



ASLA  
CONNECTICUT

February 5, 2021

Honorary Membership Nominations  
c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

**RE: Honorary Membership**

Dear Executive Committee,

It is my pleasure to nominate **Christina Smith** for induction as an honorary member of the American Society of Landscape Architects. As the President and CEO of **Groundwork Bridgeport**, she has been immensely effective in helping young men and women to find careers in green industry professions. Her efforts reflect a homegrown sensibility towards equitable design by empowering local youth to identify and solve issues in their own communities.

Where others see Bridgeport as a struggling post-industrial city, Christina envisions an inclusive and uplifting future for her hometown. Her degrees in Economics, Historical and Sustainable Architecture, and Urban Regeneration have helped her create a framework that she is implementing through the nonprofit Groundwork Bridgeport program. The combination of job training and creative placemaking prepares students to be the future stewards of the environment in which they live. To make this opportunity possible, Christina solicits approximately \$250,000 annually in grants and donations, most of it in allocations of less than \$10,000.

Inclusivity is a hallmark of the Groundwork Bridgeport mission. The demographics of the program reflect Bridgeport's diversity, particularly its significant African-American and Latino communities. The program has also been successful in achieving gender parity among participants. In 2020, there was a 50-50 split among graduating seniors. Much of this success comes as a result of Christina's sustained efforts in making participation in the city's regeneration accessible to youth in every neighborhood.

Christina's optimism is a powerful and effective agent for change. Her outreach to high school students has resulted dozens of city youth signing up each year to participate in landscape design studios, urban ranger courses, and service-learning projects. These programs give students direct opportunities to collaborate with working professionals and implement actual projects around the city. As a result, Groundwork Bridgeport had a 100% graduation rate for its 22-member senior class this past year with 81% going on to collegiate programs of study.

Another major part of the Groundwork Bridgeport's success is Christina's warm personality and strong encouragement for student learning. Her ethos is built around the idea of "passion for place" and how community revitalization will be most

CONNECTICUT  
CHAPTER

AMERICAN  
SOCIETY OF  
LANDSCAPE  
ARCHITECTS

P.O. BOX 209197  
NEW HAVEN  
CONNECTICUT  
06520

WWW.CTASLA.ORG



# ASLA CONNECTICUT

successful when its members have a diversity of experiences and skills. Program graduates are currently pursuing studies in education, science, engineering, environmental studies, arts, horticulture, and landscape architecture. Christina hopes that they will be inspired as she was and return to Bridgeport to share their knowledge and enthusiasm.

Since its inception, Groundwork Bridgeport has valued landscape architects and their capabilities to shape for student learning. Unlike traditional ACE mentoring programs, Christina's approach focuses on tactical urbanism strategies and green infrastructure solutions which are a natural fit for our profession. Built projects have already planted thousands of trees, shrubs, and perennials across the city.

Over the past year, Christina and her students worked with three of our chapter members to prepare site design concepts for several vacant lots in the city. The students drew gathering spaces, rain gardens, bioswales, meadows, pollinator gardens, and other ideas that they had for these sites. Then, working with licensed practitioners, they developed a final plan for each site that Groundwork Bridgeport could use to seek grant funding and community feedback. The students gained valuable skills in project management, budgeting, presentation, graphic communication, and public speaking which will serve them well in their future careers.

Christina Smith truly understands ASLA's vision of healthy, beautiful, and resilient spaces for all and would make an outstanding honorary member of our Society. In support of this nomination, please find enclosed additional letters of endorsement from the following individuals:

1. Drew Goldsman, AICP, The Nature Conservancy
2. Ely-Anna Becerril, Student ASLA, University of Connecticut
3. Tom Tavella, FASLA, Schmidt Design Group
4. Aris Stalis, ASLA, Aris Land Studio

Thank you for your time and consideration of this application. A photograph of Christina as well as her contact information are enclosed in this submission. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding the qualifications and accomplishments described above.

Very Truly Yours,

Matthew Verry, ASLA  
*President*  
*Connecticut Chapter of ASLA*

CONNECTICUT  
CHAPTER

AMERICAN  
SOCIETY OF  
LANDSCAPE  
ARCHITECTS

P.O. BOX 209197  
NEW HAVEN  
CONNECTICUT  
06520

WWW.CTASLA.ORG



Honorary Membership Nominations  
c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

February 1, 2021

**Re: Nomination of Christina Smith as Honorary Member of ASLA**

To the American Society of Landscape Architects,

It is my honor to provide my support for the nomination of Christina Smith as an honorary member of ASLA. I have had the privilege of working with Christina over the past six years in a variety of contexts, from program development to on-the-ground projects to fundraising.

