

NEWS RELEASE

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YMCA SELECTS ROBERT A.M. STERN ARCHITECTS TO DESIGN NEW YMCA AT MAHACKENO

Indicates Intent to Site Facility Next to Merritt Parkway

January 26, Westport, CT -- The Westport/Weston YMCA today announced its selection of nationally renowned architectural firm, Robert A.M. Stern Architects (RAMSA) to design its new YMCA, located on the thirty-two acre campus of its Mahackeno Outdoor Center. The YMCA also announced that its extensive preliminary analysis indicates that it can locate the new facility in the Northeast section of the campus, adjacent to the Merritt Parkway.

“We are absolutely thrilled with the team from RAMSA,” said YMCA CEO, Richard Foot. “We believe their innovative approach to project management, their incredibly talented design team and their track record of success in similar projects will yield a facility that represents all that is best about the YMCA, the greater-Westport community and the treasured location on which it will reside,” he added.

Mr. Foot also stated, “We are very pleased that the initial reviews indicate we can locate the facility on the North side of the Mahackeno campus. This will allow for a tremendous buffer from the small number of residential properties that abut Mahackeno and preserve the existing Camp Mahackeno facilities and grounds.”

The selection process led by the Building Committee and Sam Gault, selected RAMSA from a competitive review of more than 15 firms and the selection was ratified by the YMCA’s boards.

Mr. Gault stated, “The team from Stern impressed us from the start. We know we have a truly unique and precious piece of property in Mahackeno and we wanted a team that had an appreciation for that and a track record of incorporating the natural environment into their design. Robert Stern’s practice is premised on the belief that buildings should engage in a dialogue with the physical and historical contexts of their locations, and we look forward to their response to this wonderful site.”

Robert A. M. Stern Architects is a 140-person firm which has established an international reputation as a leading design firm with wide experience in residential, commercial and institutional work.

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RAMSA has an impressive roster of projects, including the new Museum Center at the Mark Twain House in Hartford, the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Massachusetts; Ohrstrom Library, St. Paul's School, Concord, New Hampshire; the Disney Feature Animation Building, Burbank, California; the Brooklyn Law School Tower, Brooklyn, New York; the William Gates Computer Science Building, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California; and, many more. The firm served as co-master planner of the new town of Celebration, Florida, and continues to work with the City and State of New York on the implementation of the design guidelines it developed for the revitalization of New York City's 42nd Street. Robert A. M. Stern, Senior Partner, serves as the Dean of the Yale School of Architecture.

Kevin Smith, Associate Partner at RAMSA and the YMCA Project Leader, who lives in Westport, commented that “this is a truly unique assignment and we are honored to be given the opportunity to design a facility that will serve the residents of greater Westport long into the future. YMCA’s are special organizations with truly community-focused missions and this facility will reflect that. It will also provide for state-of-the-art recreational and social space, tastefully integrated with the character and topography of the Mahackeno location.”

The indication that this new facility can be located on the North side of Poplar Plains Brook and adjacent to the Merritt Parkway represents an important development in the planning process. Locating the facility in this part of the property will have a number of important benefits, including:

- Ⓟ Maximum separation from the few abutting residential properties;
- Ⓟ Direct connectivity with Sunny Lane, the access route;
- Ⓟ Maximum preservation of existing Camp Mahackeno facility and grounds; and,
- Ⓟ Ability to use the steep-sloped terrain of this part of the property to potentially reduce the physical signature of the facility

The YMCA planning process is still in its early stages and will continue with further site assessments and reviews by relevant Town boards and commissions. Current plans call for construction to begin in 2006 with a new facility opening in 2008.

The Westport/Weston YMCA

The Westport/Weston YMCA is an affiliate of the YMCA of the USA and a partner agency of the United Way of Westport and Weston. The mission of the YMCA is to build strong kids, strong families and strong communities. The YMCA is governed by two boards comprised of forty-two community volunteers.

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