



March 15, 2019

Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission  
Zeidler Municipal Building  
841 North Broadway, Room B-1  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Members of the Commission,

The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF) strongly supports efforts to achieve permanent historic designation for the Kiley Grove at the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Established in 1998, TCLF is a national non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C., whose dual mission is to educate the public about significant cultural landscapes and to advocate for their informed stewardship. TCLF is a recognized authority on the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*.<sup>1</sup> As such, the organization frequently submits testimony to municipal, state, and federal agencies regarding the stewardship of historic landscapes and acts as a consulting party under the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

TCLF also has special knowledge of the career of eminent postwar landscape architect Dan Kiley, who, as you know, designed the Marcus Center landscape in 1965 – 1966. TCLF has conducted numerous symposia and lectures focused on Kiley's designed landscapes and has published extensively on his life and career.<sup>2</sup> In 2013 TCLF created *The Landscape Architecture Legacy of Dan Kiley*, a traveling photographic exhibition that has been hosted by museums and educational institutions throughout the nation and was on view at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, in 2017 – 2018.

Dan Kiley (1912 – 2004) was undoubtedly one of the most important and influential landscape architects of the twentieth century. Indeed, the profession's decisive transition to a modernist style is often traced directly to Kiley and his two Harvard classmates Garrett Eckbo and James Rose. Kiley's oeuvre includes the Dallas Museum of Art Sculpture Garden in Dallas, Texas (with architect Edward Larrabee Barnes); Fountain Place, also in Dallas (with architect Harry Cobb of Pei Cobb Freed); the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado (with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill); The John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, Massachusetts (with architect I.M. Pei); Nations Bank Plaza in Tampa, Florida (with architect Harry Wolf); the Henry Moore Sculpture Garden at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Missouri; the South Garden at the Chicago Art Institute in Chicago, Illinois; and the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial ("Gateway Arch") in St. Louis, Missouri, and Dulles International Airport outside Washington, D.C. (both with architect Eero Saarinen).

Among Kiley's other acclaimed projects are the Irwin Union Bank & Trust, the North Christian Church, and the world-famous Miller House and Garden—three sites in Columbus, Indiana, that, in 2000, formed part of the first multiple-property National Historic Landmark in America to recognize postwar landscape architecture. In fact, five of Kiley's designed landscapes have been designated as National Historic Landmarks—an achievement unmatched by any twentieth-century landscape architect and bested only

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly the coordinator of the National Park Service's Historic Landscape Initiative, TCLF's founder, president, and CEO, Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA, FAAR, was a co-author of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*.

<sup>2</sup> Biographies of Dan Kiley appear in two scholarly, hardbound volumes produced by The Cultural Landscape Foundation and published by the University of Virginia Press: *Shaping the Postwar Landscape: New Profiles from the Pioneers of American Landscape Design Project* (2018) and *Shaping the American Landscape: New Profiles from the Pioneers of American Landscape Design Project* (2009). Kiley is also the subject of TCLF's *What's Out There: The Landscape Architecture Legacy of Dan Kiley Gallery Guide*, and individual projects by him are treated extensively in several of the organization's publications, including *Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture II: Making Postwar Landscapes Visible* (2004).

by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., the ‘father of American landscape architecture.’ Moreover, Kiley was awarded the National Medal of Arts in 1997, the highest honor bestowed on artists and arts patrons by the U.S. government, and he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in 2002.

The innovative approach to classical design that characterizes the aforementioned list of projects is also evident in Kiley’s work at the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts. Here Kiley envisioned the Marcus Center’s main, sunken plaza—a trapezoid rather than a rectangle—as a grid of 36 horse chestnut trees set within a surface of crushed stone. The trees were carefully placed so as to disguise the geometric irregularity of the plaza, with those on its eastern end planted at just over eighteen feet apart, a distance that gradually increases to 21 feet on the plaza’s western end. The design also reveals the influence of Kiley’s time abroad. As has been well documented, for his landscape beside the Milwaukee River, Kiley took inspiration from the garden of the Tuileries (also planted with horse chestnut trees) on the right bank of the Seine in Paris, France. There he recognized “the spatial and compositional power of the simplest of elements” and regarded the garden as “no less than living architecture.” The Performing Arts Center’s plaza in downtown Milwaukee unmistakably illustrates those sentiments and also echoes Kiley’s conversation pit at the Miller House and Garden.

Finally, one should consider Kiley’s work at the Marcus Center as being in dialogue with his other work in Milwaukee. Kiley’s Cudahy Gardens at the Milwaukee Art Museum opened in 1998. The landscape, which is set in counterpoint to both the modernist War Memorial of Eero Saarinen and the organic Quadracci Pavilion of Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, was Kiley’s last fully realized public commission. These two important civic projects, separated by only a few city blocks, effectively bookend the unparalleled career of a modernist master whose legacy is now foundational to the history of his profession and is studied by its future practitioners. No other city can boast of having two civic projects of this caliber by Kiley and spanning the breadth of his career. While the landscape of the Marcus Center, like any civic space, must respond to the changing requirements of access and maintenance, such change can certainly be accommodated without sacrificing the original design intent of the landscape’s creator. TCLF therefore urges the Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission to confer permanent historic status on the Kiley Grove at the Marcus Center, duly recognizing it an outstanding cultural resource for current and future generations.

Sincerely,



Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA, FAAR  
President + CEO  
The Cultural Landscape Foundation

Cc: James Draeger, SHPO, Wisconsin Historical Society; Theodore Lipscomb, Chairman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors; Steven Shea, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors; Robert Bauman, Alderman, Milwaukee Common Council