

Honorary Membership Nomination Narrative

Nominee: Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP, PP, RTPI (hon.), FPIA (hon.)

Nominee's Address: New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, 830 Fifth Ave

City/State/Zip: New York, NY, 10065

Phone: (212) 360-1305

Nominator: Jennifer Nitzky, ASLA

It is with great honor that I nominate Commissioner Mitchell Silver for Honorary ASLA status. Since his appointment in 2014, he has elevated awareness of the importance of parks for public and environmental well-being in New York and beyond. His ground-breaking initiative, Parks Without Borders, brings new meaning to parks for all people. As Commissioner of the nation's largest employer of landscape architects, he Leads the design and stewardship of land and communities - a vision shared by all ASLA members.

Background

Mitchell J. Silver became Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation in May 2014. Commissioner Silver is also the immediate past president of the American Planning Association (APA). He is an award-winning planner with almost 30 years of experience and he is internationally recognized for his leadership in the planning profession and his contributions to contemporary planning issues. He specializes in comprehensive planning, place making and implementation strategies. As Parks Commissioner, Mitchell Silver oversees management, planning and operations of nearly 30,000 acres of parkland, which includes parks, playgrounds, beaches, marinas, recreation centers, wilderness areas and other assets.

Prior to returning to his native New York City as Parks Commissioner, he served as the Chief Planning & Development Officer and Planning Director for Raleigh, NC. His career has included roles as a policy and planning director for New York City's Department of Planning, a principal of a New York City-based planning firm, a town manager in New Jersey, and deputy planning director in Washington, DC.

Commissioner Silver lectures extensively throughout the United States and abroad on a variety of planning topics. Known by his colleagues as a passionate communicator, creative thinker, problem-solver and visionary leader, Mitchell Silver has been at the center of many cutting edge trends, innovative solutions and visionary plans, including Harlem on the River and Vision for Jamaica Center in New York City and the revitalization of neighborhoods in New York City, Philadelphia, Washington, and Raleigh.

As president of APA, he led an international effort to elevate the value and rebirth of planning in the 21st century. In 2012, the *Urban Times* named him one of the top international thought leaders of the built environment today. In 2013, UBM Future Cities named Mitchell Silver as one of the top 100 City Innovators in the world and the Royal Town Planning Institute made him an honorary lifetime member. In 2014, he was inducted into the College of Fellows of the American Planning Association. In 2015, the Planning Institute of Australia named him an honorary fellow.

When Mayor Bill de Blasio named Mitchell Silver as New York City's Parks Commissioner, he called him "a visionary." The Mayor went on to say: "He has a passion for fairness and equality, and he

brings it to the work of government, and understands that we have to ensure that parks and open spaces are available in every community, and are well-maintained in every community in this city.”

As planning director in Raleigh, he led the comprehensive plan update process and a rewriting of the development code to create a vibrant 21st century city. Mr. Silver served in Raleigh from 2005 until taking his job at Parks. He was an outspoken advocate for Raleigh and helped transform it into a world-class city with great streets, great places and great neighborhoods. His work has been featured in *Time Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian (U.K.)*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Huffington Post*, *Associated Press*, *Atlantic Cities*, *the Urban Times*, *Planning Magazine*, *the News & Observer*, *the Charlotte Observer*, *the Triangle Business Journal*, *Crain’s Business Journal*, *BBC World News* and *National Public Radio (NPR)*.

Mitchell Silver was born in Brooklyn and grew up near Prospect Park. He received a Bachelor’s Degree in Architecture from Pratt Institute and a Master’s Degree in Urban Planning from Hunter College. He is certified by the American Institute of Certified Planners and is a licensed Professional Planner in the State of New Jersey. As part of his Sunday routine, he visits a new park every week, experiencing first-hand the power of parks.

Parks Without Borders

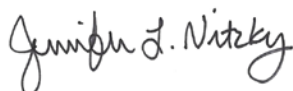
In 2015 he launched Parks Without Borders, a new vision for how New York City’s parks interact with their communities at entrances and edges. Supported by \$50 million in Mayoral funding through the plan OneNYC, Parks Without Borders improves the areas of connection between parks and their communities by making park entrances, edges, and adjacent and in-between spaces more attractive, accessible, and active. Because this program is centered on bringing people into their parks, he made community input central to the selection process for parks. By creating a seamless public realm, this powerful new design approach will transform how New Yorkers interact with parks and public space across the city — and perhaps, across the world.

In May of 2016, Commissioner Silver hosted Parks Without Borders: Ideas For The Next Generation Of Urban Parks And Public Space, a summit on the future of parks and urban spaces. This very successful event brought together thought leaders from a range of disciplines to envision the future of parks and public space and has inspired a lecture series

Jared Green recently included an interview with Commissioner Silver in The Dirt blog in which he asked the Commissioner “Why focus on the borders?”. The Commissioner responded: “Parks aren’t just islands of green space; they’re connected to our entire public realm. Parks Without Borders help us create a more seamless experience at the edges, entrances, and adjacent park spaces. We don’t have to buy new land; we own it. We just have to program it differently, so we provide a better experience.”

Commissioner Silver is not only working with landscape architects to improve the quality of life in our urban environment for all people, he is also creating an abundance of awareness for the stewardship of our parks that landscape architects are leading. With a true passion for parks and improving the lives of all that are touched by urban parks, I can see no better person to be welcomed into membership of ASLA.

