



February 5, 2021

ASLA Community Service Award Nominations  
c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Dear ASLA Community Service Award Nominations, Executive Committee:

I am honored and delighted to nominate Ernest C. Wong, FASLA, for the American Society of Landscape Architects 2021 Community Service Award.

I have known Ernie since 2007, when I joined *site design group, ltd. (site)*, the firm he started with fellow Principal Robert Sit in 1990. Following in the footsteps of his father, the celebrated architect Y.C. Wong, FAIA, Ernie chose to pursue a design profession, receiving his Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from Michigan State in 1985. For the past 37 years, Ernie has shown exceptional leadership in landscape architecture, excelling not only in the award-winning projects, but also through an immense amount of local and nationally-based service and outreach. Through a dedication to community service, outreach, and collaboration, Ernie has guided the firm and the profession of landscape architecture in Chicago toward a mindset of giving back.

### **Local Leadership**

Born and raised in Chicago, his service is rooted in the diverse and multi-faceted communities within the politically and culturally complex City of Chicago. As a second generation Chinese American, Ernie has embraced his cultural roots, working tirelessly to advocate for the Chinese community within Chicago and across the country. Since 2006, Ernie has served on the Board of Directors for the Chinese American Service League, the largest social service agency serving Chinese Americans in the Midwest. This \$12M organization provides essential social services, job training, and education for the growing community of 54,000 residents in the City of Chicago. Assuming the role of Chair of the Board from 2008 until 2018, the agency continued to grow and flourish, despite the economic downturn and state funding cuts.

After making his name in Chicago as a Landscape Architect and Chinese American, in 2007, Mayor Richard M. Daley appointed Ernie to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, replacing former First Lady Michelle Obama. For many years, Ernie continued serving on the eight-person commission as the only trained design professional overseeing all of Chicago's landmarked buildings and districts. In recent years, he has helped shape the commission to include a diverse group of men and women that reflect the cultural diversity of the City and all facets of the design community, although he remains the only Landscape Architect. As part of his role on the commission, he dedicates a full day every month to scrutinizing the designs of nearly every architect in the city, whether they are proposing preservation or creating a contemporary addition to a landmarked building or district. Earlier this week, Ernie began his tenure as Chair of the Commission, an honor that Mayor Lori Lightfoot appointed him to in recognition of his substantial contributions and dedication over the past 14 years. Preceding his role as the Chair, he served as the Vice Chair and Chair of the Permitting Committee (2018-2021).

Ernie volunteers countless hours on numerous other boards and organizations throughout Chicago, including the Advisory Board for the Chinatown Special Service Assessment (SSA), an organization that is set up to improve infrastructure in Chinatown and the Near South Planning Board, which serves as a watchdog and advocacy group for smart planning in the Near South District of Chicago. Other positions include the Chicago Botanic Garden Board of Trustees, the Museum of Science and Industry's President's Council, and most recently, the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events Monuments and Memorials Committee (2020-present) and the Department of Planning and Development's ad hoc Design Excellence Committee, formed in 2020 by Commissioner Maurice Cox. Ernie also previously served on the City of Chicago Commission on Cultural Affairs

(2011-2019), as an advisor and facilitator for the development of Chicago's Wabash Arts Corridor, and on the boards of the Friends of Downtown (2003-2007), and the Chicago Public Art Group (2005-2009). Beyond traditional boards and commissions, Ernie also freely participates on other volunteer positions, including the 2016 Chicago Olympic Committee and serving on Mayoral Transition Teams for Mayors Rahm Emanuel (2011) and Lori Lightfoot (2019).

### National Service

In 2011, Ernie was first invited to participate in the National Mayor's Institute on City Design (MICD), in which he has since served as a panelist and seminar speaker on numerous occasions, focusing on the issues that challenge urban cities. The impact of showing public leaders the value of Landscape Architecture in city design and planning led to an invitation to participate in the American Architecture Foundation's City Design Leadership Forum, where he participated among two dozen mayors, planners, and business leaders in developing ideas to improve our nation's cities.

