

MEDIA RELEASE



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For Immediate Release
Thursday, April 25, 2002

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Security Task Force Invites Top Firms To Create Design For Pennsylvania Avenue In Front Of The White House

Washington, DC – Four of the country’s top landscape design firms are taking to the drawing board to come up with creative proposals to beautify Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House. The National Capital Planning Commission’s Interagency Security Task Force invited the four firms to submit designs for creating a pedestrian-oriented public space at the site of one of the most visible locations in the Nation’s Capital.

The design firms are Balmori Associates in New York City; EDAW in Alexandria, Virginia; Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates in New York City; and Peter Walker and Partners in Berkeley, California.

“This is one of the most important, symbolic locations in the nation and it has been unsightly and unresolved for too long,” said Task Force Chairman Richard Friedman. “Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House not only requires adequate security, but it also deserves a beautiful streetscape and distinguished public realm. It is certainly worthy of proposals from the most creative and well respected landscape designers.”

The Task Force in March invited the four firms to prepare concepts to design the public space in front of the White House. The request is part of the Task Force’s ongoing work in preparing the Urban Design and Security Plan, which will identify permanent, comprehensive solutions to the growing problem of security elements that are cluttering Washington’s streets and sidewalks and marring the historic urban design and beauty of the Nation’s Capital.

In addition to the Pennsylvania Avenue designs, the Task Force is working with designers on solutions for Washington’s entire Monumental Core, including the Federal Triangle, the National Mall, Downtown, the West End, and the Southwest Federal Center. Proposals will include an array of landscape treatments and design solutions that would be implemented over the next three to five years.

Design plans for some sites on the National Mall have already been presented to the Task Force, including a plan by renowned landscape architect Laurie Olin for integrated landscape

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and security features at the Washington Monument, along Constitution and Independence Avenues, as well as the Jefferson and Lincoln Memorials. The EDAW firm has presented plans to refurbish the pedestrian corridor along Pennsylvania Avenue, between the Capitol and the White House, and the Walker design team is developing designs for security improvements in the Southwest Federal Center that enhance the pedestrian experience in that area.

“Security measures have become an unfortunate but now necessary feature of urban life, as in our capital city,” said Friedman. “Good security and good urban design are not incompatible however, and we must find ways to move beyond the unsightly barriers and make Washington a city that truly reflects the beauty, values, and spirit of America.”

The four design teams working on Pennsylvania Avenue will present their concepts to the Task Force in late May. The Task Force will review all designs proposed in the Urban Design and Security Plan before forwarding its recommendation on the Plan to the full commission. If approved, NCPC would then forward the plan to the President and to Congress.

Members of the Task Force include Chairman Richard Friedman; NCPC Chairman John V. Cogbill, III; and representatives from the Department of Interior, the General Services Administration, the DC Mayor’s office, and the District of Columbia Council’s office. The Task Force is also seeking the advice of key security and civic groups and individuals, including the Secret Service, the Federal City Council, the Department of Justice, the Commission of Fine Arts, the Architect of the Capitol, Department of Transportation and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. In addition, John C. Warnecke, who first proposed a park at Pennsylvania Avenue to President Kennedy in the 1960’s, has been invited to serve as an honorary member on the Task Force.

The National Capital Planning Commission is the federal government’s central planning agency in the District of Columbia and surrounding counties in Maryland and Virginia. The Commission provides overall planning guidance for federal land and buildings in the region. It also reviews the design of federal projects and memorials, oversees long-range planning for future development, and monitors capital investment by federal agencies.

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