

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Department of Landscape Architecture

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Honorary Membership Nomination

Nominee: Gerald W. Adelman
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Nominating Trustees: Gary Kesler, FASLA; Terry Ryan, FASLA

Gerald W. Adelman has been for many years one of Illinois' leading advocates for land preservation, cultural heritage planning, and landscape architecture. He has lectured and advised on many projects throughout the United States and abroad, drawing on his work as an environmental and historic preservation planner to articulate ways in which nature, art and history need to be woven back into the fabric of metropolitan life in order for that life to be healthy and meaningful.

Since 1988, Adelman has served as the executive director of Openlands Project. One of the oldest urban conservation organizations, Openlands Project was founded in 1963 and works to protect and enhance open space within the three-state Chicago metropolitan area. Adelman first joined the staff of Openlands Project in 1980 to coordinate a special program focusing on the Des Plaines River Valley. This led to his founding of the Canal Corridor Association in 1982. Adelman served as president until 2002 and led the effort to create the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor in 1984. An urban cultural park encompassing 49 communities along 120 miles of inland waterways, the Heritage Corridor was the first federal land designation of its kind. Using the I & M Canal as a model, and in several instances, direct consultation with Adelman, 23 federally designated heritage areas have been created across the United States today. In 1986, Openlands received the National Trust for Historic Preservation Honor Award and in 1992 the Burnham Award from the Metropolitan Planning Council. Adelman remains an active member of the Canal Corridor Association's Board of Directors.

In 1990, Openlands launched the 21st Century Open Space Plan, which outlined an integrated regional framework for the organization's work. The plan called for the creation of a new generation of neighborhood parks and gardens in Chicago, a metropolitan network of greenways, and several large regional reserves, such as Fort Sheridan and the 19,000-acre Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. Co-authored by Openlands and the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, the Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways Plan was adopted in 1992 and by the end of the century included over 4,000 miles of linear parks and trails. Openlands received the first American Greenways DuPont Award from the National Geographic Society and The Conservation Fund in 1993.

CorLands (Corporation for Openlands) was formed in 1978 as an affiliate of Openlands to provide technical assistance to local governments and private groups for land acquisition and preservation. By 2002, CorLands was responsible for the protection of over 10,000 acres throughout the metropolitan region. Most recently, CorLands purchased a 400-acre boy-scout camp for the Kendall County Forest Preserve District and it negotiated the preservation of over 280-acres of wetland and upland buffer at the Black Crown Marsh in western Lake and eastern McHenry Counties. On the other end of the spectrum, Open Lands is assisting with the acquisition of a property to develop a reading garden next to a public library and purchased a lot on Chicago's lakefront in Rogers Park to help "fill in between the dots" to reach the City's goal of a continuous, publicly accessible lakefront.

Specific initiatives undertaken by Adelman and the Openlands Project in support of landscape architecture and landscape preservation include:

1. Advocacy and support for the return of Northerly Island in Chicago to a public park (rather than an airport) including involvement in the planning and design.
2. Advocacy for the preservation of large tracks of lakefront, ravines and O.C. Simonds' historic landscape at Fort Sheridan in Highland Park. These large tracks are now owned by the Lake County Forest Preserve District and are being appropriately restored.
3. Planning and development of numerous regional trails including the Grand Illinois Trail (go to Openlands web site and click on the link to the Grand Illinois Trail), Old plank Road Trail - connecting, via an abandon rail corridor, south suburban Chicago communities into Will County and their forest preserve system.
4. Completion of a comprehensive report on the forest preserve and conservation districts of the region noting their strengths and weaknesses and making recommendations for the coming years.
5. Several key studies on urban sprawl and smart growth. Openlands recently published two key reports on water quality and quantity issues in northeastern Illinois (also posted on the web site). Jerry also serves on the executive council of Metropolis 2020.
6. As chair of the (Chicago) Mayors Wildlife Committee, developed the City's first nature and wildlife plan. The plan will be released at a press conference in the next couple of weeks.
7. Openlands played a key advocacy role in the conversion of the Joliet Arsenal to the 19,000-acre Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie and through CorLands has assisted with additional key land acquisitions and wetlands restoration work.
8. Collaboration with Herb Schaal, FASLA, from EDAW's Fort Collins' office on a design for a botanical garden in Yunnan, China, an integral piece of a master plan to preserve a much larger and ecologically rich region. Part of the goal is to build the garden in a less sensitive area of the region that can support eco-tourism while preserving more sensitive areas in a wilderness state.

Adelmann holds a Bachelor of Arts in art and architectural history from Georgetown University, and a Master of Philosophy in American Studies from George Washington University. Graduate work in Paris, Boston, and Washington, D. C., was in historic preservation, urban planning and American History. He was a pre-doctoral fellow at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D. C. before returning to the Chicago area. In 1986 he received an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree from Lewis University in recognition of his contributions to the Heritage Corridor region. Adelmann has received numerous awards, including a 1996 Chevron-Times Mirror Magazines Conservation Award.

Adelmann is a vice chairman of the Illinois State Museum and serves on the board of the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation. He is an emeritus member of the National Board of Advisors of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Secretary of the Interior appointed Adelmann to the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor Commission. He has served on the boards of numerous organizations and agencies, including the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois, Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council, The Nature Conservancy's Illinois Chapter, the Hegeler-Carus Foundation, the Liberty Prairie Foundation, and the Governor's Task Force that established the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency in 1985. Adelmann chairs Mayor Daley's Nature and Wildlife Committee and was a founding member of Chicago Wilderness, a coalition of over 140 agencies and organizations working on biodiversity issues in metropolitan Chicago. He is also a member of the Advisory Council of the Center for United States-China Arts Exchange at Columbia University (N.Y.C.), the Executive Council of Chicago Metropolis 2020 (charged with creating "the Chicago Plan for the 21st Century"), and the National Council of The Conservation Fund.

Adelmann's accomplishments, from creating the first national canal heritage corridor to his approach to building consensus among cross-disciplinary and jurisdictional agencies, have served as exemplars for many similar organizations and agencies throughout the States. His untiring efforts on behalf of landscape planning, preservation and design, and the influence he has had within the Chicago region and beyond, make it a distinct pleasure to nominate Gerald W. Adelmann for honorary membership in the ASLA.

Gary Kesler, FASLA