



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
NEW YORK
205 E 42nd St, 14th floor
New York, NY 10017
212.269.2984
www.aslany.org

American Society of Landscape Architects
Medal of Excellence Nominations
c/o Carolyn Mitchell
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Re: Nomination of Central Park Conservancy for Landscape Architects Medal of Excellence

Dear Colleagues:

I am thrilled to write this nomination of the Central Park Conservancy for the Landscape Architects Medal of Excellence. The Central Park Conservancy (CPC) is a leader in park management dedicated to the preserving the legacy of urban parks and laying the foundations for future generations to benefit from these public landscapes.

Central Park is a masterpiece of landscape architecture created to provide a scenic retreat from urban life for the enjoyment of all. Located in the heart of Manhattan, Central Park is the nation's first major urban public space, attracting millions of visitors, both local and tourists alike. Covering 843 acres of land, this magnificent park was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1963 and as a New York City Scenic Landmark in 1974.

As the organization entrusted with the responsibility of caring for New York's most important public space, the Central Park Conservancy is founded on the belief that citizen leadership and private philanthropy are key to ensuring that the Park and its essential purpose endure. Conceived during the mid-19th century as a recreational space for residents who were overworked and living in cramped quarters, Central Park is just as revered today as a peaceful retreat from the day-to-day stresses of urban life – a place where millions of New Yorkers and visitors from around the world come to experience the scenic beauty of one of America's greatest works of art.

Brief History

On July 21, 1853, the New York State Legislature enacted into law the setting aside of more than 750 acres of land central to Manhattan Island to create America's first major landscaped public park; they would soon refer to it as "the Central Park." Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, the winners of the 1858 design competition for Central Park understood that the creation of a great public park would improve public health and contribute greatly to the formation of a civil society. Immediately, the success of Central Park fostered the urban park movement, one of the great hallmarks of democracy of nineteenth century America.

By the early twentieth century, deterioration of the social, political and economic climate threatened the fabric of the Park and caused its first serious decline. Robert Moses, park commissioner from 1934 to 1960, received federal funding for the restoration of many eroded landscapes and crumbling structures, and embarked on massive public programming for the post-Depression city. When he left office, however, there was no management strategy for maintaining those improvements or educating Park visitors in proper stewardship, and for the next two decades the second – and most devastating– decline took its toll on the fragile 843- acre Park.

To help remedy this troubled situation, George Soros and Richard Gilder, under the sponsorship of the Central Park Community Fund, underwrote a management study of Central Park in 1974 by E.S. Savas, who was at that time the Columbia University School of Business, Professor of Public



Systems Management. The groundbreaking study proposed that two important initiatives be implemented to ameliorate the conditions in Central Park: one, that a Chief Executive Officer be given “clear and unambiguous managerial authority” for all Park operations, and two, a Central Park Board of Guardians be created to oversee strategic planning and policy, thereby instituting private citizen involvement in their public park.

The first Central Park administrator, Betsy Barlow Rogers, Honorary ASLA, conceived of and then helped to create a revolutionary public/private partnership with the support of then park commissioner Gordon Davis that would bring private monies and expertise in partnership with the City of New York to manage and restore Central Park. In 1980, the two most prominent private advocacy groups – the Central Park Task Force and the Central Park Community Fund – merged to become the Central Park Conservancy – the citizen-based Board of Guardians that the Savas study had essentially recommended.

Under a Conservancy-funded master plan, the gradual restoration of those decrepit landscapes evolved, and success bred success. As the Conservancy showed its ability to protect and maintain its investment, many more private individuals, foundations and corporations put their trust and their money into the restoration of the Park. Today, they manage Central Park under a contract with the City of New York. Over its 160+ year history, the Park has experienced several cycles of restoration and decline. Central Park Conservancy is uniquely qualified to prevent future declines and ensure the on-going care of this American masterpiece.

Leader in Urban Park Management

The mission of the CPC is to restore, manage, and enhance Central Park in partnership with the public. They strive to build a great organization that sets the standard for and spreads the principles of world-class park management – emphasizing environmental excellence – to improve the quality of open space for the enjoyment of all. The Central Park Conservancy is committed to sustaining this operating model to provide a legacy for future generations of park users.

