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THE ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS NETWORK

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TO: The ASLA Olmsted Medal Committee
FROM: Richard C. Webel, Chairman
RE: C. Thomas Wyche Nomination

I would like to add my support to the many others you will receive on behalf of Tommy Wyche's nomination for the Olmsted medal.

To me, nothing more encapsulates this extraordinary man than a conversation he had with my father and me almost 25 years ago. With the excuse of getting landscape architectural advice from us, he walked us to the edge of the Reedy River in downtown Greenville, South Carolina, and told us about the conservation projects he was working on. With understatement and quiet wit, he laid out the most ambitious, almost outrageous agenda - and concluded with almost the same words J. Irwin Miller used in another conversation with me two decades later. 'I realize', he said. 'that this will take a little patience and persuasion to get folks to buy in'. How absolutely remarkable that a quarter century later, he has accomplished almost all that he set out to do, and is still expanding the agenda.

What most distinguishes Tommy to me is the rare trait of quiet tenacity. Never bullying, never looking for the spotlight, he just wears down those who claim to be unmoved. Moreover, he does so with an underlying methodology that organizes and prioritizes more moving pieces than most could even identify. Just one of many examples is his spearheading of the effort to revitalize downtown Greenville's riverfront. The land acquisition partnership he formed bought the most important section of center city riverfront in 1982 with the idea of bringing a public/private partnership together that reintroduced the natural landscape into the city proper in a way that drew in peoples' active participation and sense of appreciation. It took 21 years of constant lobbying and effort, but in 2003, he achieved his goal - and then asked if it wouldn't make sense to skip the Press Conference so that attention would not be taken away from the political entities that he had won over.

In a world where sound bites and immediate results seem to get all the attention, it seems to me to be very important indeed to recognize those who produce the results. I can think of no better example of quiet, effective vision and leadership for environmental improvement than Tommy's. His example is one to be emulated and copied.

We are all lucky to be the beneficiaries of his passion and achievements.

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