

## The new U.S. Embassy on Pariser Platz

The United States government will break ground for the construction of the new American Embassy on Pariser Platz in October of this year. The building will open for business in the spring of 2008.

Prior to ground breaking, preliminary surveys, required searches for munitions and surveys of existing conditions of surrounding buildings and boundaries will take place. The project is expected to be awarded to an American contractor in September who will have a presence in Berlin during the construction duration of approximately three years.

The structure will rise four and a quarter levels above the intersection of Behrenstrasse and Ebertstrasse and will close the last frontage on the historic Pariser Platz. The Embassy project is possible and will benefit from improvements to the street scape and historically sensitive renovations to the Platz and the urban gardens. A green band of trees, gardens and walkways will be created along the street fronts. The overall design has been enriched by extensive critique and collaboration with the Urban Planning authorities of Stadt Berlin and a sensitivity to the surrounding historic quarter required by the client, the Office of Overseas Building Operations of the United States Department of State.

The project is by the acclaimed American architect Moore Ruble Yudell of Santa Monica, California. The palette of materials and design features have been carefully considered to complement the setting and to provide an open yet secure presentation of America.

The final design for the United States Embassy in Berlin is a transformation of the original 1996 competition design to meet new site, security, and program requirements.

The public image of the Embassy responds to the varied context of each of its three principal sides, from the northern orientation on Pariser Platz, to the west face along Ebert Strasse across from the Tiergarten, to the south front and entry corner at Behren Strasse.

The stone wall exterior with its regular grid of punched windows is activated on each side by a set of larger sculptural forms: openings with metal and glass volumes that are carved into, set on top of, or placed just outside of the walls.

On Pariser Platz the simple stone façade is dramatically split to form an entry with a cylindrical court that provides the main lobby. Over the lobby a "wave" of steel and glass canopy projects out like a wing protecting the entry. The entry itself is light and glassy between the stone walls, and carefully scaled to welcome individuals as well as groups. The carved opening brings a wash of light into an otherwise shadowy northwest wall, and lights the flag as it swoops out at a jaunty angle over the sidewalk.

Opposite the Tiergarten the Embassy rooftop is mounted by a pen house, a house of State whose focal point is the glassy conference room of the Lantern. Using only soft interior lighting at night, the Lantern joins both the Reichstag's dome and the Quadriga sculpture on the Brandenburg Gate, as part of the civic district's collection of skyline landmarks. The view from the Lantern has been carefully composed to show the Quadriga as it seems to ride across the Embassy's rooftop parterre garden of native American grasses.

On Behren Strasse the Consular entry corner presents a light pavilion as a vestibule containing a major commissioned work of public art by noted American artist Sol Lewitt. The open structure is braced by a wall stretching across the south façade to a glass enclosed stair tower, making a transition to the animated façade of Frank Gehry's Pariser Platz 3.

At the green center of the Embassy's enclosed courtyard is a formal garden and hospitality pavilion. Framed by stone fireplaces and a steel trellis overhead, the outdoor pavilion attaches to a glass-enclosed lounge, providing for everyday lunch and relaxation as well as occasional events for invited guests.

This new facility will provide the USG with a safe, secure and fully functioning diplomatic platform.