Thanks to the generosity of many individuals, corporations, foundations, and the City of New York, Central Park Conservancy has invested more than \$800 million into the Park, making it a model for urban parks worldwide. 75% of Central Park’s \$65+ million annual operating budget is covered through private donations, making possible all aspects of Park maintenance, as well as capital improvements and restorations.

With 42 million visits each year to its 843 acres, Central Park is the most frequently visited urban park in the United States. To manage the Park, Conservancy crews aerate and seed lawns; rake leaves; prune and fertilize trees; plant shrubs and flowers; maintain ballfields and playgrounds; remove graffiti; conserve monuments, bridges, and buildings; and care for water bodies and woodlands, by controlling erosion, maintaining the drainage system, and protecting over 150 acres of lakes and streams from pollution, siltation, and algae.



Central Park Conservancy has informally supported other parks in a variety of ways for more than three decades. The Institute for Urban Parks helps other parks by providing direct assistance and advice, formal training, and on-site support.

By directing private funds toward both operating staff and capital projects, the Conservancy inspires other parks across the nation to develop public-private partnerships. A cornerstone of the Institute’s work to support other parks is the Park-to-Park program, which offers both training and direct assistance to other park organizations. The Conservancy’s model is based on both classroom education and hands-on field training. Training is provided to current and aspiring professionals from urban park management and other related fields. All training modules are based on the Conservancy’s best practices in operations and management, which have been developed and refined over the past three decades. Regular seminar and webinar series continue the education throughout the year reaching park planners and managers across the United States.



Through their Five Borough Program the CPC takes training and on-site support to other parks across all five boroughs in New York City. The program is currently focused on turf-related improvement projects in Macombs Dam Park/ Heritage Field, Crotona Park, and Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx; Fort Greene Park and Brower Park in Brooklyn; Bennett Park and East River Park in Manhattan; Tappen Park and Walker Park in Staten Island; and Astoria Park in Queens.

The successes of the Central Park Conservancy inspired dozens of similar efforts in other cities across the country. Piedmont Park in Atlanta, St. Louis's Forest Park, Shelby Farms in Memphis, and strings of parks in Pittsburgh, Louisville, Buffalo, and many other places were modeled directly on the Central Park example, not to mention spinoffs launched in New York City itself to create the High Line and improve Battery, Prospect, and many other parks.

Commitment to Education

Healthy cities need parks, and parks need management. As the world leader in urban park management, the Conservancy is uniquely positioned to teach what they have learned to park users and managers both locally and globally in order to develop respect and responsibility for urban parks. The Central Park Conservancy Institute for Urban Parks was formed in 2013 as the educational arm of the Conservancy. Through a variety of educational programs and learning resources, the Institute teaches people about managing and making good use of urban parks. The Conservancy is dedicated to sharing their experience and expertise with managers, educators, students, and visitors to help shape the future of urban parks.

The Institute teaches park users and managers to care for urban parks everywhere. Through the Institute, the Conservancy is committed to both training and advising local, national, and international urban parks. Institute programs are divided into two Centers: the Center for Urban Park Discovery and the Center for Urban Park Management. The Center for Urban Park Discovery teaches park visitors, families, adults, students, and educators how to use urban parks responsibly and how to get involved in their ongoing care. The Center for Urban Park Management shares the Conservancy's expertise with current and aspiring park professionals to elevate the urban park management profession. In 2015 alone, the program engaged over 2,000 current and aspiring park managers, impacting over 100 New York City parks, 65 parks in other cities across the nation and over 85 parks worldwide. The Institute for Urban Parks provides opportunities for people of all ages to better understand, experience, and enjoy urban parks. Institute programs underscore the role urban parks play as cultural and environmental treasures that have extraordinary capacity to educate, enrich, and inspire people in the development of healthy, vibrant urban communities. Through lectures and discussions, tours, and exhibits, the Institute for Urban Parks provides an insider's view of Central Park's rich history, cultural and ecological significance, art and design, and restoration and management.



The Central Park Conservancy Institute for Urban Parks provides a range of educational activities designed to enhance how children experience the city's greatest outdoor classroom.

