

Ms. Carolyn Mitchell
Olmsted Medal Nominations
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Dear Ms. Mitchell,

It is my pleasure to nominate Renata von Tscharner for ASLA's Olmsted Medal in recognition of her continuing environmental leadership, vision, and stewardship. For over 30 years, Renata has dedicated her life to improving the quality of life for local residents through her stewardship of Greater Boston's Charles River Parklands.

Like other exceptional leaders and stewards of public lands, Renata von Tscharner is a determined self-starter, an accomplished, energetic instigator, and in fact a visionary. Trained as an architect and city planner at the Institute of Technology in Zurich, Renata then moved to London to work on the Greater London Council's Covent Garden team. Another aspect of her European background would also influence her in years to come; growing up in the Emmental, and when later living in Basel, Zurich and Bern, Renata loved to swim in the rivers that flow through these cities.

In 1979, Renata immigrated to the United States and co-founded the Townscape Institute. In her 15 years as principal there she worked in about 100 cities and towns across America and Europe. With close to 20 years experience as an urban designer, working on and writing about public spaces and "place making" in both Europe and the United States, she has developed a passion for places where beauty and pleasure converge.

In her adopted home of Boston, as she traversed the water and shore of the state-owned parklands along of the Charles River, she began to wonder why this magnificent public space and powerful focal point of the greater Boston region was crumbling and overgrown, and who was "in charge" of seeing to its care. In this way her volunteer vocation, as a steward of public lands, began. Used by well over a million people each year, the 19 miles of shoreline within the Charles River Parklands include some 500 acres, and are host to many major events including the Head of the Charles Regatta, the annual 4th of July concert at the Hatch Shell, walk-a-thons, races and river fairs.

As her experience with the river grew, the influence on her of the green and blue band winding its way through residential and commercial neighborhoods towards the harbor grew stronger. She started to research the genesis of the Parklands, which landscape architects Charles Eliot and Frederick Law Olmsted had created mostly from mudflats, tidal marshes and industrial sites.

As a way to further her research on the Charles and to share the compelling call of the Charles with others, Renata approached Harvard University and proposed a course on the Charles River for their Radcliffe Seminars Landscape Program, where she had taught "Townscape" courses two decades earlier. The proposal to look at all aspects of these 500 acres of parklands along both sides of the most urban ten-miles of the Charles was accepted. As part of her preparation

for teaching she also went to scores of meetings and read everything she could about the river and surrounding parklands. For her student projects she selected sites where their designs could make a real difference.

While she loved the challenge of working with students, her research led her to the conclusion that if the larger potential of the Charles River Parklands was to be realized, what was needed was the concerted, committed and ongoing efforts of a private, non-profit entity. Among its many tasks would be a working partnership with the public agency charged with stewardship of the Charles; now the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

Renata sought to create nothing less than a new vision for these parklands, a vision inclusive of much of the planning done by the DCR and many others. She saw one of her roles as lending support to planning officials in public sector agencies. But she also began to espouse a vision that went further. Maintenance, restoration and new parks needed the infusion not just of money but of the participatory and passionate efforts of thousands of citizens. Starting with a symposium in 1999 attended by 75 civic leaders, landscape activists and environmentalists, Renata launched the Charles River Conservancy. It was founded as an advocacy group dedicated to the management and enhancement, of the Charles River Parklands and their surroundings, particularly parks, parkways, pathways and bridges.

Her goal for the Conservancy is to facilitate stewardship and renewal efforts by approaching them from all sides – legislative initiatives, educational and awareness programs, funding partnerships between public and private organizations, and coalition building within the community. Further, she began to promote the addition of new amenities to the Parklands, with swimming opportunities and a new skatepark at the top of the list. “The parklands have to be attractive and active”.

In the years since its founding, the Conservancy has sponsored legislative briefings and formed alliances with the DCR and many other groups. It has garnered support from the business and academic communities, as well as from a wider public, with upwards of XXX citizen supporters. Today, the Charles River Conservancy is a well-established and influential organization with a full-time staff of five and funding from foundations and corporations. The Conservancy now offers educational resources to school children throughout the metropolitan area. Through an extensive volunteer program, the Conservancy has assumed responsibility for the maintenance of much of the green spaces within the Parkland.

Perhaps most importantly, the CRC promotes extensive, effective outreach about the benefits and uses Charles River Parklands to the entire Greater Boston community. A constant stream of special events, online newsletters, articles in local papers and media appearances by Conservancy staff and members are designed to highlight the Parklands in the public eye. In a city obsessed with the Big Dig, the Charles River Parklands are no longer forgotten.

It is not only her daily stewardship of the Charles River Parklands that makes her deserving of the Olmstead award, but also her vision to expand upon the legacy of Charles Eliot, whose vision of a comprehensive park system built on a grand scale has sustained and enriched us all with the creation of green space throughout greater Boston.