In my role as Urban Conservation Director for the Connecticut Chapter of the Nature Conservancy I have developed partnerships with community-based organizations in Bridgeport, the focus of our chapter's urban conservation program, none of which have grown as deep and impactful as with Christina and Groundwork Bridgeport. Some of the specific ways that I have grown and developed as a professional by working alongside Christina include:

- **Pragmatic focus on outcomes:** Christina is committed to ensuring that Groundwork Bridgeport is positioned to succeed, especially in the context of organizational struggles predating her tenure. She has streamlined the organization's programs to focus on a core set of priorities that advance youth leadership development through place-based environmental programs – and holds the organization accountable to its goals.
- **Deep commitment to mission and Bridgeport's youth:** It is an understatement to say that Christina believes in the power of youth. I have seen her passion shine when students present their concepts for greenspaces in Bridgeport that address their community's needs. Christina brings her whole self to the job – managing the organization but also cultivating the same belief in the power of place in the students she mentors.
- **Understanding of systems of discrimination and inequity:** The project that Christina and I have most recently collaborated on pairs students with landscape architects to co-create designs for underutilized neighborhood greenspaces. This project centers the vision and leadership of youth – the vast majority of whom are black and latinx – to address the ongoing ways in which discrimination impacts their lives. I have witnessed Christina's seamless ability to expose systemic inequities and support student growth.

I believe that ASLA would benefit immensely from having Christina Smith as an Honorary Member.

Sincerely,



Drew Goldsman, AICP, Urban Conservation Director ([drew.goldsman@tnc.org](mailto:drew.goldsman@tnc.org))





OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT

999 BROAD STREET  
BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT 06604  
TELEPHONE (203) 576-7201  
FAX (203) 576-3913

JOSEPH P. GANIM  
Mayor

February 2, 2021

Honorary Membership Nominations  
c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street  
NW Washington, D.C. 2001-3736

Dear Members of the National ASLA Honors & Awards Committee,

It my pleasure and honor to support the nomination of Christina Smith as an Honorary Member of the American Society of Landscape Architects. Christina was born and raised in our city, and she has returned to help make Bridgeport "a place people love to be" by using the skills she's learned in economics, urban regeneration, and historic preservation to improve our public places. Furthermore, as the President and CEO of Groundwork Bridgeport, she is doing amazing work by educating, energizing, and empowering young people to become stewards of their community.

Groundwork Bridgeport provides youth across the City with opportunities to collaborate directly with working professionals on projects citywide while receiving training in landscape architecture, environmental science, horticulture, and related disciplines. Through Christina's unique ability to secure grants and donations to fund the program, Groundwork Bridgeport is able to deliver small-scale projects to our community at little to no cost to taxpayers.

Bridgeport is known as "The Park City" because of its number of parks, including Seaside and Beardsley Parks, many of which were designed by the father of American landscape architecture, Frederick Law Olmsted. Christina's vision of revitalizing Bridgeport through a mosaic of equitably designed community green spaces is visionary. This work has the potential to deliver economic, environmental, and health benefits to residents lacking access to these amenities.

For all of these reasons and more, I enthusiastically endorse her nomination. Given her amazing work improving and preserving our public spaces in Bridgeport, it is only fitting that she receives an honorary membership in a society dedicated to "stewardship of the land."

Sincerely,

Joseph P. Ganim  
Mayor

07 January 2020:

Honorary Membership Nominations  
c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

**RE: Honorary Membership-Christina Smith**

Dear Executive Committee,

I am pleased to support the nomination of Groundwork Executive Director Christina Smith as an Honorary Member of the American Society of Landscape Architects. When I first joined Groundwork Bridgeport almost 3 years ago, I instantly felt welcomed by her presence. The program strives to help youth learn about sustainability, horticulture, and environmental stewardship in their city with hands on opportunities. Executive director Christina Smith and Program manager Tanner Burgdorf have been the ultimate power team dedicated to teaching and supporting Bridgeport youth and they both have inspired me in many ways.

During my experiences at Groundwork, Christina always radiated passion and positivity which inspires me to this day. I distinctly remember conversing about pursuing degrees while planting flowers at the downtown square of Bridgeport. I was interested and amazed at the variety and kind of work she had done in her educational career. I had realized that especially as a young woman, I could pursue multiple fields as well as anything that I desired in my educational endeavors.

Christina's strong dedication for supporting youth in her hometown of Bridgeport and helping them advocate for the spaces around them has always stood out to me. I now also aspire to bring back the skills I learn as a future landscape architect to my hometown of Bridgeport and support youth initiatives.