Central Park Conservancy offers a variety of educational programs and resources to help children explore Central Park and develop skills for learning and inquiry, all in the world's greatest outdoor classroom. Through their *Discovery Club*, families can learn how people, plants, and wildlife thrive in Central Park by getting a different "insider's view" each week. Activities related to park design, horticulture, and gardening culminate with an opportunity for family members to get their hands dirty with a Park improvement project. Weekly *Discovery Tours* allow families to take a trek with Conservancy experts and learn about Central Park's landscapes through hands-on exploration using Discovery Kits. The *Keeping it Green for Schools* program allows students the opportunity to give back to their community and learn the value of stewardship by spreading mulch, weeding, or raking leaves. Led by environmental educators, projects are located throughout the Park based on the school's location and are offered after school. Families can also take part in this program.



High school students participate in a semester-long ecological restoration and management project in Central Park's woodlands, including maintaining rustic trails, removing invasive plants, and cultivating new plantings.

New generations of stewards are inspired by the Conservancy through their full-time, paid internship program. These internships offer high school and college students the opportunity to support the Conservancy's horticulture, visitor services, and public programs departments. Interns work five days a week with individual schedules varying depending on the position. The Central Park Conservancy's Horticultural Sciences College Internship provides students with the opportunity to work side-by-side with Conservancy staff to build important life and career skills. Through hands-on work, students will learn more about the complexity of urban park management in a park that receives over 40 million visits a year and better understand the role they have in protecting living landscapes. Working with the staff of landscape architects at Central Park, the Landscape Architecture and Construction Management intern is involved in the oversight of the construction of various projects throughout the Park, the creation of as-built plans, the gathering of field data, and other related jobs.

Stewardship

Since its founding in 1980, Central Park Conservancy has demonstrated on-going stewardship of the park, ensuring the health, safety and welfare of both the landscape and those that use the park. For over 35 years the Conservancy's Volunteer Department has enriched the environmental stewardship of thousands of volunteers. Originally called L.I.V.E. (Learning and Involvement for Volunteers in the Environment), the program has expanded tremendously. This program has grown to nearly 3,000 volunteers yearly whose hours total over 50,000 a year.

Since the unforeseen microburst, a powerful storm that hit the upper Park in August 2009, emergency measures have been a major priority in the Conservancy's strategic planning. When extreme weather hits, the Conservancy's staff works hard to make Central Park safe and accessible as quickly as possible. When it became obvious that Hurricane Sandy could seriously affect New York City, the Conservancy took action immediately by lowering the water levels of all of the Park's water bodies to avoid flooding. Sandbags were placed in flood-prone areas. Water drains were inspected and cleared to assure smooth drainage. The Conservancy put out a call for twelve teams of tree contractors from as far away as Massachusetts. They arrived in the City before the storm started, and when it abated they were on the job immediately under the supervision of the Conservancy's arborists. The Conservancy's eight-member Tree Crew were in the Park during the storm and when the storm lifted, they were immediately deployed to oversee the contractors.

They began work in the Park immediately after the storm, inspecting trees for damage and dangerous conditions in every section of the park. Every tree surrounding each of the Park's 21 playgrounds was inspected individually. After the first survey of the Park, inspections were continuous. Tree experts looked for cracked trees, hanging limbs, and uprooted trees, determining which trees needed to be pruned and which were so damaged they had to be removed. Of the 20,000 trees in Central Park, over 1,100 trees were damaged or destroyed by Sandy. The CPC Tree Crew identified each fallen or damaged tree using a GPS tracking system. Damaged trees were logged and flagged in the database in order to monitor their condition. As directed by the City, Central Park was closed until it was deemed safe to open it to the public. Once the first phase of the Central Park cleanup was completed, the Conservancy's Tree Crew also dedicated their time and their expertise in Fort Tryon Park, East River Park, and the devastated neighborhoods of Staten Island and Queens.

