

Lead Designer Selected for Center City Park

Action Greensboro and the Center City Park Committee today announced the selection of Halvorson Design Partnership, Inc. (HDP) as the lead designer for Center City Park. Halvorson will begin work immediately on a concept design, anticipating completion by the end of September, 2004. Craig Halvorson, founder and president of the Boston MA firm, will lead the design effort and Bob Uhlig, an HDP principal, will serve as the firm's manager for the project. Halvorson will team with the local architectural firm of J. Hyatt Hammond on the final design and construction oversight of the park.

On behalf of Action Greensboro, the Center City Park Committee issued in March a nationwide "Request for Qualifications" for a park designer. They received submissions from 29 firms and after careful review, chose 5 finalists. In early May, the five firms made presentations in Greensboro. From the additional information gained during these interviews, the Center City Park Committee recommended Halvorson Design Partnership to be the lead design firm. Action Greensboro accepted this recommendation and authorized the committee to proceed with a contract to engage the Boston firm.

Co-Chair of the Center City Park Committee, Alexa Aycock, states, "Our committee was extremely impressed with all of the design firms we interviewed. However, we felt that Halvorson was the best choice for Greensboro. The Halvorson firm has a reputation of designing parks which people love, and that is exactly what we want for our city."

Halvorson Design Partnership, Inc. is one of the nation's leading landscape architecture offices. Founded in Boston by Craig Halvorson in 1980, the 24-person firm is "dedicated to creating exemplary landscapes and urban open spaces for a broad array of public and private clients." They have produced award-winning projects in urban design, parks, schools and colleges, office/hotel/retail developments, waterfronts, and historic landscapes. Halvorson received the top national award from the American

Institute of Architects for Post Office Square in Boston – the only time a landscape has been so honored by the AIA.

Bob Uhlig, HDP's project manager, states, "Halvorson Design Partnership has a wealth of successful experience working collaboratively with clients and communities to create compelling urban parks. We pride ourselves on the ability to create innovative, exciting places that are memorable and people-friendly, while being respectful of the local vernacular. It is important to seize this opportunity to create a 'jewel' that defines the downtown and knits together the dynamically evolving cultural district."

In the March 2004 issue of "Landscape Architecture," a publication of the American Society of Landscape Architects, design critic Jane Houtz Kay reviewed Eastport Park in Boston designed by Halvorson. Ms. Kay writes that the park "...may be the finest modernist public park in the city." With tongue-in-cheek, she adds, "built with corporate money, this splendid waterfront park has just one flaw: the public loves it."

Susan Schwartz, Action Greensboro executive director says, "Action Greensboro's foundation and business leaders look forward to the design that Halvorson will create for us. Over the last few months, we have seen how much people are enjoying the temporary park. It is exciting to imagine what pleasure a top-notch design will bring to our community."

As part of their design process, Halvorson's design team will review the results of community input meetings, focus groups and comments submitted to Action Greensboro, Downtown Greensboro Inc., (DGI) and the Center City Park Committee. From November 2002 to February 2003, DGI held workshops and focus groups in order to determine what the community wants to do and see in Center City Park. At the workshops, DGI staff and Park Committee volunteers showed a series of park images and asked citizens to indicate preferences for activities and park elements. The insight gained from these workshops will help the designers create a park that not only meets the basic operational requirements, but also reflects the personality of the community.

Over the summer months, Halvorson will work closely with the Center City Park Committee to fine-tune community preferences for Center City Park.

Ray Gibbs, President of DGI, is excited about the progress on the Center City Park, “The building of the temporary park has shown people a glimpse of what a true public heart space can be. I don’t know of a great city without a great downtown, and likewise, I don’t know of a great downtown without a great public space at its heart. Our goal has always been to create a truly memorable centerpiece for downtown and all of Greensboro. From what we have seen, Craig Halvorson and his firm will create a space that Greensboro can truly love.”

To design the park, Halvorson will use the knowledge gained from events that have been held at the Phase 1 park site, including the Center City Farmers Market, Beach Music Night, and Music for a Sunday Evening in the Park and others. By examining how these events operated and the public response, designers can determine the best approach to elements such as placement of a stage(s), entry and exit, pedestrian patterns, preferred seating areas and the interaction to adjacent facilities. Halvorson will also consider natural elements such as sun and shade, along with the effects of wind on the park and its potential users.

Halvorson chose to team with J Hyatt Hammond due to their local history and experience with various public projects, especially in the downtown area. This local, award winning design firm, whose offices are located in the historic Kress Building less than two blocks from the park site, were the principal architects for the Greensboro Cultural Center (*across the street from the park site*), the Greensboro Central Library and the Greensboro Children’s Museum, along with many other significant projects in the Greensboro area. Additional local design professionals will be involved with the park as the project proceeds.

Center City Park is a \$12 million project. Action Greensboro has purchased the property for \$6 million. Four million dollars has been pledged by local corporations and

foundations for the design and construction of the park. Action Greensboro needs to raise an additional \$2 million to complete construction.

For more information about Center City Park, go to www.centercitypark.org.