

## **Honorary Membership Nomination Narrative**

Nominee: Stephen M. Benz, P.E., LEED® AP BD+C

Nominee's Address: OLIN, Public Ledger Building, Suite 1123, 150 South Independence Mall West

City/State/Zip: Philadelphia, PA 19106

Phone: 215.440.0030

Nominator: Laurie D. Olin, RLA, FASLA

*Please describe the nominee's achievements of national or international significance or influence and how they have benefited the profession of landscape architecture (no more than two pages, single-spaced, typed).*

Throughout his career, which has spanned over three decades, Steve Benz has not only contributed enormously to the fields of civil engineering and sustainable site design, but has also been a determined advocate and steward of the practice of landscape architecture and green infrastructure. His work embodies the full integration of architecture, landscape architecture, engineering, natural environmental and geological processes, existing urban infrastructure and the social systems of the people that inhabit the public realm. He approaches his practice with the conviction that, in the current era, designers of the built environment must explore the interconnected relationships of ecology, economy, politics, social justice, energy, resources and health. This unique perspective has shaped and fueled OLIN's Green Infrastructure services ever since he joined our landscape architecture, urban design and planning studio as a Partner in 2010.

As Director of OLIN's Green Infrastructure services, Steve guides project teams in establishing metrics as a means to inform the design of dynamic landscape systems, encouraging practitioners to design with entropy in mind and integrate research and technology to form innovative solutions. He has also taken on the role of educator in these issues, working in collaborative teams to enhance the knowledge and utilization of strategies that improve the performance and health of landscapes. Well-versed in sustainability metrics, Steve manages sustainability goal setting and implementation for projects, working closely with landscape architects, architects, planners and engineers to create truly responsive solutions.

Steve is known for his critical contributions to the discourse of green infrastructure and the valuable resources of living systems. He founded the Massachusetts Chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) and has served as an advisor to the national USGBC's steering committee by virtue of his role as longtime member and immediate past Chair of the Sustainable Sites Technical Advisory Group (TAG). TAG encompasses six technical committees which develop various aspects of LEED® criteria: Sustainable Sites, Water Efficiency, Energy and Atmosphere, Materials and Resources, Indoor Environment Quality and Location & Planning. Steve is currently serving on the Water Efficiency TAG, and has continued to be involved in the Sustainable Sites TAG as a Subject Matter Expert, in which he advises and makes recommendations to the LEED® system development on technical issues; assesses the consistency and technical rigor of credits and prerequisites; and works collaboratively to develop and modify credits and prerequisites to be incorporated into LEED®. This advisory work aligns future LEED® criteria with the demands of performative landscapes, which will undergo escalating pressures as natural resources becoming increasingly valuable.

In 2011, Steve joined the Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES™) Technical Core Committee, a guiding group for this emerging sites-centric sustainability rating system. In this role, Steve is helping to craft a completely new set of metrics and standards to which all future landscape design and construction projects will be upheld. The extension of criteria beyond the scale of architecture is a principle that grounds Steve's practice and daily work at OLIN. This marks a formative moment not just in sustainable

development, but the role of landscape architecture. His long-standing involvement in these groups has helped forge the industry's perspective on what defines sustainable and performative landscapes.

Before joining OLIN, Steve utilized his role as a Consulting Civil Engineer with architects, landscape architects and planners as a vehicle for pushing the limits of modern sustainable site and landscape design. His career began with his studies in Civil Engineering at Roger Williams University, subsequent to which he gained experience at various engineering firms. Following receipt of his Bachelor of Science degree, Steve established his skills at the firms of Gordon R. Archibald, Inc. and Lee Pare Engineering and studied systems management, geotechnical engineering and hydrology, as well as computer programming and systems design at the post-graduate level.