Legacy

For many years the Central Park Conservancy has been highly regarded for their management and stewardship the nation's first urban park. The Conservancy was honored in 2001 with the Award for Outstanding Commitment to the Preservation and Care of Collections by The American Institute for Conservation and Artistic Works and Heritage Preservation. In 2008,



the American Planning Association named Central Park one of the 2008 Great Public Spaces in America. The association described the Park as “arguably the most emulated park in the country” and cited it as “an exemplary public space that successfully maintains a large naturalistic landscape in the midst of one of the densest cities in the country.”

In February 2005, artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude installed 7,503 five-meter-high “gates” in Central Park for two weeks. The duo had proposed the park-wide project in 1979 but were not granted permission until Mayor Bloomberg’s first term in office, when Adrian Benepe, Honorary ASLA, was parks commissioner. The total cost of the project, over \$21 million,



The northern-most playground at E. 110 Street was recently renovated with modern play structures, spray-play, seating and activities for children of all abilities.

was paid for entirely by Christo and Jeanne-Claude. In an interview with MetroFocus, Benepe called the installation “a transformative experience.” The bright orange sculptural gates brought millions of tourists and local New Yorkers to the park in winter, offering a new and different view of the park.

The Plan for Play Initiative, a \$40 million undertaking to elevate all of the Park’s 21 playgrounds to the same standard of excellence was developed in 2013. The playgrounds of Central Park are a magical part of childhood in New York City, as my own children will attest to. As these special places are critical to the development, health, and well-being of millions of children, the Central Park Conservancy created the program to ensure that the children of all ages and abilities who frequent the Park’s playgrounds will enjoy the same optimal level of play space. Many of Central Park’s

playgrounds had not been rebuilt or significantly renovated in the last 15 years or more and required full reconstruction. Other playgrounds have required focused improvements to meet the design goals and bring all of the playgrounds to the same excellent standard. The vision of the Conservancy’s Plan for Play adds a new and natural dimension to the playground experience by incorporating views of the surrounding landscapes and access to small lawns within the playground space.

The CPC continues to stay engaged with park users with their advanced Central Park App so users can find out what events are happening in the Park, plan a visit, and browse or search over 200 things to see in the Park. The app provides users with an interactive park map with history and information narrated by a host of quintessential New York City superstars: Scarlett Johansson, John Lithgow, Whoopi Goldberg and Matthew Broderick, just to name a few. The app allows users to find playgrounds, places to eat, and cultural points of interest on the interactive map.

Today Central Park has never been more beautiful or better managed in the Park’s 150+ year history, thanks to the Conservancy’s leadership of the Park’s longest period of sustained health and beauty. Just as Central Park was the leader in the birth of urban parks, so today Central Park, through the Conservancy’s innovative care and expertise, is the leader in the rebirth of urban parks, public spaces and the quality of life movement. City officials and park professionals from across America and around the world come to the Central Park Conservancy Institute for Urban Parks to learn of its best practices to restore and manage their own local parks. Central Park Conservancy is an unprecedented leader in urban park management with the clear focus on improving the quality of life for all people, everywhere.

Because of their accomplishments and commitment of sustaining Central Park for future generations as well as their dedication to enabling urban park managers all over the world to elevate their own parks, I feel very strongly that the Central Park Conservancy is most deserving of the Medal of Excellence. I enthusiastically recommend that you to consider them with your highest regards for this very fitting honor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer L. Nitzky".

Jennifer L. Nitzky, RLA, ASLA, ISA
New York Chapter



NYC Parks

Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP
Commissioner

T 212.360.1305
F 212.360.1345

E mitchell.silver@parks.nyc.gov

City of New York
Parks & Recreation

The Arsenal
Central Park
New York, NY 10065
www.nyc.gov/parks

Medal of Excellence Nomination
c/o Carolyn Mitchell
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington DC 20001-3736

Re: Nomination of the Central Park Conservancy for the American Society of Landscape Architecture (ASLA) Medal of Excellence.

Dear Executive Committee and Board of Trustees,

I am very pleased to give my highest support for the nomination of the Central Park Conservancy for this national honor. As the New York City Parks Commissioner, I am passionate about the care, stewardship and future of our nation's important public spaces. I am very familiar with the Conservancy's groundbreaking work in developing and promoting excellence in Landscape Architecture policy, stewardship, conservation, operations, research and education. Since the Conservancy was established in 1980, it has invested nearly \$800 million in this important historic, Olmsted and Vaux designed landscape. Under the leadership of the Conservancy, Central Park has benefited from extensive capital improvement, programing and education for all park visitors and volunteers from around the city to around the world.