Ernie has also volunteered his time to serve on numerous other national boards and institutes, including the Enterprise Community Partners' Affordable Housing Design Leadership Institute (2013), the Landscape Architecture Foundation (2019-Present), and the City Parks Alliance (2020-Present). Over the past several years, Ernie has also served ASLA on the Student Award Jury and the Education Session Review Committee.

Prior to his inauguration to the Board of the Directors of the Student Conservation Association (SCA) in 2012, Ernie served on the Green Urban Design panel at their EarthVision Summit in 2008. The panel challenged the diversity of participants in our National Parks, as well as the impact of green spaces in urban areas, and spurred the SCA's Urban Youth Program, which has now been instituted in 18 major cities throughout the United States. In fact, the program became so popular that the SCA opened a branch office in Chicago. As a SCA Board member, Ernie's first order of business was to assist in connecting SCA with ASLA in order to establish a program that exposes urban youth to Landscape Architecture – an initiative that he is still active in today, even after his tenure on the Board of Directors ended in 2019.

### Turning Vision into Reality

One of Ernie's most notable attributes is his dedication to bettering people's lives and his ability to mobilize and excite others in the work he is doing. He has been able to leverage this skill and his vast network of nonprofits, community organizations, and civic agencies he serves on to create real change on the ground. By engaging the community and facilitating conversations early in the design process, Ernie has been able to create meaningful, engaging, and socially and culturally significant spaces – a value he has instilled in Landscape Architects, design professionals and community members throughout the City. Through Ernie's leadership and the implementation of these visionary projects, he contributes to positive change in the communities he works so diligently for – especially in those that are underserved and disinvested. As described by Eleanor Gorski, the former First Deputy Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD), who has worked with Ernie over the past 20 years, *"In my capacity at DPD, I worked with Ernie on all types of projects and his commitment to community-based design and access is a centerpiece of his work. In particular, his public parks work and participation in the Invest Southwest Initiative has opened up many of Chicago's communities to the power of design where there previously had been a deficit."*

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1990 - Present  
Principal, *site design group, ltd. (site)*

1987 - 1990  
Project Manager, Y.C. Wong & Associates

1986 - 1987  
Project Manager, Daniel Weinbach & Associates

1983 - 1984  
Project Designer, Michael J. Dul & Associates

### SERVICE ACTIVITIES + LEADERSHIP

2020-Present  
Chicago Botanic Garden, Board of Directors

2020-Present  
City Parks Alliance, Board of Directors

2020-Present  
City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development Ad Hoc Design Excellence Committee

2020-Present  
City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, Monuments and Memorials Committee

2019-Present  
Landscape Architecture Foundation, Board of Directors

2019  
Mayor Lori Lightfoot Transition Team, Environment Committee

2013-Present  
Museum of Science and Industry, President's Council

2013-Present  
Chinatown Chamber of Commerce, SSA Advisory Board

2013  
Enterprise's Affordable Housing Design Leadership Institute

2012-2019  
Student Conservation Association, Board of Directors

2011-2015  
Mayor Rahm Emanuel Ad-Hoc Committee on Design and Planning

### ***"Instant Park" Urban Greening***

Building off of his Board service for the SCA, in 2018, Ernie spearheaded Chicago's Urban Greening initiative – a collaboration between the SCA, Timberland, and local communities to create and restore green spaces in three urban cities across the nation. Ernie led the site selection, coordination with governmental agencies, solicitation of donations, and the logistics and implementation of Chicago's community beautification event. The "Instant Park" transformed a vacant and underutilized lot into a vibrant public space over a six-hour timeframe in a single day. The project also included site clean-up at four nearby sites and the construction of two community gardens. Located along the Blue Island Corridor on Chicago's Near West Side – a predominately Latino and African American neighborhood – the project was made possible with the help of 100 community volunteers, which included officers from the nearby police district precinct, U.S. Forest Service staff members, and residents and business owners from the Blue Island community.