In 1987, Steve accepted the position of Project Manager at SEA Consultants, Inc., a firm which has since grown into a national multi-disciplinary engineering and architecture practice. After six years and two promotions at SEA, he took on the role of Project Manager and soon thereafter was named as Chief Engineer at Nitsch Engineering, a Boston-based firm widely recognized for innovation in site engineering and stormwater management. During his 14-year career at Nitsch, Steve began developing the firm's Sustainable Site Design practice, exploring the ability of civil engineering to advance the performative and aesthetic qualities of the public realm. Among his defining projects at Nitsch was the University of Virginia Meadow Creek Regional Stormwater Management Plan, for which Steve provided creative stormwater management solutions by working with Nelson Byrd Woltz to use streambank/floodway restoration, wetland creation and green Best Management Practice solutions in the restoration of the 850-acre watershed that comprises the entire west side of the University's campus. The project won an Excellence in Landscape Architecture Merit Award from the Society for College and University Planning. He also contributed to the multi-phase revitalization of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Vassar Street—transforming a roadway that was formerly disconnected and unfriendly to pedestrians into a vibrant new central spine of the campus. At Yale University's Kroon Hall, the new home of the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Steve designed a stormwater capturing cistern which is seamlessly embedded into the site's natural topography and utilizes an aquatic plant-based garden to naturally filter and provide 100 percent of all graywater used in the building. The project has subsequently earned over two dozen awards from organizations including the American Institute of Architects, the Royal Institute of British Architects and the American Council of Engineering Companies of Massachusetts, and has achieved LEED® Platinum Certification—one of the first projects in the U.S. to receive such an honor.

After leaving Nitsch Engineering, Steve continued his leadership in sustainable design at Sasaki Associates, where he served as a Principal for three years, and now at OLIN, where he is regularly called upon as a consulting Partner on projects and a leader of the studio's continuing education, research and advocacy initiatives for Green Infrastructure solutions within the studio. One example is a comprehensive revitalization of the Mill River waterfront in Stamford, Connecticut, a collaboration with the Army Corps of Engineers which involves restoring the riparian systems of the river and integrating an environmentally responsible and programmatically active public park. Another project, a landscape master plan for the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden in California, seeks to sensitively guide the growth and sustainable evolution of this historic and horticulturally rich landscape, with components designed by Lockwood deForest and Beatrix Ferrand. Steve is also contributing to a pilot project for the Sustainable Sites Initiative with Washington Canal Park in Washington, DC, a three block linear park being constructed on the site of a former parking lot and features a state-of-the-art stormwater capturing and filtration system that both offsets the impact of runoff from the surrounding neighborhood into the municipal combined sewer system and provides functioning educational amenities that teach parkgoers about responsible water management.

As a colleague and the nominator of Steve Benz to the position of Honorary Member of the American Society of Landscape Architects, I am thrilled to express the privilege I have felt to work with someone who has contributed in immeasurable ways not only to the projects he has undertaken, the committees which he has served, or the firms he has led, but to the very nature, thought and practice of the field of landscape architecture. I highly value his collegial spirit, inquisitiveness, constant pursuit of innovation, and the ways in which he even challenges me to consider my practice in new and provocative ways. I support his Honorary Membership with enthusiasm and without reservation.



# OLIN

Honorary Membership Nomination  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

SUBJECT: Honorary Membership in ASLA  
Stephen M. Benz, P.E., LEED® AP BD+C

To the ASLA Executive Committee:

Please regard this letter as a formal endorsement for Stephen Benz to become an honorary member of the American Society of Landscape Architects as he is truly a worthy candidate. My professional collaboration with Stephen dates back more than 10 years, throughout which I have witnessed his unique ability to synthesize sustainable systems within a landscape's design, his innovative approach to green infrastructure systems, and his expert knowledge in civil engineering.

OLIN and Nitsch Engineering have a long history of collaborating together. As Nitsch's former Chief Engineer, Stephen has worked with our studio's Partners on many of our most sustainably innovative landscape projects, including the Ray and Maria Stata Center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Kroon Hall School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale University. While working on the development of both of these award-winning projects it quickly became clear to us that Stephen's careful attention to our team's designs and intelligent approach to sustainable strategies would be crucial in helping us achieve the highly efficient and dynamic environments we were after. In numerous collaborations since then and up to today, Stephen has assisted OLIN in developing appropriate and credible approaches to sustainable landscape designs.