The Conservancy brought the park landscape back from years of neglect to its current state as a vibrant and sustainable masterpiece of Landscape Architecture that helps establish New York's current place among great urban cities. While preserving the original character, the Conservancy has addressed the needs of our growing city and national and international visitors by providing programing and education that serves virtually every culture and interest today. History buffs, naturalists, children and active teens are accommodated with a landscape and programing that inspires, offers a respite, and restores the spirit. The Conservancy's consistent standard of excellence assures that future generations will enjoy this important public landscape as much as when it was first built, and as much as we do today.

The city and the Conservancy have a long and productive partnership. In 2013, the city affirmed its confidence in the conservancy's excellence and ability to manage the park for generations to come with a groundbreaking management agreement. As part of this agreement, Parks in the five boroughs of New York are reaping the benefits of the Conservancy's skills and expertise through its sharing of horticultural and operational resources and park staff training.

The Conservancy is a citywide as well as a national and international leader in urban Landscape Architecture, preservation, excellence in park management and best practices in public private partnerships. The Conservancy staff freely shares this expertise through participation in international and national forums, through the City Park Alliance, a national organization, as well as their own Institute for Urban Parks. I believe that the contributions of the Conservancy align beautifully with the goals of the ASLA Medal of Excellence. Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP

Medal of Excellence Nominations
c/o Carolyn Mitchell
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington DC 20001-3736

Re: Nomination of the Central Park Conservancy for The Landscape Architecture Medal of Excellence.

Dear ASLA Executive Committee and Board of Trustees,

It is my privilege and honor to write this letter of endorsement for the Central Park Conservancy (CPC) for the ASLA Medal of Excellence.

As past NYC Parks Commissioner, I witnessed the importance of quality parks for our communities. Central Park is a designed landscape conceived to accomplish what its creators referred to as “a single noble purpose”—to provide all New Yorkers with a retreat from the stresses of urban life. The Central Park Conservancy has been dedicated to ensuring the park not only remains an asset to all park users but also to educating other park managers to create successful management plans.

I was present at the birth of the Conservancy in 1980, and was a partner with it for almost three decades in the New York City Parks Department. I have seen firsthand the benefits of public-private partnerships in helping to restore the city’s park system after years of neglect and decline. It takes more than City funding to maintain our urban parks to ensure healthy, safe and enjoyable parks.

A strong partnership between the New York City Parks Department and the Central Park Conservancy has enabled an on-going dedication to restoring and, more important, maintaining and updating this landmarked park. The participation of citizens in the life of the park will ensure it never slips back again.

Since its founding, the Conservancy has been a model for a public-private park partnership both in New York and nationwide. The success the Conservancy had in restoring the park to its former glory in the 80s inspired many other park conservancies to be formed. The Prospect Park Alliance, Battery Conservancy, Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy, Friends of The High Line and so many other urban parks, all followed the model that Central Park created and perfected. For many years, park managers all over the country have looked to Central Park to develop their own conservancies to enhance urban parks and even build new ones.

While the additional funding from private donations has enabled the Conservancy to better serve the public, sustaining the park’s role as an equitable urban oasis for all people to enjoy, the most important role the Conservancy plays is as an enlightened manager of what is arguably the world’s greatest park.

Because of their on-going commitment to serving their community while inspiring and elevating urban parks around the world, I strongly urge you to select the Central Park Conservancy for the Landscape Architecture Medal of Excellence.

Sincerely,



Adrian Benepe
Senior Vice President and Director of City Park Development

Medal of Excellence Nomination
c/o Carolyn Mitchell
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001-3736

Re: Nomination of the Central Park Conservancy for the American Society of Landscape Architecture (ASLA) Medal of Excellence

Dear Executive Committee and Board of Trustees,

I am grateful for this opportunity to give back to an organization that was responsible for one of my great life experiences. In 1982, I joined the Central Park Conservancy (CPC) staff to prepare a plan that was to guide the renaissance of the Park over the next 50 years. After three years of inventories, analysis, planning and design work, we prepared cost estimates that tallied over 50 million dollars. At the time, it seemed an impossible goal. The Conservancy met the goal again and again in half the time.

