

Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation
Cathilea Robinett, Chair
Melani Walton, Chair, Design + Architecture Committee
Edward F. O’Keefe, Chief Executive Officer

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September 18, 2020

Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation Selects Snøhetta for Design Architect Commission of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora, North Dakota

MEDORA, NORTH DAKOTA — The Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation unanimously voted to select Snøhetta for the Design Architect commission of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library. Snøhetta will design only the 15th presidential library in the nation. The Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library will be located in Medora, North Dakota.

Theodore Roosevelt lived and ranched in North Dakota for the better part of two years after the tragic deaths of his wife and mother in 1884. Roosevelt returned to the Badlands and Medora almost every year until his death in 1919. Theodore Roosevelt National Park – the only of the 62 national parks named for a person, let alone a president – includes Roosevelt’s Elkhorn Ranch, known as the ‘cradle of conservation,’ and will be a critical part of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library plan.

“Snøhetta’s thoughtful design captures the spirit of Theodore Roosevelt and why he came to the Badlands. T.R. came to North Dakota for solace and solitude; the Badlands healed and renewed him, and gave rise to a newfound resiliency. In return, T.R. led our country as the 26th president and dramatically expanded our national park system,” said Melani Walton, chair of the Design + Architecture Committee for TRPLF and a board member of the National Park Foundation. “The Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation is confident Snøhetta can carry T.R.’s legacy to future generations.”

“One of Theodore Roosevelt’s most enduring legacies is conservation and our national parks,” said Theodore Roosevelt V, a great-great-grandson and namesake of the 26th president. “This will be the only presidential library alongside a national park and the only national park alongside a presidential library. It will invite visitors to see and experience the very cradle of conservation. That is why this location in North Dakota is perfect for the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library.”

Snøhetta emerges from an intense design competition that began with over forty (40) firms under consideration by the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation. After issuing a Project Brief on December 15, 2019, fourteen (14) firms were invited to respond to the Foundation’s Request for Qualifications (RFQ) on April 6, 2020, and twelve (12) were able to participate. The Design + Architecture Committee narrowed the field to six (6) with virtual interviews during the pandemic, and announced three (3) finalists on May 18, 2020. Those finalists were: Snøhetta, Studio Gang, and Henning Larsen.

Snøhetta, Studio Gang, and Henning Larsen sent teams to Medora, North Dakota, future home of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library, in June 2020. These sessions included surveys of the preferred site as well as meetings with the local community, stakeholders, and residents of both Medora and Billings County. The design concepts from each firm were released to the public on August 17, 2020, and

all three firms returned to Medora to present their concepts in an open session of the Board of Trustees and a community open house on August 18, 2020.

“Three world renowned architectural firms came to North Dakota in the midst of a pandemic — twice! — to compete for the commission of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library,” said Edward F. O’Keefe, CEO of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation. “Snøhetta, Studio Gang, and Henning Larsen were in the arena and we are forever grateful. Their passion, depth of commitment, and enormous creativity made this an incredibly difficult decision.”

All residents of Billings County were invited to participate in the open house and, even those that did not attend, were invited to contribute feedback on the design concepts at <http://trlibrary.com/contact>.

“When designing a new project, we think about how we can more give to the site or community than is initially asked of us,” said Craig Dykers, founding partner of Snøhetta. “We integrated the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library into the landscape of the North Dakota Badlands. The main library building rises from the butte, echoing the surrounding landforms. Visitors are invited on a journey through a preserved landscape of diverse habitats, punctuated with small pavilions providing spaces for reflection and activity. We still have much to learn about President Roosevelt, and we’re looking forward to working with the Medora community and the broader project team to translate this knowledge into an immersive place to learn about T.R.’s life and legacy.”

The winning design concepts for the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library by Snøhetta can be found [here](#).

The Board of Directors of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation unanimously approved Snøhetta as the Design Architect on September 16, 2020.

North Dakota-based firm J.E. Dunn will serve as Construction Manager on the project. With the selection of Snøhetta as Design Architect and J.E. Dunn as Construction Manager, the project team at the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation will now select a local architect, based in North Dakota, to work on the ground during construction.

Snøhetta is an internationally renowned architecture and landscape firm with more than 240 employees from 32 nations. Founded in Norway with offices in New York City, Innsbruck, Paris, Hong Kong, and Adelaide, Snøhetta received its first commission in 1989 to re-conceive the Alexandria Library after winning an international design competition. A decade later, Snøhetta won another competition commission to design the Norwegian National Ballet and Opera. In 2004, Snøhetta was commissioned to build the 9/11 Museum, the only cultural building on the World Trade Center Memorial site. Other notable Snøhetta projects include the SFMOMA Expansion in San Francisco, ‘Under’ – Europe’s first underwater restaurant, the Ford Dearborn Master Plan, the reimaging of Times Square in New York City, and Calgary’s new Central Library. In 2014, Snøhetta was commissioned by the Central Bank of Norway to redesign their native country’s currency.

“Snøhetta has created cultural institutions known less by the name of the studio that designed them and more for people’s experience living over, under, and through them,” said Cathilea Robinett, chair of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation. “The experience of the Badlands changed Theodore Roosevelt, and we are inspired by the idea that this special place, and this special architect can do the same for so many more.”

In winning this competition, Snøhetta is the first architectural firm with global roots outside of the United States to design a presidential library. This is of particular poignance since Theodore Roosevelt was the first president to travel outside the United States while in office, and nearly half the population of North Dakota claims Scandinavian roots.

Snøhetta has received almost every architectural award and accolade including, but not limited to, the Aga Khan Award for Architecture for the Bibliotheca in Alexandria, Egypt; the Mies van der Rohe Award for the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet in Oslo; and the AIA Medal for the World Trade Center project.

Further inquires should be directed to Colleen Wolfe, project manger at The Working Group, in association with the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation. cwolfe@drhorne.com

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