Sincerely,



Jennifer L. Nitzky, RLA, ASLA



Ms. Carolyn Mitchell
Honorary Membership Nomination
ASLA
636 Eye Street, NW,
Washington, DC 20001-3736

RE: Letter of Support- Nomination of Mitchell J. Silver for National Honorary ASLA Status

Dear ASLA Executive Committee and Board of Trustees,

It is with great pleasure that I endorse the nomination of Mitchell J. Silver to National Honorary ASLA status. I cannot think of a more qualified person to work with the landscape architecture profession and for this recognition. His idea of planning has been community based since I met him while he was Planning Director in Raleigh, North Carolina. More recently as Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, he has led with a revolutionary vision to infuse parks into the city's communities, making this happen with the very successful Parks Without Borders program.

In 2016, Commissioner Silver further demonstrated his leadership ability by hosting Parks Without Borders: Ideas For The Next Generation Of Urban Parks and Public Space, a summit that gathered professionals from a variety of disciplines to chart the future of parks and public space. Coinciding with the Parks Without Borders program, the conference has had lasting effects in pushing people's thinking on parks. He is inspirational and a forward-thinker that has both challenged and contributed greatly to the landscape architecture profession.

Commissioner Silver is an excellent candidate for National Honorary ASLA status, and I wholeheartedly recommend that you grant him this recognition. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call my office at (212) 620-5660. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fred Kent". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Fred" and last name "Kent" clearly distinguishable.

Fred Kent
President and Founder
Project for Public Spaces

Honorary Membership Nomination

ASLA

636 Eye Street, NW,

Washington, DC 20001-3736

RE: Honorary ASLA Mitchell Silver

Members of the Executive Committee,

For the last three years since Mitchell Silver FAICP took over as Commissioner of The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, I have seen a remarkable transformation of the agency. Under Mitchell's leadership we have seen the Community Parks Initiative and Parks without Borders program develop and come to fruition. Mitchell is exactly the type of leader who we should welcome into our fold.

While Mitchell is a great leader, it is perhaps his professional background in planning that makes him particularly effective in this role. Mitchell's vision is transforming the city with projects that reach underserved neighborhoods. Playgrounds, trails and parks are being rejuvenated in some of the most park-poor parts of the city. These parks are a critical lifeline for communities to develop active lifestyles that will serve them from childhood through old age. I could say countless children will be helped by his programs, but knowing Mitchell he surely has a metric for that!

As a fellow design professional Mitchell understands not only how to envision and manage a significant portfolio of park space, he also knows how to be a great client. Mitchell has transformed project delivery at NYCDPR. As an on-call consultant, I now experience a very responsive staff who is enabled to make decisions expeditiously. Projects move from design through document production, bidding and construction with extraordinary efficiency. Project award and payments are also incredibly speedy. It's a new world, and I like it. I owe Mitchell a huge debt of gratitude for making my small Brooklyn based woman owned business a viable enterprise. I cannot think of a worthier candidate for this honor.

With all my most sincere and heartfelt regards.



Susannah C. Drake FASLA, AIA

Founding Principal

DLANDstudio Architecture and Landscape Architecture PLLC



PUBLIC DESIGN COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Justin Garrett Moore, AICP, Executive Director

ASLA
636 Eye Street, NW,
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Honorary Membership Nomination Committee:

I am enthusiastically submitting this letter of support for Mitchell J. Silver's consideration to be among this year's ASLA Honorary Members. Commissioner Silver has been a leader, innovator, and advocate for the quality and thoughtful design of public spaces and infrastructure here in New York City and across the globe. Through his leadership, the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation has advanced two signature initiatives: Parks Without Borders, and the Community Parks Initiative. Through these programs, he has fostered an interdisciplinary and interagency focus on delivering public spaces that work for the people who own them—everyday New Yorkers from all backgrounds, ages, and boroughs, and the many visitors who enjoy the city's public parks and landscapes. The Community Parks Initiative uses a design process to make improvements in parks throughout the city, many of which have not seen investment in a long time. In many cases, these projects are small and resourceful, but they are incredibly meaningful changes to the built environment for the city's diverse neighborhoods. Parks Without Borders is a much-needed revisiting of long-held design and best practices that have limited the best use of public spaces here in New York and other cities. He has identified this urban problem and understood it as a design problem and worked to bring about a new approach to the safety and security concerns that affect the design of public space. Silver's background in urban planning has spurred a new approach to park planning and design that simultaneously looks at the big-picture to address the city's most challenging issues from climate change and flood resilience to social equity and population growth, while also working in communities to engage with people and learn how public spaces can best be programmed, designed, and managed to meet local needs and character. His leadership has inspired Parks workers, landscape and urban designers, urban planners, policymakers, and community leaders to become champions for our shared public realm, and for better connecting people with the built and natural environments that help make healthier and more sustainable outcomes for urban living.

I have had the fortune to work with Commissioner Silver in my role at the city's Public Design Commission, where we advocate for excellence in the design of the city's public infrastructure, buildings, spaces, and art. Our parks and the landscapes that define them are an essential part our city, and he has helped usher in a new generation of thinking for how our city can be designed, for whom, and with bold and meaningful steps to design our cities for today and the future generations. And finally, I also have to note that it is so important to acknowledge the contributions and commitment of this incredible public servant to the design community, and to the people who are responsible personally and professionally for helping to shape the built environment. Unfortunately, the design and built environment fields have a persistent lack of diversity of backgrounds in their ranks, and especially in the leadership and highest profiles. Mr. Silver undoubtedly deserves membership with the ASLA, and I have no doubt that he will bring his voice and value to the organization and the profession.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Justin Garrett Moore', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Justin Garrett Moore, AICP
Executive Director, NYC Public Design Commission