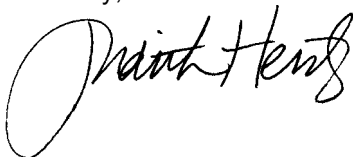
The CPC was the brainchild of the then NYC Parks Commissioner Gordon Davis and Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, the first Central Park Administrator and an Honorary ASLA member. In 1982 the organization consisted of Ms Rogers, an executive director, three fund-raisers, fledgling restoration and horticulture crews, various office staff and 2 landscape architects recently hired to plan the Park's future. They were heady times for a group whose sole incentive was a love for NYC's premier landscape.

As a landscape architect, I believe the Central Park Conservancy is to be highly commended for carrying an in-house design staff. Beginning in 1982 and continuing to the present, and rather than out-sourcing work to consulting firms that are juggling numerous projects, it recognized early on that the work in the Park should be done by those who best understand the Park, and it has supported a group of dedicated professionals whose primary, and indeed only, interest is the Park's well-being.

In addition to maintaining its design and planning staff, the Conservancy has not stinted on sharing its experiences operating and managing the Park with other municipalities, parks organizations, and preservation groups. Many such constituencies have contacted the Administrator and the Conservancy staff. They have not been disappointed by their willingness to provide guidance and advice based on its over 35 years of trailblazing experience. In NYC, as the first of the City's official public/private park partnerships, it has been a model for urban park governance and stewardship for parks of all sizes and shapes. Conservancy sponsored education about the Park's history, design and ecology has helped local citizens, community groups, students, and tourists to understand the Park, not just as a destination for their preferred activities but also as an organism that depends on their care to survive.

For all its achievements, not the least of which is the beautiful Park we see today, I highly recommend the Central Park Conservancy for this highest of awards. We have all been honored by our association with it.

Sincerely,



Judith Heintz, ASLA

American Society of Landscape Architects
Medal of Excellence Nominations
c/o Carolyn Mitchell
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Re: Nomination of Central Park Conservancy for Landscape Architects Medal of Excellence

To: The Awards jury for the Society of Landscape Architecture Medal of Excellence;

I am honored to support the nomination of the Central Park Conservancy for the American Society of Landscape Architecture (ASLA) Medal of Excellence. I offer my support as a professional and resident of the Upper Westside community.

In the sixty years I have resided in the Upper Westside, a block away from this iconic park, it has played a special role in my life experience. The Conservancy and those who provide their time and energy on its behalf deserve recognition for their selfless work.

The park is a unique experience for tourist and resident. For tourist it is one of the most visited sites in New York along with the Empire State and High Line. For the diverse population of our city the park is the social and recreational center. This is where we come together and share a space as one community and demonstrate the meaning and value of diversity and democracy.

Having stated the importance of the park, I have personally experienced the deterioration of the park during the financial crisis of the City. Recognizing the need for an alternate support system for the park a group of concerned New York citizens created the Central Park Conservancy. The mission of the Conservancy was to return and maintain the park's environment as it was originally intended. Not only have all New Yorkers benefited from their work, the Conservancy has demonstrated the need for all citizens of urban areas to take part in the preservation of their public spaces.

The Conservancy is a palpable example of the positive result when a community takes ownership and provides support for the public spaces that they share. The Conservancy's work has been a model for other municipalities and has made New Yorkers proud.

I had just returned from a stroll in the park with my wife when I received an email requesting my support of the nomination. During the walk, I commented on how beautiful the park was and how fortunate we were to have the Conservancy as stewards of the park. Coincidence?

In my experience I know of no other community based, grass roots effort that has had as dramatic and positive an influence on the social and physical environment as the Central Park Conservancy. The Conservancy deserves the award for what they have achieved, and I would like to advocate for the committee to look favorably on them and honor them with recognition.

Yours Truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Paul Friedberg', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

M. Paul Friedberg







