



CITY OF LAKE CHARLES

RANDY ROACH
MAYOR

326 Pujo St. • P.O. Box 900
Lake Charles, LA 70602-0900
(337)-491-1201 • FAX (337)-491-1206

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

October 17, 2008

Olmsted Medal Nominations
c/o Carolyn Mitchell
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

RE: Nomination of Elizabeth “ Boo” Thomas and Center for Planning Excellence
for the Olmsted Medal

Dear Board of Trustees for the ASLA:

It is a pleasure and a privilege to endorse the nomination of the Center for Planning Excellence in Baton Rouge, Louisiana for the 2009 Olmsted Medal.

“The Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX) has been created to serve as a resource for residents, community organizations, developers and elected officials to provide information on best practices for planning and urban design. This organization educates, inspires and encourages quality control in planning and development. The Center for Planning Excellence is the liaison between the Louisiana Recovery Authority Support Foundation and the consultant team during the Louisiana Speaks planning process.” – Louisiana Speaks

Under the direction of Boo Thomas, CPEX has been the most influential organization to address the recovery needs for hurricane impacted areas of Louisiana. Public expectations regarding the recovery components initially focused on physically rebuilding structures and infrastructure. Through CPEX’s guidance of Louisiana Speaks, our local community response expanded to include capacity building. We went beyond the restoration of physical damages to a holistic understanding of the need to recover in ways that would develop a more sustainable quality of life.

As a local testimonial, the City of Lake Charles was an early recipient for these recovery planning efforts. Under Boo’s guidance, the planning firm of Duany Plater-Zyberk conducted a local neighborhood level charrette to analyze our current urban conditions. In addition to the charrettes, CPEX engaged UDA to offer suggestions on rebuilding Safer, Smarter and Stronger, analyzing our local codes and development policies, as well as, the unique character of our local community. On

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the heels of the neighborhood charrettes we participated in the regional planning efforts led by Calthorpe and Associates.

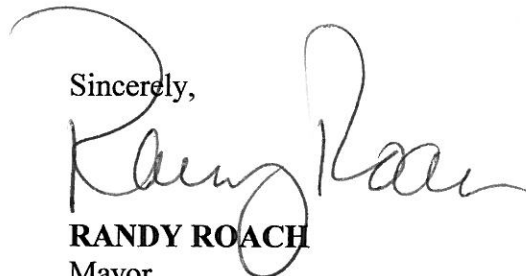
The City responded. The DPZ charrettes illustrated how smart growth principles could be applied to guide our recovery and subsequently be adopted into a Smart Code for our Lakefront Downtown Development District. The Urban Design Associates network celebrated our character and unique community and cultural identifiers. They provided guidance in the form of architectural standards toolkits and pattern books. The leadership of Calthorpe Associates analyzed our infrastructure needs in context with regional growth opportunities and constraints. We responded by initiating city wide visioning and comprehensive master planning to assess our capacity to sustain future annexation and to implement smart growth principles.

In addition to the Louisiana Speaks efforts, our staff participated in valuable networking and training opportunities coordinated by CPEX. The annual Livable Louisiana Smart Growth Conference was valuable in initiating dialog, fostering debate and guiding policy. Not only has the City of Lake Charles been a direct benefactor, CPEX sought additional funding resources, and administered several grants supporting planning excellence and training throughout the State. Staff and civic leaders requested more, and CPEX delivered.

The future is brighter for our community due to CPEX's sensitive response to our needs. I unreservedly recommend the Center for Planning Excellence for the Olmsted Medal, and hope that the Board will give full consideration to this nomination.

With best regards,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy Roach". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "R".

RANDY ROACH
Mayor
City of Lake Charles

RR/csd

February 2, 2009

Ms. Carolyn Mitchell
Honors and Awards Coordinator
American Society of Landscape Architecture
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Dear Ms Mitchell:

It is with great pleasure that I support the nomination of Elizabeth "Boo" Thomas and The Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX) for the Olmsted Medal. Like so many others who grew up in Louisiana and graduated from college in this state, I opted to leave to seek better opportunities and a better quality of life. It is not that I did not love the state, but I just could not stand to see what was happening to the environment and the surrounding natural beauty. The politics of the challenges at that time seemed insurmountable. I can still remember my father telling me that if all those who care so dearly for Louisiana leave, then its future would truly be bleak. Having moved back some seventeen years ago, his words still ring true to me.

Fortunately for our state, Mrs. Thomas did not choose to leave. From her very first job upon graduating in Landscape Architecture at LSU, she devoted her focus towards making Louisiana a better place to live. She initially became involved in developing a comprehensive green links linear park system master plan for East Baton Rouge Parish. From there she became the executive Director of the Mid City Redevelopment Alliance, assisting in the revitalization and redevelopment of impoverished neighborhoods in Mid City. The huge success and recognition of the alliance expanded and redirected Mrs. Thomas's efforts as she became the director of Plan Baton Rouge. Mrs. Thomas spearheaded and coordinated a comprehensive planning effort for the city of Baton Rouge focused on redevelopment of downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods. Plan Baton Rouge, more than anything, engaged the city's citizens and stakeholders to actively participate in planning the vision and sharing ideas for building a better community. Neighborhoods surrounding the downtown area were included in this planning vision, and the momentum was started. Mrs. Thomas's tenacity, guidance, and devotion expanded the coordinated best-practice planning initiatives to the parish level.

After the devastating hurricanes in 2005, Plan Baton Rouge, with the vision and advocacy of smart growth planning principles, coordinated an unprecedented statewide recovery planning process. Plan Baton Rouge rapidly transformed into The Center for Planning Excellence, established to lead Louisiana in a new planning direction set forth in "Louisiana Speaks, Our Vision, Our Plan, Our Future".

