



**Rollout of Pariser Platz Construction Project
Berlin
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Ambassador Coats

As prepared for delivery.

We are very happy to announce that the United States government will break ground for the construction of the new American Embassy on Pariser Platz in October of this year.

This has been a long process and we appreciate the very close collaboration with the Urban Planning authorities of the City of Berlin, the Office of Overseas Building Operations of the United States Department of State in Washington, and our neighbors on Pariser Platz. We also appreciate the support of Secretary of State Colin Powell who made it very clear that he felt the U.S. embassy should be on the original Pariser Platz site. In 1931, when the US government originally purchased property on Pariser Platz, it was to be the site of a showcase embassy -- but World War II derailed those plans. Today we are back on track -- and Pariser Platz is a pivotal location in a new Berlin. The State Department's decision to return to this historic site is a tribute to German-American relations. It demonstrates America's support of reunified Germany.

An embassy is a symbol of a nation's foreign presence, identity, and diplomatic intentions. It is more than a collection of government offices. We want our embassies to send a message of openness and optimism, projecting the values of democracy and freedom that guide our diplomacy. We felt strongly that building on a more remote site would send the wrong message. We plan to construct a beautiful building here on Pariser Platz, which will be fitting with the architecture of this very historic place, but will also reflect America. I believe that the architects have been successful in giving the building expression to the ideals of "diversity," "openness," and "equality," while at the same time meeting all security concerns.

The final design for the United States Embassy in Berlin is a transformation of the original 1996 competition design by the acclaimed American architect Moore Ruble Yudell of Santa Monica, California. It meets new site, security, and program requirements in the wake of the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998, and succeeds in compensating for the normally required 100-ft setback. All our neighbors around the site have agreed to cooperate with security features to be put in place. The building will be protected, but in a way that is in harmony with the appearance of the historic site. To quote the architect, the embassy will project an image that is "strong but not hostile."

The new Embassy will rise four and a quarter levels above the intersection of Behrenstrasse and Ebertstrasse and will close the last frontage on Pariser Platz.

The front facade looking onto Pariser Platz is divided in the middle to form a lobby with the feel of an open courtyard. The lobby-court brings daylight into the shady north-facing corner on Pariser Platz. We want to be able to welcome individuals as well as groups graciously but still under circumstances that meet security requirements.

Opposite the Tiergarten, the Embassy rooftop is mounted by a glass and copper Lantern that joins both the Reichstag's dome and the Quadriga sculpture on the Brandenburg Gate, as part of Berlin's skyline landmarks. The Lantern forms the roof of a conference room. The view from this penthouse area has been carefully composed to show the Quadriga as it seems to ride across the Embassy's rooftop garden of native American grasses.

Increased setbacks along the Behrenstrasse and Ebertstrasse prompted a renewed interest in urban landscape. A green band of trees, gardens and walkways will be created along the street fronts and link the site to the Tiergarten. The architect's design includes landscape materials inspired by places of the American continent.

The Consular entry corner on Behren Strasse presents a light pavilion as a vestibule containing a major commissioned work of public art by noted American artist Sol Lewitt.

At the center of the Embassy's enclosed courtyard is a formal garden and pavilion, providing for everyday lunch and relaxation for staff as well as occasional events for invited guests.

Prior to the official ground breaking, preliminary surveys, required searches for munitions and surveys of existing conditions of surrounding buildings and boundaries will take place. These surveys will start next week and may last into September or October. Next week, as the ground studies are initiated, the city of Berlin will start moving Behrenstrasse. In September, the city will start moving Ebertstrasse. Each street move is expected to take about three months.

The required ground studies will involve some earth moving, but the official groundbreaking will take place in October. Construction on the building itself will start in October or November. The entire project is expected to be awarded to an American contractor in September who will be present in Berlin during the construction duration of approximately three years. The building should be completed in late 2007 and we expect to be open for business in the spring of 2008.

I am the sixth Ambassador to be involved in the planning of this wonderful new Embassy in Berlin. I know that I speak for all those previous Ambassadors in saying how proud we are that this new American Embassy will take its place in the very center of historic Berlin.

Thank you.