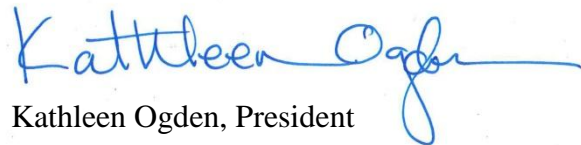
Through her work and leadership at the Charles River Conservancy, Renata has become a force to reckon with in the parklands community. Advocating for pathway improvements, gaining municipal and civilian support for the creation of underpasses along 8 miles of pathways on the Boston side of the Charles, and raising \$2.5 million and breaking ground for the creation of a world-class skatepark are just a few of the ways her extraordinary leadership has influenced the Charles River Parklands. Also, thanks to Renata's vision of one day being able to swim in the Charles River, the Governor appointed the Charles River Water Quality Commission to study the feasibility of bringing swimming back to the Charles. A CRC staff member supports the Commission and in 2013, the Conservancy hopes to offer the first public swims in the Charles River since the 1950's.

Re-establishing a visceral link between the people and the Parklands is very much a goal of Renata's efforts. "By physically working along the glittering water and caring for their public land, these volunteers become long term park lovers and landscape advocates," she notes. Another facet of Renata's vision and ability to marshal diverse elements in service to Parklands renewal lies in her contributions to and use of the award-winning "Inventing the Charles River," a profusely illustrated book by landscape architect and urban planner, Karl Haglund. The ASLA honored this book with the Communication Award- and this confirmed Renata's goal that the more people know about the Charles River Parklands, the more they care for them.

In addition to the broad vision and substantial energy Renata brings to her work, she has been vigilant in building a strong organization. The influence of the Charles River Conservancy has grown far beyond that of most "Friends" groups. The media has become vastly more sensitized to the value and needs of the Parklands, with hundreds of articles and community TV broadcasts since 2000.

The Charles River Parklands are, if their founders and Renata von Tscharner's Charles River Conservancy are to be taken on their face, "democracy's common ground," a description imbued with hope for a civil society and a dynamic future. "Park stewardship works better when people can participate with the bodies and their hearts: exercise, community, learning, food and fun" It is this broader vision of stewardship that Renata has brought to the Charles River Parklands. We are thankful and proud to have Renata von Tscharner working among us as a steward of public land.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Ogden, President
Boston Society of Landscape Architects

Jay Baldwin
92 Foster St Cambridge MA 02138

Ms. Carolyn Mitchell
Olmsted Medal Nominations
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Dear Ms. Mitchell:

I am very happy and enthusiastic to offer a letter in support of Renata von Tscharnner's nomination for the Olmsted Medal. I have had the pleasure of serving with her on The Charles River Conservancy's (CRC) Board for the past 10 years.

Renata is a vigilant and determined advocate for our wonderful parklands along The Charles River. Her awareness of the landscape, pathways, vistas, playgrounds and common spaces sets her apart in setting in motion the design and maintenance solutions that keep these parklands in the best possible conditions given the Massachusetts DCR's very limited funds. A mission I worked closely with her on, as Chairperson of the Fund Raising Committee, is The Charles River SkatePark. Renata's vision of a major skatepark to be recognized internationally initially seemed very daunting. Her focus, clarity of a mission that would benefit the youth of our community through sporting activity, increasing safety by moving skaters from our streets and other parks where they also faced legal challenges with the police, soon gained us a broad, loyal, well financed support base raising \$ 2.5 million dollars. These funds were donated to the building of the park for our State. It would not have happened without her vision and follow through. The Park will open by the end of 2013.

This is just one example, of many available, to share of her skills in impacting for the positive the attractiveness and activity of these parklands she has so successfully stewarded. I can not think of a more worthy recipient of this prestigious award, especially with Olmsted's legacy of great urban parks -which Renata's efforts so well mirror.

Sincerely



Jay Baldwin
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jay@wrcpartners.com

Harvard Design School



ASLA Board of Trustees
c/o Carolyn Mitchell, Honors & Awards Coordinator
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye St. NW
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Olmsted Medal Nomination - Renata von Tscharner, Charles River Conservancy

Dear Friends & Colleagues,

It is my great honor to nominate Renata von Tscharner, President & Founder of *The Charles River Conservancy*, for the ASLA's Olmsted Medal in recognition for her service as champion of open space, defender of regional water resources, and leader of contemporary urbanism in Greater Boston.

