

Honorary Membership Nomination Narrative 2017

Nominee: Michael O'Brien

Nominee's Address: American Society of Landscape Architects
636 I Street NW

City/State/Zip: Washington DC, 20001

Phone: (202) 216-2347

Nominator: Jeffrey A. Townsend, FASLA

Michael O'Brien has had a profound influence on our Society for the past nine years as Chief Financial Officer (CFO). His exceptional leadership and business acumen has allowed the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) to improve its financial position for long term success, expand our programs, and increase our assets. Michael has adopted this profession and our Society as his own. He is personally committed to our professional core values and mission, and routinely explores new and innovative ways for ASLA and our profession to expand its influence.

I have witnessed Michael's leadership and commitment to our profession over many years having worked closely with him as Trustee, Chair of the Finance Committee, the Vice President of Finance, and a member of the Executive Committee of ASLA. He is not only extremely competent as our CFO; he also serves as the Publisher of Landscape Architecture Magazine and is an effective leader of the senior management team. He has provided valuable contributions during a season of growth in new initiatives and programs.

Financial Balance Sheet – Under Michael's leadership as our CFO the Society's financial health has improved each and every year. Our net assets in 2008 were just over \$500,000 and have grown to nearly \$2,000,000. This occurred as we launched new initiatives and programs, including the Baldrige Initiative, the Green Streets Initiative, and preparations for the Headquarters Renovation.

Baldrige Process – Michael has been a key leader in both organizing and implementing the Baldrige Initiative. This is a "best practice" process that has required a significant commitment from Michael to engage our Society at levels well above the customary role of a CFO. In this capacity he has led the organization through a transformative review of our operating procedures that will guide the Society for many years to come. He has helped to create an organization that is "built to last" for future generations of landscape architects!

Headquarters Renovation - During Michael's tenure as the CFO he led negotiations with our Bank to close out the previous building loan and negotiate a new loan with very favorable terms that minimize the restrictions on our cash position. This will allow our Society to participate in new "special projects" and expand our current programs over the course of the loan. He also provided critical oversight during the construction of our headquarters renovation, meeting regularly with the contractors to ensure a timely delivery within the limits of our contract.

Audited Accounting Skills – Year after year Michael has received the highest marks possible from our Auditors. These are third party reviews performed by seasoned accounting professionals who measure ASLA against some of the most successful organizations in the world. ASLA has an exemplary financial ledger thanks to Michael.

Team Building – Aside from Michael's extraordinary abilities in finance and business he is also a team builder. He is continually connecting with incoming Chapter Presidents and Trustees as both a mentor and cheerleader for the Society. He has a contagious passion for our mission that inspires and motivates volunteer professionals within ASLA to the highest level; often encouraging them to achieve success they would not have otherwise found.

These examples are just a small sample of the many contributions that Michael has made to our Society and to the profession. Michael has improved our organization, our capacity, and our overall well-being as a Society in ways that few have achieved before him. As a Former Trustee and Vice President of Finance of our great organization, it is with great enthusiasm that I encourage you to endorse Michael O'Brien's nomination for ASLA Honorary Membership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey A. Townsend".

Jeffrey A. Townsend, FASLA
Trustee & Vice President of ASLA (2008-2016)

ASLA Honorary Membership Nomination Letter of Endorsement

Nominee: Michael O'Brien

Nominator: Jeffrey A. Townsend, FASLA

I am writing this letter in support of the nomination to Honorary Membership in the American Society of Landscape Architects of Michael O'Brien, Chief Financial Officer of the ASLA and Publisher of Landscape Architecture Magazine,

I have worked with Michael O'Brien since he first joined the ASLA staff. I have greatly benefited from his support and advice while serving on the Audit Committee, the Finance and Investments Committee, as Vice President for Finance and Investments, and currently as President of the ASLA. As CFO, he has brought to the Society an outstanding level professionalism as well as a healthy dose of humor in both the management and communication of ASLA budgets and reports as well as investment strategies. He has been a strong negotiator while managing our mortgage and maximizing the benefit of the ASLA's largest asset, our headquarters building.

Michael has gone well beyond his role as CFO in his dedication to the ASLA and its members. With great enthusiasm, he has taken on various building management functions, initially involved in green roof monitoring, and currently serving as one of the leaders of the building renovation, excited to be a part of the improvements to both LEED and WELL building standards.

Michael jumps in wherever he is needed. He has suggested and implemented ideas, first listening carefully to the issues others on the staff and in leadership positions encounter, and then helping to develop and implement solutions. His ongoing work directed towards growing membership is just one example of this overall interest in helping the Society to be stronger and to better address the needs of the members. Michael's work on the Expo and the ASLA Annual Meeting has also been both thorough and creative. He seeks to understand issues and to address them with a willingness to try new ideas and then expanding on successes.