Stephen is a former long-standing member and immediate past Chair of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) National Sustainable Sites Technical Advisory Group. He was also a two-term and founding Chair of the Massachusetts Chapter of the USGBC, and most recently has been appointed to the USGBC's LEED® Water Efficiency Technical Advisory Group and the ASLA's Sustainable Sites Initiative Technical Core Committee. In 2010, we invited Stephen to join our studio as Partner, and with his proven leadership in sustainable site design and exploration it was without hesitation that we asked him to serve as our Director of Green Infrastructure. OLIN is and will remain a landscape architecture centric firm, but with Stephen's guidance and input, we will rise to and lead the challenges confronting landscape architects in the 21st century.



Stephen's remarkable experience, leadership and approach to sustainable systems within the context of landscape design have made him an incredible asset to the projects he has worked on deeming him a more than deserving candidate for honorary membership in to the ASLA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lucinda R. Sanders". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial 'L'.

Lucinda R. Sanders, RLA, FASLA  
CEO and Partner



# The University of Georgia

College of Environment and Design

Honorary Membership Nomination  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Honorary Membership in ASLA  
Stephen M. Benz, P.E., LEED® AP BD+C

To the ASLA Executive Committee:

It is with great enthusiasm that I nominate Stephen Benz for an honorary membership with the American Society of Landscape Architects. Currently, Stephen serves as Partner and Director of Green Infrastructure at an award-winning landscape architecture studio, and he is a nationally-recognized expert in sustainable site engineering and green infrastructure.

I have personally known and collaborated with Stephen for more than 6 years, and during this time I have become increasingly aware of his deep understanding for sustainable systems. Stephen formerly served as the Chairman of the U.S. Green Building Council National Sustainable Sites Technical Advisory Committee while I was Vice-Chairman, where he directed the group in developing sustainability criteria for landscapes and site development within the LEED® program. As a member and current Chairman of the Technical Advisory Group, I have learned a tremendous amount from Stephen's efforts and believe that his contributions have seamlessly connected the disciplines of civil engineering and landscape together in a way that is forward-thinking and greatly constructive.

For more than thirty years Stephen's contributions have greatly impacted the development of sustainable site engineering and green infrastructure within the practice of landscape architecture and his accomplishments should not go unnoticed. I am delighted to fully support his nomination to be an Honorary Member of the ASLA as he is truly a deserving candidate.

Sincerely,

R. Alfred Vick, ASLA, LEED® AP BD+C  
Associate Professor  
University of Georgia  
195 Felton Circle  
Athens, GA 30605



UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA  
Office of the Architect for the University

Honorary Membership Nomination  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Honorary Membership in ASLA  
Stephen M. Benz, P.E., LEED® AP BD+C

To the ASLA Executive Committee:

It is without hesitation that I offer my support for Steve Benz's nomination to become an honorary member of the American Society of Landscape Architects. As the University Landscape Architect at The University of Virginia for more than sixteen years, I have had experience working with Steve on several of major projects.

In particular, Steve played a critical role in the implementation of the University aspirations to adopt a more sustainable approach to managing stormwater on grounds. At the time, the opinion of most civil engineers both inside and outside the institution was that the low impact design practices recommended by landscape architects Andropogon Associates in their 1999 report, *A Strategic Plan for Water Resources Management*, were neither feasible nor functional to implement. In contrast, Steve, then employed by Nitsch Engineering, was enthusiastic about the plan's innovative ideas and took on their implementation as a design challenge.

The follow-up study that he undertook in 2002, *Meadow Creek Stormwater Management Plan*, demonstrated the both the feasibility and benefits offered by an area-wide hydrological approach to stormwater management on the west side of the campus. His credibility and competence as an engineer convinced the sceptics and garnered support for new policies and practices that are still the basis of planning and design at the University a decade later.

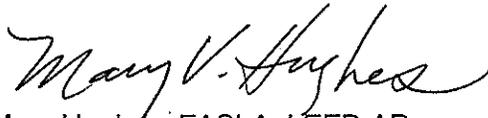
The regional stormwater plan forms the engineering basis for a number of design projects by landscape architecture firms in the watershed, several of which have won ASLA design awards, such as The Dell (Honor Award 2009) and the Carr's Hill Arts Precinct Landscape Master Plan (Merit Award 2003). More than any other engineer I have known, Steve works as a full creative

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partner with landscape architects on a design team. His knowledge of civil engineering and sustainable systems provides complementary professional skills and insights while he, in turn, respects the contributions of other professional disciplines.

