacted. But her influence does not end there. She is always more than happy to share her knowledge and experience, working with Trust for Public Land offices from Newark, New Jersey to Los Angeles, CA, with Denver and Philadelphia in between. This selfless dedication to share her success and strengthen this model sets Mary Alice apart.

Mary Alice is also an advocate for landscape architecture through various media sources and has been quoted, written about and interviewed by many local and national news media. She has presented at several conferences and workshops nationally and continues to be the go-to expert on playground participatory design. Some examples of press Mary Alice has been in are listed below.

Our chapter is not the only one to recognize the importance of her achievements. Her work has been covered in the New York Times, New York Daily News and New York 1 network, as well as celebrated throughout the New York City government. Given the reach and impact of her work, as well as her dedication to building strong working relationships with landscape architects, I wholeheartedly nominate her for the designation of Honorary ASLA.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nette Compton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "N" and "C".

Nette Compton
ASLA-NY Chapter President

Supporting Press:

New York City and the Trust for Public Land Create "Green" Playground at p.s. 261 in Brooklyn That Will Manage Stormwater and Improve the Health of the Gowanus Canal
http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/html/press_releases/13-099pr.shtml#UxUpGYVWKZM

Getting Lessons on Water by Designing a Playground, NYTimes
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/08/nyregion/queens-students-get-water-lessons-by-designing-playground.html? r=0>



March 5, 2014

Honorary Membership Nomination Committee
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Members of the Honorary Membership Committee:

It is with great enthusiasm that Annette Wilkus, Founding Principal and Melissa Potter Ix, Principal at Site Works Landscape Architecture write in support of Mary Alice Lee's nomination for honorary membership to the American Society of Landscape Architects. Mary Alice's career has been dedicated to promoting positive change in the urban environment always working closely with landscape architects to achieve and enhance this goal.

As Program Director for the City Spaces Program at the Trust for Public Land since 2002, Mary Alice has spearheaded the transformation of over fifty underutilized asphalt schoolyards into public community parks and playground. We have had the honor to participate in this effort over the last twelve years, working with Mary Alice to champion sustainable initiatives and introduce green infrastructure into these well used and much loved public spaces. She has embraced the role of landscape architects in our efforts to promote water efficiency in the schoolyards through planting native species, collecting water on site and directing it to rain gardens, reducing impervious surfaces, increasing tree canopy coverage, as well as incorporating outdoor nature classrooms. She has welcomed our efforts to include innovative new design interventions into the schoolyards such as green roof gazebos and learning laboratories.

The cornerstone of the City Spaces Program is a three month participatory design process that engages the students, teachers and community through hands-on site specific curriculum. Lessons addressing the "seven S's of site design – size/shape, sun/shade, slope, surroundings/sounds, site history, stormwater management and sustainability encourages active participation in the design of their new playground and fosters community stewardship initiatives. Through this participatory design program, Mary Alice continues to be a strong advocate for the profession and landscape architects are in the classrooms, assemblies and PTA meetings teaching the students, their families and faculty about the role of landscape architecture in the design of their new playground. Under Mary Alice's leadership over 50,000 New Yorkers





throughout the five boroughs have been introduced to the importance of landscape architecture in the development of public open space and the preservation of our natural resources. Through Mary Alice's efforts a new generation now understands the importance of stormwater management and landscape stewardship, as well as how one can reverse the effects of global warming. Through her tireless advocacy, we believe there will be a greater number of students who will choose Landscape Architecture as a profession.

Beyond the classroom, Mary Alice has made sure that landscape architects lead the multi-disciplinary teams of professionals needed for the design development, construction documentation and construction management of this ground breaking community playground effort. Based on Mary Alice's successes in the New York metropolitan area, The Trust for Public Land is now expanding its Schoolyards to Playground Program throughout the United States and continuing to promote the important role of Landscape Architecture. We cannot imagine a more loyal and devoted champion of our profession and therefore a more worthy nominee for honorary membership. We both believe without reservation and whole heartedly endorse Mary Alice Lee to be nominated as an honorary member of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Sincerely,

Annette Wilkus, FASLA
Founding Principal

Melissa Potter Ix, ASLA
Principal



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Gina Perez
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February 25, 2014

Honorary Membership Nomination
ASLA
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington DC 20001-3736

To Members of the Nominating Committee:

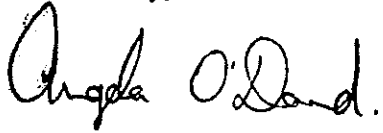
I am writing to highly recommend Mary Alice Lee for an honorary membership in the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA). As Director of the NYC Playgrounds Program for The Trust for Public Land, Mary Alice is responsible for a program that has provided playgrounds for 385,000 students and their families across the five boroughs of New York City. At each of the 185 playgrounds she has worked on, the students were involved in designing their own schoolyards through a unique participatory design process. They measured the size of their schoolyards, analyzed existing conditions, discussed what activities they would like to see in the playground and surveyed their classmates and communities to gauge the most popular items. The children used templates and a base map to determine how they could fit all of the amenities into their schoolyard and considered the budget while making choices. At the end of the process, the students presented their final designs for a school-wide vote and the winning design was chosen to be built. Through this process, the students of P.S. 62 and all the other schools learned what it was like to be a landscape architect. At the end of the process, several students mentioned they would consider landscape architecture as a career. They also developed a strong sense of ownership as the playground that they designed was built in front of their eyes. This ownership ensures that they help keep the playground in good condition.