### ***Positioning Pullman***

In addition to his involvement in local and national organizations, Ernie has demonstrated a strong commitment to community engagement projects that embrace challenged and disinvested neighborhoods. One such example is the Pullman National Monument. Designated a national monument by President Obama in February 2015, Pullman historically provided the setting for the evolution of industry and transportation, the foundation of labor law, and the advancement of civil liberties for African Americans. After decades of disinvestment, it sat vacant and crumbling. On the heels of the Pullman's national designation, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Chicago Chapter and the National Parks Conservation Association conducted a three-day "collaborative ideas workshop" led by local design professionals. The purpose of the workshop was to engage the public and the design community in a conversation to enhance visitor experience and advance community development goals across Pullman.

Ernie served as the leader for the Park Experience team – one of 40 volunteer architects, landscape architects, city planners, economists, and engineers. Input was collected from the over 500 diverse stakeholders who attended the series of engagement events, which directly influenced a guiding vision: Positioning Pullman. The culmination of thousands of volunteer hours, the document provides a clear and exciting vision for the future of the national monument that seeks to share stories of innovation from the 19th Century and demonstrate 21st Century best practices for neighborhood and building development. Since then, Ernie has led *site's* involvement in realizing the Positioning Pullman vision, including an ongoing, pro-bono Action Plan for Pullman Park, a small, forgotten green space adjacent to the National Monument, demonstrating his long-standing commitment to the communities he serves.

### ***75th Street Boardwalk***

In the wake of the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Sean Reed, and many others, and the subsequent unrest in 2020, it was never more apparent that as a firm, a profession, and a community, we all needed to stand in solidarity with the Black community and everyone taking action against these injustices. As many of us took time to reflect and further prioritize racial justice in all aspects of our lives and businesses, Ernie began meeting with a group of local design professionals with shared values. Through this group, he took action in leading the visioning, and later the management, design, and construction of the 75th Street Boardwalk. This unique, short-term placemaking and tactical urbanism project was a collaboration with the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development, the Greater Chatham Initiative – a nonprofit community organization that works to invest in southside communities – and an initiative known as

#### **SERVICE ACTIVITIES + LEADERSHIP, CONTINUED.**

2011-2020  
City of Chicago Commission on Cultural Affairs, Commissioner

2011  
Mayor Rahm Emanuel Transition Team, Economic Development and Planning Committee

2010-Present  
Chicago Architecture Foundation, Strategic Planning and Public Programs Committee

2009-Present  
Chinese American Service League, Board of Directors  
2009 - 2018: Chair of the Board

2008-2009  
Chicago 2016 Olympic Committee

2006-Present  
City of Chicago Commission on Landmarks, Commissioner  
2021 - Present: Chair  
2018 - 2021: Vice Chair  
2018 - 2021: Chair, Permitting Committee

2006-Present  
Lambda Alpha International, The Honorary Society For The Advancement of Land Economics, Member

2005- 2009  
Chicago Public Art Group, Board of Directors

2004-Present  
Near South Planning Board, Board of Directors  
Chair of the Board, 2021-Present

2004  
Chicago Christian Industrial League, Events Committee

2003-2007  
Friends of Downtown Chicago, Board of Directors

1995-Present  
American Society of Landscape Architects, Member  
Fellow and Student Award Juror  
Illinois Chapter, Member and Marketing Committee

All Reimagining Chicago (ARC). Together, this project sought to bring together designers and community organizations to create outdoor dining solutions for neighborhoods and businesses in need. From inception to completion, this project took place over a mere 12-week timeframe.