The work that Christina and the Groundwork team does is essential to the growth, health, and livelihood of my hometown of Bridgeport. For the reasons above and many more, Christina should be recognized for her leadership, the hard work she has put into Groundwork, and for the impact she's made on Bridgeport youth many years after they have joined the program.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ely-Anna', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Ely-Anna Becerril, Student ASLA



January 27, 2021

Honorary Membership  
Nomination American Society  
of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street, NW,  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

**Re: ASLA Honorary Membership for Christina Smith, President of Groundwork Bridgeport**

Dear ASLA Board of Trustees:

I wholeheartedly endorse the nomination of Christina Smith for Honorary Membership in the American Society of Landscape Architects. I believe Christina embodies the principles of sustainability and equity that we, as landscape architects, live by. Furthermore, her values fit the mission of our Society of creating healthy, beautiful, and resilient spaces for all.

As the President and CEO of Groundwork Bridgeport, her energy and leadership are powerful agents of change. Under her leadership, Groundwork Bridgeport has been reclaiming blighted areas into gardens, parks, playgrounds and other open spaces that instill pride in the community. Christina understands how offering programs for the youth of Bridgeport will develop their leadership skills, build social capital, and improve the public realm. She is particularly proud that one of her students will be receiving her B.S. Landscape Architecture degree from the University of Connecticut in May.

As part of a landscape design and placemaking studio, I worked with several high school students in the Groundwork Bridgeport program to redesign a neglected property. The students showed me their design thinking for the site, and I helped them develop it into a conceptual plan suitable for grant funding. This iterative process of dialogue between students and professional landscape architects engenders mutual respect and understanding, an important aspect of encouraging students that their voices and vision belong in our profession.

In recognition of her vision, hard work, and leadership, I strongly encourage the Board of Trustees to elect Christina Smith as an Honorary Member of the American Society of Landscape Architects. Thank you for your consideration of her nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Thomas R. Tavella'.

Thomas R Tavella, PLA, FASLA  
President  
Tavella Design Group, LLC  
Past President  
American Society of Landscape Architects

February 3, 2021

Honorary Membership Nominations  
c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

**Re: Honorary ASLA Member Nomination of Christina Smith**

Dear Honorable Members of the Board of Trustees:

I am pleased to forward my letter of endorsement to nominate Ms. Christina Smith, of Bridgeport, Connecticut as an Honorary Member of the American Society of Landscape Architects. I have worked with Christina in her capacity as Executive Director for Groundwork Bridgeport, as well as her work as a Council Member for the Bridgeport City Council.

Christina exhibits the goals and aspirations of the landscape architecture profession on a daily basis. She feels compelled to share her caring for the environment and need to educate the youth which is why her role as the executive director at Groundwork Bridgeport (GB) is so successful. As Executive Director of GB, Christina organized a trip to expose local high school students to the magic of our natural world. The trip was to a state park located along the shores of Long Island Sound, in the Town of Westport. Those familiar with Long Island Sound know of the incredible impact it has ecologically as well as economically on the region. The trip was a significant step, especially for some of the students since some of them had never left the municipal boundaries of Bridgeport since their birth. Helping to expand minds to better understand our environment, which Christina focuses on, is probably one of the most important aspects of the profession of landscape architecture.

Groundwork Bridgeport was started as a thought in 1995, and officially founded in 1998. One of the founders was Stuart Sachs, a well know landscape architect in Connecticut. Stuart continues to serve GB as an Ex-Officio Board Member. Stuart has shared that Christina has provided more energy and focus for educating youth about the environment, than any previous executive director. The focus brings student education to the forefront of the program, to help create ecological leaders for future generations. Her commitment includes an understanding of funding non-profit organizations, that rivals any for profit organization on Wall Street. Groundwork Bridgeport was the first Groundwork organization in the United States, based on the United Kingdom's Groundwork organization. Today there are 21 Groundwork Trusts throughout the United States, and this is in no small part to the success of Groundwork Bridgeport.

Awarding Honorary Membership to Christina Smith recognizes the important work she does at Groundwork Bridgeport and her selfless dedication to the community in which she was born.

In closing, I can summarize Christina's work with the following: "Her goal is to have youth in Bridgeport understand the value of water as waves wash across their feet as they stand on the shore of Long Island Sound and revel as they experience the peace of streets lined with trees cooling the urban environs during hot summer months."

I look forward to hearing of your enthusiastic endorsement of Christina Smith as an Honorary Member of the ASLA.

Sincerely,

Aris Land Studio, LLC



̄Aris W. Stalis, ASLA, LEED®AP  
President







**ASLA**  
CONNECTICUT

**Contact Details for Christina Smith**



**CONNECTICUT  
CHAPTER**

**AMERICAN  
SOCIETY OF  
LANDSCAPE  
ARCHITECTS**

P.O. BOX 209197  
NEW HAVEN  
CONNECTICUT  
06520

WWW.CTASLA.ORG

*Groundwork Bridgeport*  
*1001 Main St, Suite 20*  
*Bridgeport, CT 06604*

*(203) 335-6126*  
*csmith@groundworkbridgeport.org*