For the past 13 years, Renata von Tscharner has been exhaustively leading, initiating and advocating for spatial and ecological change along the Charles River. Considered as Boston's 'Central Park', the Charles River is one of the region's most important resources lying at the center of environmental transformation and urban reform. Enlightened by Renata von Tscharner's vision for more than a decade, the Charles River and its parklands has grown into the public imagination as a central resource and essential infrastructure in the quality of life for citizens along the river, from Boston and Cambridge, to Watertown and beyond. Thanks to her efforts, the river today is also an international precedent for contemporary landscape architecture design, river restoration, regional stewardship, alternative mobility and public recreation.

Tirelessly working with agencies, organizations, and individuals—including the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Charles River Watershed Association, and Members of Congress for example, Ms. von Tscharner has been harnessing the power of landscape architecture, from urban design to resource conservation. A few of the examples and results of her initiatives include the growth of riverside bike trails, bridge underpass improvements, pollution prevention and Spring cleanup, safe pathway lighting and pedestrian crossings, as well as seasonal events such as the Sunday Parkland Games and the Swimmable Charles. Along with annual river fairs and other competitive venues, these events are now permanent programs that form a vivid, cosmopolitan urbanism across the 400 acres of river parklands.

As an emblem of landscape philanthropy, Renata von Tscharner's influence has also attracted more than 2,000 annual volunteers who participate in river clean up, planting projects and water quality monitoring, that maintain and enhance the beauty of the river's landscape. Through the relentless advocacy of the Charles River Conservancy, Renata von Tscharner also provides a model for bridging the challenges and complexities of public agencies, with the potential of private organizations, and demands of citizens. Recently, her work at the Conservancy has led to a unique partnership


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to fund and support the construction of a world-class skate park below Boston's Leonard Zakim Bridge by the Summer of 2013. As an important asset for youth in the region, the skate park project is a demonstration of contemporary public works projects that combine landscape, ecology, and infrastructure with the involvement of private corporations, youth groups, government officials, and non-profit advocacy. Projects like these, and many others, exemplify the structural transformations that she has made through active engagement in the multitude of engineering plans, town meetings, and funding upgrades that the infrastructure of the Charles River has received during the past decade, from Boston's *Central Artery/Big Dig Project* to the more recent 'Accelerated Bridge Upgrades' from President Obama's *Infrastructure Improvement Program*.

Within this context, Ms. von Tschärner not only represents the values that the ASLA promotes, she is a model of landscape leadership and urban initiative that lie at the core of American Landscape Architecture today, since its inception at the turn of the 20th century. In the tradition of its founders including Charles Eliot and Frederick Law Olmsted landscape architects that recognized the value of the landscape of the Charles River as urban ecological resource early on, Ms. von Tschärner is moving that vision further into the 21st century with governments and corporations, individuals and associations, cultivating its potential for the more than 4 million that live, play and work around the Charles River.

Thank you for your consideration of Renata von Tschärner for the 2013 Olmsted Medal. Should you require any additional information or require further clarification, please contact me at the coordinates provided below.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'P' followed by a long, horizontal stroke that tapers to a point.

Pierre Bélanger ASLA
Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning
Co-Coordinator, Postgraduate Design Studies in Urbanism, Landscape, Ecology
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
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857-389-3501

Olmsted Medal Nominations
C/o Carolyn Mitchell
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Dear Olmsted Medal Nominating Committee:

It is my great pleasure to write this letter of endorsement for Renata von Tscharnher to receive the ASLA Olmsted Medal for her environmental leadership, vision and stewardship. Renata has spent much of her professional life energetically and successfully safeguarding our natural heritage in the Boston area; she embodies the essence of the Olmsted tradition.

As a practicing Landscape Architect in Boston for 40 years, I have known Renata for much of this time. I have watched her unwavering, tireless and multi-faceted pursuit of one goal, one vision – to protect and conserve the parklands along the Charles River in the Boston metropolitan area.

She started with an idea, and has marched step-by-step toward this goal, gathering supporters, spokesmen, and funding. She ultimately created and developed the non-profit organization, the Charles River Conservancy, which today is now a major player with support of public agencies and private organizations in setting policies and implementing projects for the Charles River area. The impact Renata has made is tremendous and far-reaching, as very well detailed in the letter written to nominate Renata for this award.

What I would like to highlight here is Renata, the person. Her passion for safeguarding and improving our natural environment has been key to her success and has served to make her a role model as a true steward of the environment.

With her vision and leadership, Renata would never take no for an answer. If someone managed to say no to her request for whatever was needed, this did not stop her for a moment. She just marched on and found another way to get there. Each time she speaks to an audience who may have heard her many times before, her listeners come away with renewed inspiration and appreciation and support for the job needing to be done along the river.

For years, Renata has approached her goal with creativity and energy from so many different angles, whether through TV programs, speeches, collaborating on books, song festivals on the river, new lights for the river bridges, swims in the river, volunteer teams working to clean up the parklands, etc. When support for a new skate park along the river seemed wavering, Renata would find new advocates.

