

January 17, 2011

A new center for architecture in Boston

Step one: Envision a new center for architecture in Boston. Imagine 15,000 square feet for events, exhibitions and chance interactions centered on architecture and design.

Check.

Step two: Select an architecture firm. *Check.*

Step three: Sign the lease. *Check.*

It's official: The Boston Society of Architects (BSA) is creating a center for architecture in our city this year.

The BSA will occupy two floors of the existing seven-story Russia Wharf building, now the foundation for a new 22-story tower that together are known as Atlantic Wharf. Located along the Fort Point Channel near the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway and many cultural museums, public transportation at South Station is just one block away. The center will include exhibit, multimedia, office and meeting space for programs and special events, as well as a small store. Move-in is scheduled for November 2011.

So, how does an organization that represents architects *choose* an architect? After an intensive design ideas competition that yielded 19 creative, anonymously submitted concepts, the BSA Designer Selection Panel shortlisted five teams—Höweler + Yoon, Hashim Sarkis, Merge Architects, SsD and the team of Chris and Megan Keesling and Derek Little. Ultimately, Höweler + Yoon was selected.

One of the primary challenges in the design competition was to establish a strong public interface with passersby along Congress Street. “What drew the panel to the winning scheme was the design’s ability to create a powerful architectural statement which reached beyond the building’s façade,” says Audrey O’Hagan AIA, chair of the Designer Selection Panel and 2011 BSA president. “Visually, it draws you into this two-story space, up a dynamic staircase and into the open, fluid interior.”

O'Hagan continues, "The flexibility offered by the arrangement of the conference rooms and exhibition areas will enable the space to expand and contract to adapt to specific programmatic events as needed. The Designer Selection Panel also was interested in Höweler + Yoon's integration of architecture and technology in an effort to blur physical and digital realities," she says. Deemed a "slipstream" concept, Höweler + Yoon's design includes a "cloud" ceiling system to conceal state-of-the-art digital infrastructure while creating a highly visible signature element.

View plans from Höweler + Yoon, see all the design competition entries, learn more about the Atlantic Wharf building along Fort Point Channel, and watch all the triumphs and hurdles encountered at www.architects.org/bsahq.

The Boston Society of Architects (BSA) advocates for architecture and design. Established in 1867, today the BSA consists of more than 4,000 members and 30 programs and publications, including Build Boston and *ArchitectureBoston*. As a chapter of the American Institute of Architects, we are a nonprofit, professional-service organization. Our website is www.architects.org.