

ILLINOIS



ASLA

AMERICAN  
SOCIETY OF  
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ARCHITECTS

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February 7, 2009

President Angela Dye, FASLA  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Re: Nomination of Mayor Richard M. Daley for 2009 LaGasse Medal,  
Non-Landscape Architect Category

Dear President Dye:

The Illinois Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects wishes to nominate Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, Honorary ASLA, for the 2009 Alfred B. LaGasse Medal, Non-Landscape Architect Category.

The Honorable Mayor Richard M. Daley has earned a reputation as America's "greenest mayor." His ongoing crusade to improve the urban environment of Chicago has inspired other mayors and civic leaders across the globe. A recent headline in the New York Times indicated that city was beginning to "catch up" with Chicago's ever-expanding collection of green roofs – just one indication of Chicago's national leadership when it comes to sustainable design and green initiatives.

Mayor Daley's vision for a greener, healthier, and more sustainable Chicago began with his first term in 1989, and has developed steadily over the past 20 years. By working to strengthen the environmental programs, policies and procedures followed by the City's Bureau of Forestry, Department of Environment, Department of Transportation, and other agencies – both public and private – the Mayor has created a broad-based coalition to address environmental challenges and innovations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

A series of environmental initiatives, agendas and action plans guide the City's progress, and create opportunities for engaging private citizens and organizations on many fronts. Some of these leading programs include Green Homes for Chicago (2000), the City of Chicago Energy Plan (2001), Chicago's Water Agenda (2003), and the launch of the Green Bungalows initiative and Green Homes for Chicago program that same year. Chicago's Green Building Agenda was launched in 2005, the Environmental Action Agenda and the Chicago Nature & Wildlife Plan were both launched in 2006, Chicago's Green Alleys Program and "Adding Green to Urban Design Program" were launched in 2007, and in 2008 – despite a weakened economy – the City rolled out an innovative new Stormwater Ordinance, and the ambitious Chicago Climate Action Plan, which continues to receive national attention.



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Not only has Mayor Daley *not* faltered in his commitment to sustainability in the face of economic challenges, he continues to regard this as an arena of economic growth and prosperity during the coming decades – and has made “green collar” employment a primary focus of his Office of Workforce Development and other job-training initiatives. To position the City for progress during a period of economic recession, Mayor Daley has called upon his staff to create new public-private partnerships such as the Growing School Gardens Collaborative, and Chicago’s Urban Trees Initiative – both of which leverage the City’s limited resources through partnerships with an array of interested non-profits, professional groups, and private citizens.

In early 2009, Mayor Daley will launch Chicago’s Urban Forest Agenda 2009 and a comprehensive Urban Forest Management Plan – both focused on achieving a sustained citywide effort to double Chicago’s tree canopy by the year 2040 – one of the leading strategies in Chicago’s plan to reduce and sequester carbon emissions. Not content with the “Plant a Million Trees” model adopted by other cities, Mayor Daley is making a combined commitment to planting *and* preserving his city’s urban forest, through integrated strategies that will be implemented over the course of a decade.

Chicago is home to many innovative conservation and land planning agencies, including those dedicated to preserving community open space and developing recreational trails and other means of public access. Mayor Daley recently endorsed the Chicago Trails Plan, which aims to expand and improve the City’s network of designated cycle trails, and to connect them with trails, both established and proposed, throughout the surrounding region. An avid bicyclist, Mayor Daley has directed his staff to collaborate with the adjacent states of Wisconsin and Indiana to achieve the long-term vision of long-distance cycle paths which follow the Lake Michigan shoreline and now-inactive rail lines radiating outward from the City.

Over the past two decades, Mayor Daley has led a citywide effort to rebuild public infrastructure, including buildings, streets, and public transportation systems. Each successive project has been increasingly green, and since 2005, the City’s Public Buildings Commission has required that all publicly-funded buildings be LEED-rated Silver or higher. Integral design of landscape and building has become the norm in all departments, with mandated green roofs providing landscape benefits when ground-level open space does not exist. Green walls and vertical gardens also play prominently in the Mayor’s vision for a more humane and eco-sensitive public architecture.

Tree-lined streets and landscaped medians have longed played important roles in Chicago. Since the early 1990s, over 90 miles of landscaped medians have been created throughout the City, many of them maintained by community development

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corporations, chambers of commerce, and private entities. Under the City's Zoning and Landscape Ordinances, developers of new buildings and significant rehabilitations are required to include sidewalk improvements in the public way. Design review by the Chicago Department of Transportation, Department of Zoning and Land Use Planning, Bureau of Forestry, and the Mayor's Landscape Advisory Committees, all ensure that streetscape and other open space projects are as green as possible.

Mayor Daley is committed to the idea that the City of Chicago should adhere to and promote its own environmental policies. Public education is key – whether it's expanded access and interpretation throughout the City's managed natural areas, or new and revitalized school gardens, or working strategically to plant and preserve trees throughout all 50 of the City's political wards – some of which are recognized urban heat island areas. Municipal recycling and composting programs have become a recent focus, including practical demonstrations at the Chicago Center for Green Technology, located on the City's redeveloping west side. There, the visiting public includes hundreds of school and community groups each year, who come to see rain gardens, cisterns, various green roof systems, native landscapes, recycled and repurposed landscape materials, solar panels – even the latest solar decathlon house from the University of Illinois.

Richard M. Daley has earned the respect and admiration of landscape architects everywhere for his longstanding commitment to urban greening and his belief that public landscapes are an essential part of the contemporary urban fabric. As the profession of landscape architecture has evolved to encompass and embrace an expanding array of sustainability issues, so too have Mayor Daley's interests and ideas for the public landscapes of Chicago. Nearly every department, bureau, and program has a policy or standing committee dedicated to green issues. Several have fulltime greening coordinators – including the Mayor's Office itself, staffed with a Chief Environmental Officer and a Landscape Coordinator who help to implement the Mayor's green vision, including the much-touted Mayor's Landscape Awards Program, begun in 1956 by the Mayor's late father, Mayor Richard J. Daley.

Recipient of numerous awards from environmental and urban design organizations, Mayor Daley was especially honored to be made an Honorary Member of ASLA in 2003. An avid reader of *Landscape Architecture Magazine* and other industry journals, he has for many years made a practice of tearing out pages and forwarding them to staff with brief notes attached such as "Do This" or "Get more information." And the interest goes both ways: according to Ann Looper Pryor, Publisher of *Landscape Architecture*, more Chicago-based projects have been featured over the last decade than from any other city in America.

Over the last twenty years, Mayor Daley's sustained commitment to the development and management of public landscapes and conservation of urban natural areas has

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benefited the profession of landscape architecture on local, regional, and national levels. His leadership and vision have made the Chicago-area landscape industry one of the strongest and most profitable in the country, and he has set a high standard for other mayors and civic leaders to follow. It is with great pleasure and honor that we, the Illinois Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects, nominate Mayor Richard M. Daley, Honorary ASLA, for the 2009 LaGasse Medal, Non-Landscape Architect Category.

Sincerely,

Terry Warriner Ryan, FASLA  
Trustee, Illinois Chapter ASLA

For more information regarding Mayor Daley, please contact:

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