



Information Item

Date: February 18, 2010

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Lee E. Swain, Director of Public Works
Subject: Palisades Garden Walk & Town Square Design Consultant Selection

Introduction

This report updates the City Council on the selection process of the design consultant for the new Palisades Garden Walk and Town Square project and the unanimous recommendation of the selection panel.

Background

On [September 21, 2009](#), City staff presented an Information Item to Council on a proposed methodology for selecting a design consultant for the Palisades Garden Walk which included a Selection Panel composed of outside professional experts who would evaluate applicants and recommend a consultant.

On October 12, 2009, a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was issued for the design of the Palisades Garden Walk and Town Square project. The RFQ was posted on the City's website, publicized in the Santa Monica Daily Press, the LA Times and in a number of professional design journals (including Architectural Record and the journal of the American Society of Landscape Architects) and other broadly read websites, including the Architects Newspaper Blog, Curbed LA and ToposN. On November 20, 2009 a total of 24 design teams provided their qualifications for review.

The Selection Panel consisted of Qingyun Ma, Architect and Dean of the USC School of Architecture; Ken Smith, Landscape Architect and designer of the Orange County Great Park; and Marc Fisher, Architect/Planner, Vice Chancellor and Campus Architect at

UCSB. The Selection Panel was provided with digital versions of all qualification packages prior to meeting with City Staff. On December 14, 2009 following two weeks of staff review to confirm that the proposing teams had met the required qualifications, the Selection Panel met with City Staff to discuss and determine a shortlist of teams to be interviewed. Staff departments represented on the review panel included Community and Cultural Services, Planning and Strategic Development and Public Works/Architecture Services.

Discussion

The 24 teams that provided qualifications represented a wide range of highly qualified design collaborations for the Selection Panel to consider. Criteria listed in the [September 21, 2009](#), Information Item to Council was used by the Selection Panel to determine the shortlist. They included:

- Ability to deliver the highest caliber of design and innovation;
- Similar projects in terms of context, size, scale, budget and program;
- Critical acclaim, awards, exhibits and publications;
- Ability to innovatively engage communities for effective outcomes;
- Ability to work successfully with artists in the public realm;
- Track record of successfully completing full scope of work on time and within budget; design philosophy, approach and style matching Santa Monica's commitment to unique and community-responsive public spaces;
- Understanding of project goals, program approach and importance to the Santa Monica community; and
- Commitment to sustainability and green building standards.

The Selection Panel shortlisted six teams that represented six distinct design and collaborative team possibilities (Landscape Architect-led teams, Architect-led teams, Landscape Architect/Architect/Artist partnerships). The six teams selected for interviews were: Gehry Partners, Gustafson Guthrie Nichol, James Corner Field Operations, Peter Walker Partners, Studioworks/Turenscape, and SWA.la/Shigeru Ban.

Interviews with the six shortlisted teams commenced on January 14 and concluded on February 2, 2010. Each team was given two hours to present their team's approach to the project, show their commitment to designing unique public places, provide outstanding examples of relevant past work, discuss their approach to community engagement, and outline the team's organizational structure. Following the presentations, a question and answer session allowed the Selection Panel to assess how teams would be able to work together. Team strength and cohesiveness, as well as the group dynamic, general approach to design, and comprehension of the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the site were evaluated.

Following the interviews, the Selection Panel conferred with staff. The Selection Panel unanimously recommends James Corner Field Operations to be the Palisades Garden Walk consultant, and staff concurs. James Corner Field Operations represents a strong Landscape Architect-led cohesive team that possesses experience with innovative public engagement processes, a high level of experience in civic design, and a sensitive and insightful analysis of the site and the unique opportunities it presents.

James Corner Field Operations recently completed the High Line project in New York City. Hovering above the streets on 1.45 miles of abandoned elevated train tracks, this unusual urban park snakes through lower Manhattan offering the public a tranquil promenade experience within the dense urban framework of the city. Other projects included the Great Falls Park in Patterson, New Jersey, a 40 acre destination park along the Passaic River, offering visitors a sequence of outdoor "rooms" along a "loop path" that joins together a number of different landscaped experiences. The group's Fresh Kills Park in Staten Island, is a 2,200 acre ecological restoration project that will include wetlands, trails, bike paths, woodland habitats, a regional sports complex, active recreational spaces and markets.

Cited by the Selection Panel as being a "great, energetic team" that emphasized "deliverability" and the desire to "make people part of the park," James Corner Field

Operations offers an exuberant focus on a civic park as well as an understanding of the connectivity of the park to its surroundings, its major circulation elements, and local horticultural imperatives.

Staff will bring this recommendation and associated contract to Council in March 2010.

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