Located in the heart of Chatham along a commercial corridor, the Boardwalk activates the public right-of-way by replacing on-street parking spaces with safe outdoor dining and gathering opportunities for adjacent Black-owned businesses and their patrons. A series of modules create outdoor rooms with individual programming that ranges from seating, dining, fitness, and lawn games, and directly serves adjacent businesses, which include restaurants, salons, and a bakery. Through grassroots outreach, more than 50 volunteers gathered to paint the Boardwalk bright green – a color selected through community input. When the project needed funding, Ernie was the first one to go out and solicit donations from businesses around the City, obtaining more than \$200,000 in monetary and in-kind donations, without which, this project could not have been possible.

In addition to the organization and management of this project, Ernie was adamant that we needed to give back to the community through the process. Local residents, business owners, and community leaders were deeply involved in all stages of the project – from the initial meet-and-greet, to the painted murals, to the construction of the Boardwalk itself. A key to the project's mission was to connect Black contractors with Black youth in the community to empower them by teaching them carpentry and construction skills through simple design and construction methods. Adding another layer to the project, the boardwalk was made from utilized repurposed plywood that was used to board up local businesses earlier in 2020.

### **Inspiring the Next Generation**

Ernie has dedicated his career to community service and leadership through participation in public service organizations, community-based service work, and pro-bono projects. His dedication has impacted people and communities at many levels and in many different places. By demonstrating what it means as a professional to give your time to and for the betterment of others, freely and without asking for anything in return, Ernie has instilled a culture of service to our entire team and the countless other Landscape Architects and design professionals he engages. He has encouraged others to get involved in a way that is meaningful to them – whether it is volunteering for one of the many pro-bono projects he initiates, getting involved in a service organization, or by organizing their own initiatives. Most importantly, Ernie's service work has benefited communities across Chicago – many in disadvantaged and disinvested neighborhoods – in a powerful and lasting way. As his service continues, I have no doubt his influence will only continue to grow, reaching design professionals, students, and community members throughout the nation; ultimately bringing visibility to Landscape Architecture and continuing to further our profession.

In recognition of Ernie's outstanding dedication and tenure of service, it is my sincere pleasure to enthusiastically nominate Ernest C. Wong for ASLA's prestigious Community Service Award.

Sincerely,



Bradley McCauley, ASLA, CDT  
Managing Principal  
*site design group, ltd. (site)*

Vice President of Membership  
American Society of Landscape Architects





## CONTACT

**Ernest C. Wong**  
FASLA, APA

President and Principal  
*site design group, ltd.*

888 S Michigan Avenue  
Unit PH1  
Chicago, Illinois 60605  
(312) 427-7240 x102  
[ecwong@site-design.com](mailto:ecwong@site-design.com)  
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*"In my 11 years at LAF I've worked with nearly 100 board members who are leaders in landscape architecture and their community. I have never seen a board member with so much extensive community service or experience serving on local and national non-profit boards as Ernie Wong. He is a true gem and champion for youth, our communities, and landscape architecture."*

**Barbara Deutsch, FASLA**  
CEO, Landscape Architecture Foundation





## Instant Park” Chicago Urban Greening

A collaboration with the Student Conservation Association and the community, the “Instant Park” transformed a vacant and underutilized lot into a vibrant public space over a six-hour timeframe in a single day with the help of 100 community volunteers.





## 75th Street Boardwalk



This unique, short-term placemaking and tactical urbanism project activates the public right-of-way by replacing on-street parking spaces with safe outdoor dining and gathering opportunities for adjacent Black-owned businesses and their patrons. Watch the video at: <http://bit.ly/75thStreetBoardwalk>







Illinois Chapter of American  
Society of Landscape Architects

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February 05, 2021

ASLA Community Service Award Nominations  
c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

re: ASLA Community Service Award Nomination

Dear ASLA Executive Committee and Board of Trustees Members,

The Illinois Chapter of the ASLA is proud to support the nomination of Ernest (Ernie) Wong, FASLA, for the Community Service Award. Throughout his 37 year career in Chicago, and his 21 years of Chapter membership, Ernie has dedicated his service beyond practice to showcasing and advancing the principles of landscape architecture with his many arenas of influence. His service is visibly rooted in his commitment to access, awareness, and engagement with the next generation, with an impact that is immeasurable and invaluable for the profession nationwide.