Michael shows an enthusiasm for the profession of landscape architecture as well as dedication to the Society that goes well beyond what might be expected of someone in his position. Honorary Membership in the ASLA is well deserved, and I highly recommend that the Board of Trustees award him this honor.

Vaughn B. Rinner, FASLA
President, American Society of Landscape Architects



WWW.DDGPC.COM

January 27, 2017

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

RE: Letter of Support for
Michael O'Brien

Dear Board of Trustees:

I trust that the majority of you have come to know and respect Michael O'Brien, ASLA's Chief Financial Officer for the past nine years. Michael's contributions to the ASLA extend beyond his expertise in financial matters. His ability to work with volunteers, employees, and department heads and assist them with maximizing results through their efforts is quite phenomenal.

His financial planning and vision has had a tremendous impact on ASLA that has allowed greater organization sustainability. Michael introduced easy to understand terminology with the Board to discuss complex financial matters to assist with fulfillment of our fiduciary responsibility as Trustees. He is extremely approachable, and willing to take time to further discuss and answer questions.

Because of Michael's leadership and passion, ASLA is extremely fortunate to have a CFO with such dedication to advancing the ASLA mission. As a result of his commitment to the Society, it is my privilege to offer my support of Michael's nomination as Honorary Member for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chad D. Danos", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chad D. Danos, FASLA, PLA
DDG Business Unit Leader
ASLA Immediate Past-President

DUPLANTS DESIGN GROUP, PC

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THIBODAUX

BATON ROUGE
COVINGTON

HOUMA
HOUSTON

January 24, 2017

Board of Trustees
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Board of Trustees,

Please Give Michael O'Brien serious consideration for honorary membership in ASLA. His proactive shepherding, creative strategies, and other achievements related to his job I leave to others who can address them far better than I. His financial leadership alone merits consideration for this honor. However, he contributes so much that is not in his job description.

Michael goes beyond the traditional expectations of his role and has become a valued colleague as well as a strong advocate for the profession. Collegiality and support for the institutional mission are expected of any staff person, but Michael has become an important leader, voice, and cheerleader.

Michael studied and embraced ASLA's goals and values, and he is enthusiastic, well-spoken, and informed. He is adept at activating and engaging people, but he goes beyond his job in fostering "team spirit" with his contagious good will and gusto. In all he does, large or small, Michael asserts support for this profession and the need for all of us to be engaged. His financial status presentations are light-hearted variations in the rhythm of meetings—yet extraordinarily clear even to the most innumerate of us artist types. I have also seen him powerful and serious. He understands our humor and personalities to nudge us where we need to go. For example, recognizing the competitiveness of his landscape architects (softball, kickball, anyone?), he offered membership challenges (with prizes supplied by him) to boost participation and support amongst Chapter Presidents and Trustees. Michael takes on far more than just finances. He contributes time and energy to many facets of ASLA.

CFO O'Brien has done an amazing job in his time with ASLA. But as importantly, we are better for having had Michael as colleague and cheerleader.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara Katherine Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sara Katherine Williams, FASLA
ASLA Parliamentarian
ASLA Vice-President for Education, 2013-15

January 25, 2017

ASLA Board of Trustees
American Society of landscape Architects
636 Eye St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Members of the Board of Trustees:

It is my great pleasure to support the nomination of Michael O'Brien for Honorary Membership in the American Society of Landscape Architects. During my service as ASLA President, VP and member of the Executive Committee, I had the opportunity—and the real joy—of getting to know Michael and his work on behalf of the Society. His ability and skill in guiding ASLA financial matters is without equal. Throughout his tenure with us, Michael has been highly impactful in growing and maintaining ASLA's strong financial base. His unusual ability to communicate complex financial information has encouraged broad engagement and confidence in the organization. Always ready to provide further information and respectful explanation, Michael embodies the kind of senior staff member that is essential to the success of the Society and its mission.

His expert financial guidance throughout several simultaneous projects over the past several years has been invaluable, including SITES transitioning, successful Headquarters loan retirement, growth of the Reserve fund, negotiation of favorable CLA loan terms and many others. The fact that ASLA as an organization is consistently able to point to a solid financial footing is to a large extent, the result of Michael's expertise, deep engagement and steady stewardship.

I've found his contributions go well beyond any standard role of CFO and Publisher. Michael has consistently shown a deep appreciation for Landscape Architecture and the contributions this discipline makes to the long-term welfare of the environment and society. His enthusiastic embrace of the Profession and welfare of ASLA membership shows in all that he does, including his active participation in Advocacy. I have found him to be unfailingly conscientious in his representation of ASLA and without question, personally invested in our success as ASLA members and landscape architects.

For his commitment and his contributions to the advancement of the Society and its goals, he is truly deserving of the recognition of honorary membership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Richard Zweifel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "R".

K. Richard Zweifel, FASLA
Past-President