

Design Workshop, Inc.
Landscape Architecture
Land Planning
Urban Design
Strategic Services

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

Dear Trustees,

I am thrilled to nominate Mr. Charles Birnbaum for the Alfred Lagasse Medal, for his decades of work in the preservation of America's natural resources and cultural landscapes. There are certain character traits I have long admired in individuals - passion and entrepreneurship. Both describe the life and work of Charles Birnbaum. I first met Charles over twenty years ago at the ASLA Annual Meeting in Seattle. From that moment it was clear that he was a dynamo, a remarkable bundle of focused energy, committed to the cause of preserving the country's historic and cultural landscapes. At that time, landscape preservation was an emerging, yet still young area of interest within the profession. There were very few converts to the cause. Yet Charles was undaunted. His charm, enthusiasm, intelligence, and exceptional interpersonal skills time and time carried the day.

Charles is the personification of the word "advocate", continually sounding the clarion call for the concern of our great public and private landscapes. I have on many occasions seen him encounter doubters and opponents of his cause. Why are these landscapes important? Are there not better uses of the space? Should not our dollars be directed elsewhere? In the face of such doubt, Charles is resolute and relentless. He can see all sides of an issue, acknowledge the concerns of others, yet brilliantly craft arguments to persuade others.

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As Director of the Historic Landscapes Initiative of the National Park Service he has educated thousands of practitioners and lay persons about the importance of cultural landscapes through countless lectures, symposia, and educational sessions.

The Cultural Landscape Foundation was Charles's brainchild while a Loeb Scholar at Harvard. He saw a void and set out to fill it and in doing so has put the "flesh" on the term "cultural landscape". As founder of the Cultural Landscape Foundation he has galvanized the enthusiasm and concerns of like-minded individuals to the cause. In doing so he has brought new advocates (lawyers, businessmen, teachers, and designers) to the cause of landscape architecture and historic preservation. He has documented for posterity the contributions of such significant practitioners as Cornelia Oberlander, Paul Friedberg, Carol Johnson, Richard Haag, and others. Public awareness has been furthered by his successful Landslide series. As author of the Pioneers series and publications he has made us all aware of the contributions of hundreds of early landscape architects and the parks and gardens they created. This in turn has further raised awareness and concern. Most important he has created an organization that is on a strong financial footing with broad-based support that will continue long after he is gone. His legacy will extend through the generations.

It is with greatest enthusiasm that I nominate Charles Birnbaum for the Lagasse Medal. He is clearly worthy of a place among the prior recipients of this great honor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Kurt Culbertson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Kurt Culbertson