Ernie has made it a personal and professional mission to increase access to the design profession and landscape architecture to communities across Chicago. As a child of Chinese immigrants, Ernie has personal ties to the Chicago Chinatown community, and as such, has played a key role in advancing the mission, vision, and values of Chinatown organizations and residents. He has served on the Board of the Chinese American Service League since 2009, and works closely with the Chinatown Chamber of Commerce and Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community. Ernie has also continuously partnered with some of Chicago's most disinvested neighborhoods throughout the South and West sides of Chicago, most recently through his leadership in the design, fundraising, and implementation of the 75th Street Boardwalk – a pro-bono urban design and community engagement project in the South Side Chatham neighborhood that provides safe outdoor dining and gathering spaces for adjacent Black-owned businesses.

These exemplary projects and his evergreen commitment to service is what makes Ernie invaluable to ILASLA and the landscape architecture profession. With his leadership, he has encouraged collaboration between diverse communities and the next generation of landscape architects.

Most recently, Ernie led a collaboration in the Fall of 2020 between the ILASLA and the Chinese American Service League (Chinatown neighborhood), El Hogar del Niño (Pilsen neighborhood), and Blacks in Green (Woodlawn neighborhood) for a two-part horticulture and landscape maintenance education series. The 'Ninja Gardening Education Series' was developed with the goal of engaging and teaching elementary through high school students how to identify invasive species, remove excess species, and maintain their community gardens.





Illinois Chapter of American Society of Landscape Architects

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This program successfully brought together three culturally diverse communities to work and learn together, exposing to the horticulture field in a dynamic and hands-on experience through the knowledgeable mentorship from Ernie and several other ILASLA members. This is one of many examples of his leadership and perseverance to provide opportunities for Asian, Latino, and Black youth in Chicago who may not have otherwise been exposed to horticulture or landscape architecture, especially in such an accessible and fun manner. The success and the connections gained also opened the doors for ILASLA to be able to replicate and build off of this program in the future, supporting the Chapter's mission to strengthen the pipeline from underrepresented communities into our profession.

Ernie's hands-on leadership style has not only materialized in several programs throughout the years, but he has also helped amplify a diverse new generation of landscape architects and Chapter leaders through his mentorship and support of his employees. He has fostered a culture that prioritizes a commitment of service to the profession and ASLA, and as such, under his encouragement and support, numerous site employees have served locally and nationally with the ASLA, ranging from ASLA Vice President of Membership to ILASLA Advocacy Committee Chair.

As a landscape architect, Ernie's commitment to communities of all backgrounds has created a stronger network of supporters of our profession, ranging from advocacy to education. His commitment to service and his hands-on approach has an impact that has reached beyond his own scope, and will broaden the future for ILASLA and the profession at large for generations. The Illinois Chapter is forever thankful for his service and will hold his work in the highest regard as an example for our future leaders.

Sincerely,

Magdalena Aravena, ASLA  
ILASLA President

Alan Watkins, ASLA  
ILASLA Trustee

Adam De Foor-White, ASLA  
ILASLA President-Elect

Sarah Dreier, ASLA  
ILASLA Treasurer

Rob Reuland, ASLA  
ILASLA Past-President

Cassandra Rice, ASLA  
ILASLA Secretary



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February 3, 2021

ASLA Community Service Award Nominations  
c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Dear Executive Committee,

It is my privilege to endorse Ernest Wong, FASLA, APA, for the ASLA Community Service Award. Ernie has dedicated his career to serving Chicago through inventive landscape design, leadership in supporting healthy and equitable communities, and advocacy for neighborhoods that others might overlook.

