

March 18, 2004

Olmsted Medal Nominations
ASLA
636 Eye Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

To Members of the ASLA Executive Committee and Board of Trustees:

I am writing to support the nomination of Joseph P. Riley, Jr., Mayor of the City of Charleston, South Carolina, for the Olmsted Medal. In his twenty-eight years as mayor, Joe has led the transformation of Charleston into what is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful and livable cities in the nation. His success is rooted in the deeply held personal conviction that beauty and design excellence in the public realm are essential to the human spirit and a fundamental civic right. He lives this conviction every day through his incredible dedication and focus, and by using his role as mayor to demand the highest standards of excellence from everyone who has a hand in the design and construction of his city. This alone would make him worthy of your honor.

But his influence is much greater than that. Eighteen years ago Joe Riley was the driving force behind the creation of the Mayors' Institute on City Design. Joe's vision for the Mayors' Institute was of a program that would inspire mayors to oversee their cities with the same dedication to design excellence in the public realm that he has exhibited in Charleston. I was honored to serve as Executive Director of the Mayors' Institute for ten years, from 1993 to 2003, and during that time I saw his vision achieved literally hundreds of times. There are mayors all across the country who have become passionate advocates for design and public space because of Joe Riley. Their cities have public places that owe their quality and sometimes even their existence to their mayors' leadership. His peers hold him in a level of esteem that is unequalled. His ability to inspire is legendary.

I have often described Joe as the Johnny Appleseed of excellence in city design. In my travels with the Mayors' Institute, I frequently heard people say things like "Joe Riley was here last month. He spoke at a public design workshop, and it has galvanized the community." I don't know he can find the energy to oversee everything that goes on in Charleston while traveling as much as he does, but I am very thankful that he can. He has not only made a personal contribution to the design of his city, but to the design profession, by elevating awareness of the importance of design of public space by the public and by public officials across the country.

Thank you for your consideration of Joseph P. Riley, Jr. for the Olmsted Medal.

Sincerely,



Christine Saum, AIA
Senior Urban Designer and Acting Director
Urban Design and Plan Review Division
National Capital Planning Commission
401 9th Street NW, Suite 500N
Washington, DC 20576