

ASLA

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

CONNECTICUT
CHAPTER

AMERICAN
SOCIETY OF
LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECTS

87 WILLOW STREET

NEW HAVEN

CONNECTICUT

06511

800 878-1474

RE: Nomination of the National Association for Olmsted Parks for ASLA's Medal of Excellence

Dear Ms. Mitchell:

The Connecticut Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects has the great honor and pleasure to submit to the Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) the National Association for Olmsted Parks (NAOP) for nomination of the American Society of Landscape Architect's Medal of Excellence. Since 1980, the NAOP has continuously contributed to the development of policy, assisted in research, educated, and participated in project planning and design throughout the United States, highlighting the importance and value of landscape architecture.

A partnership of design and preservation professionals, historic property and park managers, scholars, municipal officials, citizen activists and representatives of numerous Olmsted organizations around the United States, the NAOP's focus is a concern for the legacy of landscape work left by Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. and the firm founded by his sons, Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects. The value of the focus extends beyond mere historical preservation, but how the Olmsted legacy has impacted our Nation culturally and socially.

An examination of the history of the NAOP highlights the value it has brought to our communities, and NAOP's plans to continue to assist in the preservation and recognition of landscapes that reflect a vision of American communities and American society as relevant today as it was in the second half of the 19th century during Olmsted's tenure. The NAOP continues a commitment to visually compelling and accessible green space that restores and nurtures the bodies and spirits of all people, regardless of their economic circumstances.

To help revitalize communities and enrich people's lives through Olmsted's principles and the legacy of irreplaceable parks and landscapes, the National Association for Olmsted Parks incorporates:

- Advocacy
- Research
- Education
- Communications
- Strong Organizational Planning Skills

Since the inception of the National Association for Olmsted Parks in Buffalo, their actions and organizing has led to numerous accomplishments. The following snapshots in time highlight a small sample of their accomplishments during the last 26 years.

YEAR	ACTION
1983:	The founding the Olmsted Parks Society of Atlanta, partly in response to the threat to Olmsted-designed suburb Druid Hills from proposed "Presidential Parkway".
1984:	NAOP testifies at Congressional hearing (May/June) on Seiberling bill to develop a National Inventory of Olmsted Parks ("Olmsted Historic Landscapes Act")
1987:	Workshop in Louisville, KY (November), "Mobilizing An Olmsted Constituency," co-sponsored with Louisville Friends of Olmsted Parks Publication of "The Master List of Design Projects Of The Olmsted Firm, 1857-1950" (also known as the "Green Book") in conjunction with the Massachusetts Association for Olmsted Parks
1993:	Conference in St. Louis, MI (September) "Reality Check for Our Nation's Parks," in conjunction with The National Park Service Historic Landscape Initiative and the National Trust for Historic Preservation Conference
1995:	Cooperative Agreement with the National Park Service Historic Landscape Initiative

- 1996:** Conference in Chicago, IL (October) "From Riverside to Sunnyside: Preserving Our Nation's Historic Communities," co-sponsored with The National Park Service Historic Landscape Initiative, National Trust for Historic Preservation and American Planning Association
- 2003:** Research begun on Olmsted projects on the National Register of Historic Places in cooperation with Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois

A NATIONAL IMPACT

During the last five years, especially in our Nation's Capital, we are experiencing a transformation of how our landscapes are perceived, utilized, and designed. The changes can have a significant impact on the perceptions and message that we as a nation communicate to the public about how public lands are to be utilized. In an effort to bring a focus and attention to these changes, and to help maintain the integrity of designs as originally envisioned by Frederick Law Olmsted, in 2005 (June) the NAOP held an Educational forum in Washington, D.C. "A Design for Democracy: An Olmsted Vision for the U.S. Capitol Grounds, 1874 - 2005". This is part of a larger effort the NAOP has undertaken as advocates, bringing together local and national stakeholders to talk about the future of the Capitol's historic landscape and to advocate for its preservation and restoration.