I have known Ernie for 14 years and have been amazed at how he immerses himself into the critical issues facing Chicago's neighborhoods. He uses his platform within the design and non-profit communities to identify the resources needed to innovate in solving complex issues that transcend normal landscape architecture. He also has a unique ability to build trust with people of all races and ethnicities throughout this city. As a result of his commitment and determination, Ernie has made communities healthier by making an investment in the people, creating transformative public outdoor experiences in underserved areas, and enhancing the distinct cultures found throughout Chicago's neighborhoods.

He is a deeply committed advocate for the Chinese community's businesses, families, and seniors. He has served on various boards and committees that impact all aspects of Chinatown. Ernie played a key role in significant projects in the area, including award-winning projects such as Ping Tom Park, Leonard Louie Fieldhouse, and the Chinatown Public Library. He also advocated for improvements to the streetscape and the Special Service Area in support of long-term success for local business owners.

His legacy is that of a leader and fierce advocate for great design for *all* residents of Chicago. His leadership in improving the Chicago River, for example, has yielded long term benefits for people and wildlife across the city. His involvement with the Chicago River Design Guidelines and creativity with the Chicago River Edge Ideas Lab demonstrates his ability to inspire and bring diverse constituencies together.

Ernie loves his city, builds enduring relationships, and is committed to making long lasting change within communities. His impact is abundantly evident in the thousands of lives he has touched both personally and professionally through his body of work. I offer the highest endorsement of Ernest Wong for the ASLA Community Service Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James Mark".

James Mark AIA LEED BD+C  
Chief Strategy Officer, Wight & Company  
Chairman of the Board, Chinese American Service League  
Vice President, Board Member, Friends of the Chicago River





January 25, 2021

ASLA Community Service Award Nominations  
c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

**RE: ASLA Community Service Award, Ernest C. Wong Nomination**

Dear ASLA Community Service Award Nominations, Executive Committee:

It is my honor to endorse Ernest C. Wong, FASLA, PLA for the 2021 American Society of Landscape Architects Community Service Award. Ernie has been an important leader in the City of Chicago and has demonstrated a deep dedication to service and bettering communities.

Ernie first began his tenure of service to the City of Chicago when he was appointed to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks by Mayor Richard M. Daley in 2007, replacing Michelle Obama as she moved onto her role as First Lady. Ernie now begins his 14<sup>th</sup> year of service on the Commission. Additionally, Ernie has served on the Mayoral Transition Teams for Mayor Rahm Emanuel (Economic Development Committee, 2011) and Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot (Environment Committee, 2019), the Commission on Cultural Affairs (2011-2020), and most recently serving as part of the Department of Planning and Development's Design Excellence Working Group.

In addition to Ernie's appointments to various Chicago boards and committees, I have had the opportunity to work closely with Ernie through the INVEST South/West initiative, an unprecedented community improvement initiative to marshal the resources of multiple City departments, community organizations, and corporate and philanthropic partners toward 10 communities on Chicago's South and West Sides. This initiative seeks to maximize public investment in these historically disinvested communities in order to attract significant additional private and philanthropic capital, respond to changing commercial trends, and enrich local culture. One of the most prominent Invest South/West projects was the 75<sup>th</sup> Street Boardwalk located between Greater Grand Crossing and Chatham neighborhoods. The Boardwalk activates the public right-of-way by replacing on-street parking spaces with safe outdoor dining and gathering opportunities for the Black-owned businesses and their patrons along 75<sup>th</sup> Street. The project connected Black contractors with Black youth in the community to empower them by teaching them carpentry and construction skills.

I am pleased to provide this letter of support for Ernie's nomination for the ASLA Community Service Award in recognition of his outstanding service to the City of Chicago, the profession of landscape architecture, and the communities throughout Chicago.

Sincerely,

Maurice D. Cox, Commissioner  
City of Chicago, Department of Planning and Development



February 1, 2021

ASLA Community Service Award Nominations  
c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Dear Honors & Awards Committee:

I am a member of the Greater Chatham Initiative, (GCI) team. We are a nonprofit based on the southside of Chicago Illinois. Our mission is to strategically invest in the Chicago communities of Chatham, Greater Grand Crossing, Avalon Park, and Auburn Gresham so they can re-emerge as communities of opportunity and choice.