When it comes to leadership, vision and stewardship of the natural environment, Renata is the embodiment of all of these. I cannot think of a better person to receive this Olmsted Award.

Sincerely,



Kate Thompson
Landscape Architect

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

Dear Executive Committee:

I am writing in support of Renata von Tscharner's nomination for the 2013 ASLA Olmsted Medal. Here in Boston – the city of the Emerald Necklace and the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site – I've known Renata to be a tireless advocate and visionary for our shared public landscape through her role as the President and Founder of the Charles River Conservancy (CRC).

Trained as an architect and urban designer in Switzerland, Renata went on to expand her interests to planning and public spaces, recognizing the critical importance of parks and waterways as the lifeblood of a city. To that end, in 2000, Renata founded the CRC to focus her energies on the most crucial waterway in Boston – the Charles River.

Filling a void that was created by years of deferred maintenance and lack of vision for the Charles, Renata and the non-profit CRC play an enormously important role in catalyzing individuals and organizations to create and support river activities and regeneration. These initiatives include the Swimmable Charles, Active Parklands, coordinating and running exceptional volunteer programs, and the fundraising, management, and construction of the city's first public Skate Park, underneath the iconic Leonard P. Zakim bridge.

All of these programs and projects have been guided by Renata's passionate, steady hand and keen awareness of the historic evolution, purpose and landscape architecture of the Charles River.

Renata's consensus-building work with stakeholders around critical landscape and environmental issues ranges from elected officials, agency commissioners, community leaders, business leaders, other non-profits, citizens, planners, architects, and landscape architects, in Boston and beyond. Her good-natured leadership, vision, and stewardship of the Charles River for the past 12 years make her an excellent candidate for an ASLA Honorary Membership. I hope that you will consider Renata von Tscharner for this most esteemed honor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mitch Glass". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mitch Glass, ASLA

Medals Committee
C/o Carolyn Mitchell
American Society of Landscape Architects
626 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Re: Renata von Tscharnier, Charles River Conservancy
Olmsted Medal Nomination 2013

Dear ASLA Medals Committee,

It is my honor to wholeheartedly support the nomination of Renata von Tscharnier, founder and president of the Charles River Conservancy, for The Olmsted Medal.

Renata von Tscharnier, as president of the Charles River Conservancy, has been a tireless advocate for many initiatives concerning the Charles River, including: a swimmable Charles River; a sustainable Charles River parkland, including funded pathway restoration projects; bicycle access in the Basin and on historical bridges (with additional pedestrian bike underpasses in particular); and she is a steadfast advocate for landscape architects and has showcased many landscape architects and planners on her BNN(Boston) and CCTV(Cambridge) television shows.

I have known Renata for many years as our firm, Halvorson Design Partnership, has been involved in numerous projects along the Charles River that have benefited from her vision and skill. These include: the Master Plan of the Charles River Basin undertaken by Goody Clancy and Halvorson Design; that was given an Honor Award in Planning from the ASLA in 2000; the new Nashua Street Park created along the Charles River as part of the Central Artery Big Dig project mitigation; and a major connectivity strategy for bicycle and pedestrians along the Charles River Basin. We have also had the pleasure of discussing these initiatives on her television show and in public meetings where she always speaks in support of what is best for the community.

An editorial writer for the Boston *Globe*, writing about the proposed skatepark spearheaded by the Charles River Conservancy, said on March 15, 2004, "...vision is what the conservancy has in spades." This is also true about the general stewardship approach brought forward by this relatively new organization that Renata founded. As a not-for-profit public private partnership during a time when public funds have been seriously reduced, Renata has continued to build on the visions of Charles Eliot and Frederick Law Olmsted by re-investing in their important park lands and inspiring others to get involved in their river.

Through her commitment to the Conservancy, Renata models the Olmsted Medal's principles of environmental leadership. She has articulated, not one, but many visions for these the parklands. Her inexhaustible energy, breadth of creative thinking, and a myriad of approaches to advocacy are wide ranging, including: the visually powerful poster she helped create; the

permanent lighting for the Weeks Foot Bridge, Anderson, Westerns, and River Street bridges; “River Sing” and “Tango by Moonlight” music and dance programs; the educational programs with service learning; and the hundreds of volunteers that she has organized.

As landscape architects we need organizations like the Conservancy to help create new parks and provide stewardship for the old parks. I am pleased to write this letter in support of Renata von Tscharnier’s nomination for the Olmsted Medal. She is an outstanding candidate for this medal and fits the criteria outlined by our ASLA organization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig C. Halvorson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Halvorson Design Partnership Inc.

Craig C. Halvorson, FASLA

Founding Principal