Over the years, I have personally witnessed Steve's contributions to the field of landscape architecture, from the conceptualization of a project through to its realization. As a Fellow of the Society, I fully support the nomination of Steve Benz as an Honorary Member of ASLA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary V. Hughes".

Mary Hughes, FASLA, LEED AP  
University Landscape Architect  
The University of Virginia  
The Rotunda, Southeast Wing  
Charlottesville, VA, 22903

Honorary Membership Nomination  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Honorary Membership in ASLA  
Stephen M. Benz, P.E., LEED® AP BD+C

To the ASLA Executive Committee:

I am pleased to support the nomination of Stephen Benz for honorary membership in the American Society of Landscape Architects. Steve's work with and in support of landscape architects certainly makes him worthy of this great honor.

I have been collaborating with Steve for more than ten years now, and have always found him to be strongly supportive of the values of this profession. The major project that we worked on together, beginning in 2000, was the reconstruction of Vassar Street for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. I was the principal-in-charge of the overall design team with the project's prime consultant, Carol R. Johnson Associates; Steve led the efforts of Nitsch Engineering, providing civil engineering services for the complete reconstruction of this mile-long urban campus street. This five-year collaboration, from concept design through construction, demonstrated Steve's skills at understanding not only how to enter into an open and productive partnership with landscape architects and other design professionals, but also his skills at placemaking and environmental stewardship, qualities I have far too rarely encountered in civil engineers. The outcome of that project was a vibrant new street, an new and distinctive front door to the MIT campus, and a model for urban revitalization that has been studied and copied by other campuses.

In addition to the Vassar Street work, Steve was making other major contributions to the MIT campus at that time, most notably the award-winning Ray & Maria Stata Center, led by OLIN, the accomplished landscape architecture, urban design and planning firm where he is now a Partner and the Director of Green Infrastructure. His efforts for that project included the design of the site's stormwater management features, which were designed to be integral to the landscape, both functionally and aesthetically, and demonstrate Steve's unique ability to synthesize complex sustainable systems within a landscape. He played a key role in coordinating between the streetscape and Stata Center project teams.

As a member of ASLA's Board of Trustees, representing the Boston Society of Landscape Architects, I look forward each year to reviewing the applications of and voting for the most outstanding nominees for honorary membership in the Society. I assure you that, if Steve's nomination is accepted, there will be few nominees more deserving of that honor, and I look forward to voting for him in May.

Sincerely,



Thomas R. Doolittle, ASLA, PLA, LEED AP BD+C



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Honorary Membership Nomination  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Subject: Honorary Membership in ASLA  
Stephen M. Benz, P.E., LEED® AP BD+C

Dear ASLA Executive Committee,

It is my pleasure to recommend Steve Benz for honorary membership in the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Steve is one of those rare civil engineers able to weave the many complexities of sustainable site engineering into a given project in a truly harmonious way. In my work with Steve, I have witnessed his remarkable ability to incorporate green infrastructure strategies within the context of a landscape's design.

During his time at Nitsch Engineering, Steve and I collaborated on significant projects at the University of Virginia. The most significant of these was the landscape for the Dell, one of the three regional stormwater mitigation sites at Meadow Creek. The Dell features a daylighted stream and a stormwater forebay and pond system that was engineered to provide vital water management functions while enhancing the campus' landscape fabric. The Dell has received numerous honors and awards, most recently highlighted by a national SCUP award and by a national design award from the ASLA (2010). Steve's contributions to the success and health of that project from a water quality point of view were immeasurable.

Subsequent to our work on the Dell, we worked with Steve Benz on a Hydrological Master Plan for the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond, Virginia. His collaboration gave very real substance to our design proposals for assisting the garden with the harvesting and effective sustainable treatment of all of its site waters. This too has been a much lauded and honored project, and I have no doubt that its merit lies as much with Steve's contributions as it does with its design qualities.

As Partner and Director of Green Infrastructure for one of the nation's most progressive landscape architecture firms, Steve is a leader in integrating sustainable engineering in the landscape architecture field and should be acknowledged as such through honorary membership among his peers in the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'W. Byrd', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Warren Byrd, RLA, FASLA, Principal  
Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects  
408 Park Street  
Charlottesville, VA 22902