Representatives from federal and capital region agencies such as the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, scholars, national organizations including the American Society of Landscape Architects and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and citizen advocates joined in the forum. Representatives of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) and its consultants were also involved. The discussions prove vital since the AOC is preparing a master plan for the entire U.S. Capitol Complex, which consists of the Capitol itself, House and Senate Office Buildings, the Supreme Court and the Library of Congress.

The NAOP has also prepared a written statement, "The United States Capitol Complex: An Approach to Preserving and Protecting the Landscape Legacy." In the statement, NAOP urged the AOC to prepare a detailed historic study of the entire complex, develop a statement of philosophy and a program plan against which all design and program elements could be measured, include a conservation plan as part of the final master plan, and engage the public to the greatest extent possible. Other stakeholder groups, who value so much the landscape of the United States Capitol and what it communicates about our democracy, join the effort.

The importance and value of bringing attention to such programs and issues highlights the value the NAOP brings to our culture. The perceptions of our Nation's ability to maintain our original principles of a nation ruled by the people, for the people rests in the very sole of the designs of these important landscapes. As passionate as we are about the value from a perspective of open space and how we utilize these landscapes, the ultimate value comes from the principles spoken of by our founding fathers. The NAOP has kept a focus on the process, to help recognize the value that we have in these landscapes.

ACTING LOCALLY

Protecting and implementing effective change for our landscapes often requires initiatives at a local level. To accomplish this, in 2004, the NAOP and the City Parks Alliance formed a cooperative agreement to hire a shared staff in Washington, D.C. The agreement helps unify the goals of the organizations, maintaining a focus on our nation's parks systems.

The City Parks Alliance (CPA) encourages greater involvement and investment in our nation's city parks. Their work strives to have city parks more fully recognized and valued for the role they play in building stronger, healthier and more livable cities. The CPA fosters interest in, and support for, dynamic public institutions through partnerships, network building, information sharing and advocacy. Their members include public agencies, park departments, park advocacy groups, corporations and individuals.

The collaboration of the NAOP and CPA highlights a merging of the historical and present day realities of the value of parks for the public. By working together with the CPA, the NAOP recognizes the high value to integrate resources, to create value from the strength of Olmsted parks, and how we can incorporate principles of the Olmstedian experience into the modern day City park.

ONGOING RESEARCH COLLABORATION

The National Association for Olmsted Parks continues to communicate and bring together partners allowing the public and the landscape architectural community better understand the resources we have available to us. An ongoing effort, the NAOP, along with the National Park Service established The Olmsted Research Guide Online (ORGO).

ORGO is an electronic database that will index the 150,000 Olmsted landscape plans and drawings and other archival materials housed at Fairsted, the firm's former headquarters in Brookline, Massachusetts. Additionally, the database includes 500,000 pages of related correspondence that is housed at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

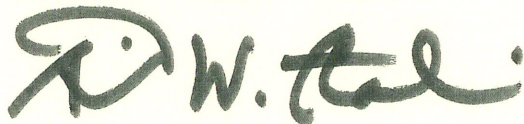
The database assists the public and practitioners alike more easily access information about their community in a unified manner.

ORGO is still being developed, and is a joint project with the National Park Service.

Currently, the NAOP is preparing for a celebration April 28 of this year, to explore the relationship between Abraham Lincoln and Olmsted, and their shared vision for democracy. The celebration marks the 150th Anniversary of Olmsted's and Vaux's Greensward Plan for Central Park. Additionally, The Master List of Design Projects of the Olmsted Firm is scheduled for re-release in April, which includes new research conducted over the past 20 years. The publication is the only document to categorize the Olmsted firm's design projects so that the scale, type and geographic diversity of the work can be quickly and easily understood.

The Connecticut Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects and I believe the actions and work of the National Association of Olmsted Parks are providing the public with a greater appreciation of their culture, helping preserve our history, and expanding on opportunities to promote a healthier and richer society for all. We look forward to your favorable approval of the NAOP for receipt of the Medal of Excellence from the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Sincerely,
Connecticut Chapter, ASLA

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "A. W. Stalis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "W" followed by "Stalis".

Aris W. Stalis, ASLA
Trustee, Connecticut Chapter American Society of Landscape Architects