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framing a modern masterpiece the city + the arch + the river

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CECIL BALMOND | DOUG AITKEN | CHIP CRAWFORD | RIPLEY RASMUS

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manifesto

The Gateway Arch has come to symbolize far more than the nation's historical westward expansion. The genius symbolism of Saarinen's "triumphal arch" is its optimism for the future, embodied in modernist form and elegant beauty. Our design philosophy is inspired by this optimism and the opportunity to collaborate with Saarinen's vision.

As memorial to Jefferson's spirit of freedom, exploration and connection, the Arch has inspired generations through its contextual grounding, clarity of purpose and timeless simplicity that now has the potential to symbolize expansion across global boundaries, engaging 21st century science and technology.

The challenge of The City + The Arch + The River opens new doors of opportunity for redefining St. Louis, its role on the international stage, the continued evolution of the post industrial city into a sustainable city and its relationship to North America's great river. Given our time in history, at the interface of the Information and Environmental Ages, we have the unique opportunity to focus on the healing potential and beauty of the Midwestern natural environment.

Multidisciplinary collaboration and innovative design will be essential to meeting the challenges of this project. We have assembled a team that is deeply rooted in St. Louis while leveraging our multidisciplinary global design resources. We collectively believe that the Arch project must elevate St. Louis by returning the core of the region - on the east and west banks of the Mississippi River - to relevance.

Understanding of the Vision and Design Issues

Innovative thought and bold actions will define the success of The City + The Arch + The River. While respecting Saarinen's monument and Dan Kiley's landscape, we will challenge the icon by redefining this "gateway" as a portal to a new American future while acknowledging its modernist past. Though the Arch will always be an icon synonymous with St. Louis, it truly is a global symbol of optimism, inspiration, culture and achievement.

Our strategy moves beyond this paradigm of the Arch as a 20th century icon to create a landscape that takes on its own life, countering the ideal static form by empowering the viewer in new ways, constantly changing with their perceptions. If Saarinen has brought us the Arch as a half circle or "half-wavelength," the intervention framing it completes the idea of the wavelength, linking the past with the future, the Arch with the city, and the landscape with the river. We want to transform and re-industrialize the arch zone as a place of production environmentally and socially, one that occurs through a constellation of smaller interventions that are interdependent.

Connect the City. The Arch is segregated from its city and river by virtue of its conception as a monument resting on monumental grounds. The monument can be reinvigorated by adapting the grounds with physical connections to the city, as well as by making virtual and metaphorical connections to the greater world in the 21st century. Memorial Drive and the I-70 chasm must be tamed for safe pedestrian activity; the Eads Bridge must have direct connectivity to the Arch grounds and the MetroLink station; and the south end of the Arch grounds should embrace the proposed linkage to Chouteau Greenway and, four miles to the west, Forest Park.

Connect to the River. The Arch grounds must engage the Mississippi River in different ways along its length. The interpretive experience can be united with new activities on the river and along Leonor K. Sullivan Boulevard. Catalyzing redevelopment around the perimeter of the Arch will stimulate activity between these nodes, particularly between Laclede's Landing on the north and Chouteau's Landing on the south. By expanding the Arch grounds to the East St. Louis riverfront, the Mississippi becomes the center, not the edge, of the user experience.

Open the Underground; Create a Lens. The interpretive experience of the Arch and the Museum of Westward Expansion must be united to the urban experience of the site and grounds. A strategy must be deployed that brings daylight into the underground museum while providing visitors an exceptional viewpoint of the monument. From above, this would transform the Arch grounds experience, replacing the earthen berm as a semi-transparent lens uniting the city and river while inviting visitors into the museum below.

Create New Destinations. St. Louis boasts numerous and exceptional cultural institutions. We propose building on these strengths with a variety of additional destinations that promote greater activity, more enriched user experiences, longer tourism stays, repeat visits and sustained economic development. Along its central axis, the Arch experience of destinations must extend from Kiener Plaza to the new East St. Louis experience, including the sites of the existing Arch parking garage on the north and the maintenance facility on the south.

Activate the East Side. To create a complementary interpretive experience and fulfill the vision of a bi-state memorial, the grounds must be connected to the East St. Louis site. We propose the eastern site include destinations that will generate jobs and economic development. An institution focused on technology, research, education or renewable energy would create a market for investment to transform East St. Louis.

We have the ability to begin implementation NOW. While advocating bold concepts and a transformative master plan, we believe that a successful plan must have incremental interventions and inherent flexibility to adapt while catalyzing and sustaining a long-term evolution of the Arch and the city in unison.

Commitment of the Lead Designers to the Project

We have a profound appreciation for the historical importance of this opportunity. For our lead designers and entire team, The City + The Arch + The River project is a once-in-a-lifetime event. Cecil, Chip, Doug and Ripley are committed to playing prominent roles throughout the project. These designers balance international perspectives with a genuine passion and love for St. Louis. We have a highly vested interest in the project's success, the city's future and the legacy that we will leave for our families and future generations.