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LaGasse Medal Nominations, Non-landscape architect category
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Dear Executive Committee Members,

I am writing to nominate a leader of remarkable vision and skills. As Director of Seattle Center, Virginia Anderson has spearheaded the creation of a dynamic and inspiring 87-acre urban park in the heart of Seattle. In the 16 years that she has overseen Seattle Center, Virginia transformed a shabby, worn-down World's Fair (1962) site into a flourishing cultural campus with 31 facilities, a \$34 million budget, 5,000 annual events, and 10 million annual visitors.

Particularly, Virginia has instilled into this green open space a vision for community. It is Virginia's strongly held belief that "place" and "community" must share a common space, experiences, a sense of beauty, surprises, and freedom. This is what Seattle Center has to offer due, in large part, to Virginia's outstanding leadership.

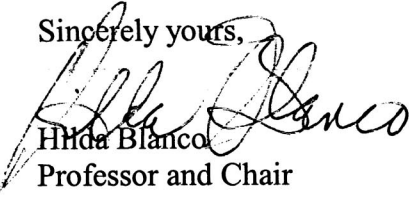
The Seattle Center she has developed is where her daughter Maile sees Asian faces just like hers in the ballet, where Jewish and Arab festivals are held, where Beethoven and Nirvana are heard, where children of all ethnicities splash side-by-side in the magnificent sprays of the 27 foot wide International Fountain, where visitors to the Space Needle are suddenly delighted by Tibetan songs, and where senior citizens do the foxtrot during lunch. These are just a few examples of what happens here. "Here" is where people want to be, in the midst of a beautiful public place, both reflective and vibrant.

After experiencing Seattle Center as an urban planning professional, it is remarkable that a leader without formal design training has created what many would point to when asked "what is a great public place?" Through the master plan she developed in 1990 and again revised in 2000, the campus is made up of public outdoor rooms landscaped with native flora and public art and bordered by cultural facilities that dot the campus. Inside these spaces, families and small groups can achieve a sense of intimacy and familiarity while still feel connected to a larger whole. The campus' centerpiece, the International Fountain, is a design that unifies visitors who naturally gravitate towards its shooting gusts of water, rising upwards of 120 feet high.

In hindsight, it is no wonder that the Fountain and the green space around it became a nucleus for citizens to gather in the wake of September 11th. Virginia has injected open space with the added component of community. She has done so by creating a symbiotic relationship between open space and people that places supreme importance on spontaneous contact among visitors of different backgrounds, race, age, and points of view.

Overall, Virginia Anderson has the esteem of the design community and public officials alike. She inspires trust in her vision for this gem in the heart of Seattle. I wholeheartedly endorse her nomination for the LaGasse Medal.

Sincerely yours,



Hilda Blanco
Professor and Chair