My school playground at P.S. 62 in Richmond Hill, Queens, with its play equipment, basketball courts, tennis courts, artificial turf field, track, outdoor classroom area and garden, is a great resource for my students and our surrounding community, who use the yard afterschool and on the weekends. This program has made a big difference to our neighborhood and I thank Mary Alice for her leadership and determination in guiding the process from site selection through design and construction. I also appreciate the stewardship she has provided us with, including a scheduling a volunteer gardening work day and providing annual bulbs

and flowers for our garden. Through this support, she ensures that the playground helps remain well-maintained and beautiful.

I believe Mary Alice deserves this honor for her tireless efforts and enthusiasm in introducing the field of landscape architecture to thousands of New York City public school children through the design of school playgrounds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Angela O'Dowd". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name.

Angela O'Dowd
Principal, P.S. 62



Carter H. Strickland, Jr.
Commissioner

Angela Licata
Deputy Commissioner of
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March 4, 2014

Honorary Membership Nomination
ASLA
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington DC 20001-3736

To Members of the Nominating Committee:

I am writing to recommend Mary Alice Lee for an honorary membership in the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA). As Director of the NYC Playgrounds Program for The Trust for Public Land, Mary Alice is responsible for a special public-private partnership among the NYC Department of Environmental Protection, the NYC Department of Education, the NYC School Construction Authority and The Trust for Public Land to design and build green infrastructure playgrounds on NYC schoolyards. Each playground is designed to capture up to one inch of stormwater when it rains, thereby easing pressure on the city's sewer system and improving the health of local waterways.

Working with the students and community members of each school through a participatory design process, Mary Alice ensures that each schoolyard has all of the recreation elements the school needs for playtime, but also the components to help slow or prevent water from entering the NYC sewer system. Each playground is designed to incorporate green infrastructure elements such as rain gardens, artificial turf fields with a gravel underlay, tree swales with pervious pavers and green roofs on storage sheds or gazebos.

Of the three Brooklyn playgrounds already opened, each averages nearly 500,000 gallons of stormwater annually. Additional sites are currently in construction or in design.

Mary Alice Lee would be a great asset to the American Society of Landscape Architects and I endorse her honorary membership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Angela Licata'.

Angela Licata
Deputy Commissioner of Sustainability
NYC Department of Environmental Protection



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February 26, 2014

Honorary Membership Nomination

ASLA

636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Dear ASLA Nominating Committee,

It is my great pleasure to nominate Mary Alice Lee for an Honorary ASLA Membership. I have known Mary Alice for over eleven years and have been fortunate enough to have worked closely with her on several school sites for the New York City Playground Program. Through this program I have witnessed the incredible passion Mary Alice has for providing communities and school children with high quality, sustainable environments. Through this program, The Trust for Public Land, led by Mary Alice, allows students to not only learn about landscape architecture but to also to put on the hat of a landscape designer through the 10 week program. She does a great deal to promote our profession and for this she deserves to be an honorary member.

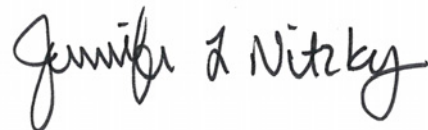
As Director of the New York City Playground Program, Mary Alice makes dreams of green schoolyards and lively community playgrounds a reality, especially in neighborhoods underserved by quality parks. Through the unique 10 week participatory design process for which the NYC Playground Program is based upon, Mary Alice and her team of designers and environmental educators work directly with each school's students, teachers and staff to fully design the playground - from site analysis, user equity discussions and design element decisions through the stewardship and maintenance of the built site. There is nothing more rewarding than seeing the excitement of the students on opening day of their new playground, showing incredible pride in the built environment that they created and will enjoy for many years to come. Mary Alice is the recipient of many hugs from the students and faculty, handshakes from local politicians and community leaders, interviews from local press - and great respect from fellow landscape architects and environmentalists.

When children's eyes are opened to the world of landscape architecture through analyzing, designing and witnessing the construction of their own playground, it can only benefit our profession by adding future landscape architectural designers and leaders to continue our stewardship. With Mary Alice Lee and her team at The Trust for Public Land, this has become a reality. Several students at the end of the participatory design workshops have commented that they hope to go on to college and study landscape architecture.

Mary Alice also actively participates in ASLA-NY events and lectures. Our chapter warmly welcomes her as part of our community and looks to her as a leader in playground development. Last May, Mary Alice teamed up with Sharon Danks to present *Reimagining School Grounds: Local NYC and International Perspectives on Schoolyard Greening* to our members for CEU credit. The presentation by both leaders in children's outdoor learning environments was very well received and attended.

Mary Alice demonstrates a sincere appreciation and full understanding of landscape architecture and sustainable design. She promotes our profession in so many ways that positively influence children and community members to have a better understanding of landscape architecture. I wholeheartedly endorse Mary Alice and recommend your consideration for this well-deserved honor. Our profession would greatly benefit more members like Mary Alice Lee.

Thank you kindly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer L. Nitzky". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer L. Nitzky, RLA, ASLA, ISA

ASLA-NY PRESIDENT-ELECT