In 2020 our businesses and community residents were adversely affected by the Covid-19 Coronavirus pandemic as were all communities around the globe. The restaurants along the 75<sup>th</sup> street coordinator in Greater Chatham were forced to close their doors and pivot.

The challenge that presented itself to us was how we save our business community and support our restaurants on the 75<sup>th</sup> street coordinator. Fortunately for us we were introduced to an amazing individual, Ernest C. Wong, principal of Site Design Group Ltd.

We had a variety of stakeholders, government, community organizations, businesses, and residents working together to find a solution. Ernie met with us on 75<sup>th</sup> street one weekday, his listened to our concerns, shared his vision and presented his concept of the 75<sup>th</sup> Street Boardwalk, with confidence and assuredness that we collectively could make this happen. He led the charge, from vision to design to implementation. He kept us motivated, helped fundraise, he was completely hands-on from start to finish.

The result, a beautiful boardwalk on Chicago's Southside Greater Chatham's 75<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor, Restaurant Row. Our boardwalk allows for outside dining and Covid-19 safe family activities and events for community residents and visitors to the neighborhood. Restaurants realized on average a 25% increase in revenue amid a Pandemic.

It is with sincere appreciation and our deepest gratitude to support the award nomination of Ernest C. Wong, founding Principal and President of Site-Design Group, Ltd.

Sincerely,

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

Rhea L. Steele  
Project Manager  
Greater Chatham Initiative





ASLA Community Service Award Nominations  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

January 25, 2021

To the Committee:

Please accept this letter as an exuberant and hearty endorsement for Ernie Wong of site design group, ltd., to receive the ASLA Community Service Award. Through my work as Midwest Director of the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), I have been fortunate to work side-by-side with Ernie to establish Pullman National Monument and provide a vision for its future. His sustained passion for this work has been invaluable.

Ernie gave his time to advocacy efforts to establish Pullman as Chicago's first national park site beginning in 2012. He met with members of Congress, wrote letters of support, and engaged colleagues to ensure that Pullman would be launched and welcome national park visitors to Chicago's far south side for generations to come.

When NPCA started to work on outlining a vision in 2014 for how Pullman could serve as a model urban national park, Ernie was the first person who came to mind. It was clear he could lead the thinking behind how to design spaces that would not only welcome visitors, but also be valuable neighborhood assets. Pullman, located on Chicago's far south side, is a disinvested area of the city. Ernie knew that having a national park could benefit visitors and residents alike. He gave countless hours to developing the Park Visitor section of the now award-winning [Positioning Pullman](#) workshop that included local residents and experts from across the city.

Following the launch of Positioning Pullman, Ernie continued to provide pro bono consultation and design support to help implement this vision. He gave his own time and committed others at site design to this valuable work. During the process of developing Positioning Pullman, we had nearly 50 Chicago professionals involved in creating the vision. Ernie was one of a very few who stayed the course year in and year out.

Between 2012 and today it is hard to know how many hours Ernie has invested in Pullman and the reinvention of this important south side neighborhood. But what I do know is that without him, we would not be where we are today. We've seen nearly \$200 million in investment for transit, infrastructure and historic renovation. This investment only happened because of the vision that Ernie helped support with his time, imagination and credibility.

### Midwest Regional Office

Ernie has a love of national parks that is rooted in his youth and a commitment to this great south side neighborhood because he cares about making spaces for people that are wonderful and welcoming. Please know you could not find a better candidate for this Community Service Award than Ernie Wong.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynn McClure".

Lynn McClure  
Senior Director, Midwest Region  
312-343-7216 cell  
[lmclure@npca.org](mailto:lmclure@npca.org)

**Midwest Regional Office**

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