



## NEW CHALLENGES FOR A MODERNIST MONUMENT

The Gateway Arch of St. Louis soars, slices the sky - a single, exquisite brushstroke of stainless steel and concrete, as daunting in its realization as it was daring in its design. Yet, for all of the vitality and drama of Saarinen's Arch and Kiley's Archgrounds, the modernist masterwork remains in striking paradox to the city and geography of its setting. Although already a memorable, iconic symbol, the Arch and its grounds have yet to achieve their full potential as an active catalyst for urban cohesion and renewal, and as a truly environmental design in this most centered American landscape.

## NEW QUESTIONS, NEW METHODS, NEW RESPONSES

To realize the Arch's original ambitions, new questions must be asked, reaching across design, engineering and academic disciplines for bold, yet achievable responses: In what ways is it possible to reveal the accrued significance of the Gateway Arch? How can the Archgrounds assist downtown St. Louis to optimize the idea of a "livable city?" True to the NPS's mission of preserving national monuments and landscape, can the restoration of the regional ecosystem - with an expanded and enhanced Archgrounds as the model and demonstration - be the iconic gesture of our time, in the Age of Sustainability?

## DESIGN INTENT

In the process of identifying and responding to these challenges, we hope to discover opportunities and creative solutions that respect and preserve the unique heritage, historic elements and characteristics of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial *and* offer a sustainable vision of the future – for both St. Louis and the nation. Rather than presenting immediate solutions, we offer an introduction to our Project Team approach, methodology and creative process. Our efforts embrace a dynamic philosophy that emphasizes interdisciplinary participation as a way of fostering innovation and increasing the potential for solving complex tasks in a comprehensive manner.

Specific to the Competition, we will work telescopically, from the scale of the continental watershed, to that of the river's edge, from the historical perspective of the primordial American Bottoms and the Cahokia peoples to the industrialized Mississippi River and the complex urbanity of St. Louis. At the same time, the team's interdisciplinary design sensibilities, professional experience and collaborative spirit are paralleled by deep, thorough technical knowledge – our competition design proposal will be speculative and substantial, far-sighted but eminently achievable.

## MULTIPLE APPROACHES

### *St. Louis and the Saarinen / Kiley Design Legacy*

Our explorations proceed from a team-based expertise in the original conditions and design ambitions of the Arch and Archgrounds, as well as the urban design history of St. Louis. With this, our designs will be grounded in an in-depth understanding of the historical / cultural / social significance of both masterpieces.

### *Ecology and Landscape*

The organic integration of landscape architecture and architecture is the defining character of the Arch and Archgrounds. The new frame for the monument we propose will be inherently one constructed from a larger ecological perspective and possessing a more active and diverse landscape, both artistically and technically considered.

### *Mississippi River*

The USGS and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have already described critical river ecosystem objectives, many of which have direct implications for the stewardship of the river in an effort to restore the ecological health of the entire watershed. Although the Archgrounds is a limited area, the activities undertaken here have great symbolic importance. St. Louis is located right at the upper end of the open, free-flowing section of the raging river that continues to the Gulf of Mexico. St. Louis is a logical place for a restored relationship with the river to begin. This is an ecological imperative and is consistent with many elements of Saarinen and Kiley's original vision that were not realized in the executed plan: development of backwater areas, island shoreline, floodplain areas and associated naturalized habitat, particularly on the East St. Louis side.

### *The Expanded City, The Livable City*

While the Arch currently functions as an edge to the City, we will explore how the Arch might become more central to an expanded urban map that creates relationships across the river into East St. Louis, and propose new program extending north, south and west into the downtown of St. Louis.

The Archgrounds competition presents many opportunities to develop an integrated transit improvement plan for downtown St. Louis to support park spaces, the monument and the wider downtown circulation networks. Accessibility to the Archgrounds will be considered within the larger context of the city's current traffic patterns, existing public transportation framework and future objectives. We will work to design shared surfaces that balance pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, as well as public spaces and streets that favor pedestrians (the 80/20 model). There is an inherent symbiotic relationship between enhanced pedestrian zones and the development of residential neighborhoods, which in turn provokes a demand for urban amenities. This effort to support the revitalization of the downtown loft district will provide cultural connectivity and revitalize the riverfront.

### *Design Leadership*

The approaches and initiatives outlined here intend to enrich the National Park Service and St. Louis public realm, as experienced by both visitors and residents. Behnisch Architekten and the competition project team's commitment is fundamentally to civic sustainability. Our design approach is holistic, addressing the quality of St. Louis' natural environment and cultural institutions and enabling the critical impact they must have in improving our society. We are charged with making a balanced, considered response to resolving the respectful tempering of the natural environment – based on local cultural and climatic conditions – with the basic necessity of identifying programmatic opportunities.

### *THE SUSTAINABLE MONUMENT, THE SUSTAINABLE CITY, THE SUSTAINABLE NATION*

Collective ambitions are always more easily reached where we find citizens who care deeply about their built environment. Over fifty years ago, St. Louisans reconceived their historic riverfront in order to erect a great national symbol – one that would reflect the ambitions and values of those prior American generations who had settled the West. Now, the National Park Service and St. Louisans initiate an equal collaborative commitment to grounding their great Arch in an expanded Archgrounds: a new design for contemporary challenges, one that will not only respect those historic ambitions, but contemplate new, sustainable ones, for the city and for the nation. We respectfully submit our qualifications.