

# Design selected for the Women's Monument in Capitol Square

The Women of Virginia Commemorative Commission announced the selection of the winning design for the Women's Monument to be placed on the grounds of Virginia's Capitol Square in Richmond. Thought to be the first of its kind in the nation, the Monument will commemorate the collective contributions of the women of Virginia throughout the past 400 years of its storied history. Prominently placed and respectfully integrated into the historic Capitol landscape, the Monument's oval-garden design includes elements of sculpture and landscaping that will provide visitors an interactive and educational experience. Out of 34 designs submitted from around the world, the Commission unanimously selected the winning design by StudioEIS of Brooklyn, New York and The 1717 Design Group, Inc. of Richmond, Virginia. The decision was announced in conjunction with the Library of Virginia's annual Virginia Women in History awards celebration.

"This monument will provide a lasting reminder to those walking through our Capitol Square of the vital role women played in shaping Virginia's history," said Governor Bob McDonnell, chairman of the Commission. "There are so many incredible stories of women who have led and inspired in the public and private sector in Virginia. This monument will honor the contributions of those great women."

The Virginia General Assembly established the Women's Commission in 2010 (Senate Joint Resolution 11) to determine and recommend...an appropriate monument in Capitol Square

to commemorate the contributions of the women of Virginia. The Commission's duties include securing from private sources the \$2 million necessary for the creation of the Monument. The Virginia Capitol Foundation will coordinate fundraising for the project.

The Commission is chaired by Governor Bob McDonnell and has been led by the Secretary of Administration, Lisa Hicks-Thomas. Other members are: Em Bowles Locker Alsop, a driving catalyst for the monument's creation; Lissy S. Bryan; Kitty Claiborne; Mary Blanton Easterly; Jacqueline Cook Hedblom; Rita D. McClenny; Mary Margaret Whipple; Mary Abel-Smith; Senator Ryan T. McDougle; Senator Jill Holtzman Vogel; William J. Howell, Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates; Delegate James P. Massie, III; Susan Clarke Schaar, Clerk of the Senate; G. Paul Nardo, Clerk of the House of Delegates; Sandra G. Treadway, Librarian of Virginia; and Alice Lynch, Executive Director, Virginia Capitol Foundation.

The Commission invited and welcomed the ideas and comments of Virginians from all corners of the Commonwealth through a series of nine Community Conversations in fall 2012, the results of which were collected into themes that Virginians wished to see represented in the monument. A total of 34 artists from around the world answered the Commission's request for proposals by the October 1, 2012 deadline. After carefully reviewing them for several months, the Commission narrowed the submissions to three finalists. At its March 21, 2013 meeting, the Commission unanimously selected the winning collaborative team of StudioEIS and The 1717 Design Group.

Ivan Schwartz of StudioEIS, who last year installed his highly-regarded sculpture of Thomas Jefferson in the State Capitol, spoke of the transformation and new meaning the Monument will add to

Capitol Square. The Monument is integrated into the landscape and will serve as an anchor within the Capitol—and the Commonwealth of Virginia—for those whose purpose may be nothing more than a spot to appreciate the architecture and beautiful landscape of the Capitol. But the Monument also will be a stopping place for those people who study women's history and those people who ponder the future disposition of women's roles in American society. It will be a place where one can honor the past and reflect on their future path.

John Crank of The 1717 Design Group elaborated. "The Monument's design is intended to be a thought-provoking and interactive experience that complements the more traditional heroic monuments that already grace Capitol Square. We see this Monument as a metaphor for the many invisible and often unrecognized voices that have been responsible for shaping our culture, country and Commonwealth for over 400 years.



Rendering courtesy of StudioEIS and The 1717 Design Group.

"It is our hope that this Monument will stand as a lasting reminder of the vital roles that women have played in Virginia history, and will serve to help educate and inspire future generations of Virginians," said Mary Margaret Whipple, a former member of the Senate of Virginia and a member of the Commission.

"Women have played an integral part in Virginia from its beginnings and this Monument will be a welcome addition to Capitol Square and a worthy tribute to the many contributions of Virginia's women," said William J. Howell, Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates and a member of the Commission.

Virginia's historic Capitol Square is one of the oldest enclosed public parks in the entire United States. It continues to be an architectural and artistic setting for events shaping America's individual liberties, political institutions, judicial traditions, and social progress. Capitol Square not only is home to the State Capitol, designed by Thomas Jefferson, which has been in use since 1788, but also the Virginia Governor's Mansion, which recently celebrated two centuries as the oldest, continuously occupied governor's residence in America, as well as a host of other government buildings and public monuments serving as reminders of the power, leadership, and enduring principles upon which this nation was founded. Visitors from across the world come to Capitol Square each year to enjoy the beautiful grounds and walk in the footsteps of history.

The Commission, in keeping with its charge to secure non-taxpayer, private funding sources for the Monument, is working with the Virginia Capitol Foundation to coordinate its fundraising efforts opportunities. Alice Lynch, Executive Director of the Virginia Capitol Foundation, said that the Foundation is "pleased to partner with the Women's Commission to engage communities throughout the entire Commonwealth in support for this historic monument's installation. We welcome contributions from any individual, family, or organization interested in celebrating the achievements of Virginia women." To contact Ms. Lynch, please call 804-786-1012 or email [alynch@virginiacapitol.gov](mailto:alynch@virginiacapitol.gov).

For more information on the Women of Virginia, Commemorative Commission and the Monument, please visit <http://womensmonumentcom.virginia.gov>. [V]