CPEX, with Mrs. Thomas as president and CEO, has become an invaluable resource for communities in the region as they shape visions for their future. With the blueprint created by the efforts of CPEX for sound planning and sustainable land use policies, Louisiana is fast becoming a state that is proud

of its heritage, uniqueness, and quality of life; and it now understands the need to protect and preserve for future generations. The spirit of what Olmsted has done for this country, Mrs. Thomas and CPEX have accomplished for Louisiana and the region. I enthusiastically nominate Mrs. Thomas and CPEX for the prestigious Olmsted Metal.

Sincerely,



William A. Reich, ASLA
Principal
Reich Associates, LLC

9 January 2009

Ms. Carolyn Mitchell
Honors and Awards Coordinator
American Society of Landscape Architecture
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Dear Ms. Mitchell,

With great enthusiasm and pleasure, I endorse the nomination of Elizabeth "Boo" Thomas and the Center for Planning Excellence as candidates for the Olmsted Medal!

My colleagues at Urban Design Associates and I met Boo shortly after the Hurricanes Katrina and Rita had devastated much of Louisiana. It was immediately clear to us that she is a natural leader. She manages to combine great charm, a gentle demeanor, a genuine interest in people, and love of her land, with strong management abilities, political agility, and an iron will to do the right thing, no matter what the obstacles. Her leadership of the Baton Rouge Foundation and the Center for Planning Excellence has been critical in the success of those organizations.

In a State with little (if any) tradition of planning, the Baton Rouge Foundation helped establish the Louisiana Recovery Foundation as a private entity to support innovative planning. Since it is independent of the political process for its funding, it is able to be objective in the issues it addresses and was able to reach out to the professionals it felt best suited to the challenges.

The three part program of the Center for Planning Excellence included: A series of demonstration charrettes across the State that demonstrated how short term emergency actions could be part of a future vision; A Regional Vision for the southern part of Louisiana which addressed the difficult issues that determine where development should (and should not) take place; and a Pattern Book for Buildings and a Planning Tool Kit that provide guidance for

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9 JANUARY 2009

planning and development throughout the region. In all three, there was an unprecedented amount of public participation in the process of determining the direction of the work. The Center for Planning Excellence did a superb job in coordinating those complex processes.

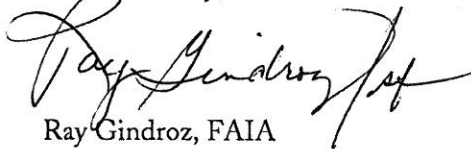
Boo and her staff have worked tirelessly to use the results of these efforts to implement positive and dramatic change throughout the State. Her ability to enable diverse contitencies and individuals to find areas of consensus has been essential in implementing these efforts.

Her training as a landscape architect has served her and the Center for Planning Excellence well in this process. She has a strong love and appreciation for the unique and fragile landscape of Louisiana. The careful stewardship of that legacy is at the center of her effort and therefore of the Center for Planning Excellence.

There could be no better way to celebrate this effort than the Olmsted Medal, named for the man whose passion for the land led to some of the most important planning innovations in our nation's history.

Therefore, I support the nomination of Boo Thomas and The Center for Planning Excellence for the Olmsted Medal.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ray Gindroz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "G".

Ray Gindroz, FAIA
Principal Emeritus

3 February 2009

Ms. Carolyn Mitchell
Honors and Awards Coordinator
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Dear Ms. Mitchell:

I write to nominate Elizabeth “Boo” Thomas, and Louisiana’s Center for Planning Excellence, the organization that she leads, as a candidate for the 2009 Olmsted Medal of the American Society of Landscape Architects. I know Boo as a colleague, friend and as client for the professional team engaged to develop Plan Baton Rouge 2, of which my firm Reed Hilderbrand is a part. She and I have served on the Alumni Advisory Council for the Robert S. Reich School of Landscape Architecture at Louisiana State University.

REED | HILDERBRAND

Boo’s career is characterized by distinguished and successful work in the realm of land use planning, urban design and community involvement. I believe in the last ten years particularly, Boo has worked at the highest level of achievement, combining her unique interpersonal skills, critical and creative judgment, deep professional experience and humanity to develop programs that pursue planning excellence and address the urgent needs of people throughout the state. It is nothing short of complete joy to have watched the evolution of her roles and responsibilities over the years, culminating in the Center for Planning Excellence, her most impressive accomplishment to date. She has found her niche, and she, her colleagues and the work of the center are changing the face of Louisiana’s landscape.

This kind of career has multi-dimensional requirements of creative leadership—vision, intellectual command of a broad, compelling and evolving subject, innate organizational skills, political savvy, persuasiveness, and infectious dedication. Boo has exemplified these attributes in her leadership of the center, and the outcome has been a kind of reach and influence that is palpable: the work is galvanizing communities and their governments to lift the quality of life and improve the environment through planning for smart growth. And all along the way the center conducts a process that encourages local governments to engage and teach their communities about the physical and cultural impact of wise and intelligent planning. The center’s publications, guidance and project management is in effect reversing the historical lack of a culture of land use planning in the state.

As a native son of Louisiana I have observed with dismay the events that have challenged the state in stark and dramatic ways—economic decline, diminishing educational values, unprecedented destruction from natural disasters, and the vagaries of politics. In far too many places the state’s natural and cultural landscape evidences the harsh reality of these conditions. But Boo Thomas, through her wisdom, talent, experience and commitment—and the products of the Center for Planning Excellence—is making a difference. She would be a worthy recipient of the distinguished Olmsted medal, and I could imagine such esteemed recognition propelling her and her work to even greater heights.

Sincerely,



Douglas P. Reed FASLA
President