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## NOVO FOUNDATION AND GOREN GROUP ANNOUNCE WINNING ARCHITECT FOR THE WOMEN'S BUILDING

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*DEBORAH BERKE PARTNERS SELECTED TO TRANSFORM FORMER PRISON INTO HOME  
FOR THE GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT*

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### THE WOMEN'S BUILDING

[womensbuildingnyc.org](http://womensbuildingnyc.org)

### NOVO FOUNDATION

[novofoundation.org](http://novofoundation.org)

### GOREN GROUP

[thegorengroup.com](http://thegorengroup.com)

### DEBORAH BERKE

**PARTNERS**

[dberke.com](http://dberke.com)

**#WomensBldg**

**NEW YORK** – Today, the NoVo Foundation and Goren Group announced Deborah Berke Partners as the winner of The Women's Building International Design Competition. Berke, who has promoted the advancement of women in the field of architecture throughout her career, will lead a diverse team of designers and architects to transform the former Bayview Correctional Facility into [The Women's Building](http://womensbuildingnyc.org) – a permanent home for the girls' and women's rights movement in New York City. Founded in 2006 by Jennifer and Peter Buffett, NoVo is one of the largest private foundations in the world supporting initiatives focused explicitly on girls and women.

The NoVo Foundation and Goren Group were awarded rights to the former prison by Empire State Development in October 2015, and announced plans to redevelop the space into a hub that offers leaders working on behalf of girls and women the space, resources, and support they need to drive critical change. The 100,000 square-foot building was originally designed in 1931 by Shreve, Lamb & Harmon, the architects of the Empire State Building. The final design of The Women's Building will be formulated in consultation with girls' and women's rights leaders and other activists.

"Over the last several months, we have met with and heard from hundreds of leaders and activists, including formerly incarcerated women, about what they hope to see in this building," said Pamela Shifman, executive director of the NoVo Foundation. "Deborah Berke and her team are the perfect partners to join us as we continue this journey, turning a shared vision of a space for liberation, equality, and justice for all girls and women into a concrete reality."

Lela Goren, founder and president of Goren Group went on to say, "As we think about all The Women's Building stands for and all we hope it will be, Deborah Berke Partners truly embodies the essence of that vision. Berke leads a team that's not only incredibly skillful, but which we believe has the collective expertise, creativity, and collaborative spirit necessary to breathe renewed life into this space."

"Even at this early stage in our journey, we've come to realize that The Women's Building already exists. It lives in the community of people who are coming together to imagine how a space of women's confinement can be transformed into a space for women's liberation. Now, with the help of Deborah and her team, this shared commitment to equality and justice can grow into a building, and stand as a bold statement about what is possible for New York and the world," said Jennifer and Peter Buffett, co-presidents of the Novo Foundation.

[An eight-person committee](#) composed of leading architects, girls' and women's rights activists, and other industry professionals reviewed over 43 submissions from a diverse, accomplished, and inspiring range of architects and design firms before selecting Berke's proposal. Among many other factors, the committee was impressed with the visionary ideas, the co-creative spirit of the design team, and the firm's alignment with the mission and values of The Women's Building.

The selection process showcased the talents of women-led teams against the backdrop of a largely male-dominated field. The following three entrants were among the top finalists:

- Joan Krevlin and Julie Nelson, BSKS Architects LLP
- Jane Smith, Spacesmith + Davis Brody Bond + AREXA
- Amale Andraos and V. Mitch McEwen, WORKac + A(n) Office

Berke's proposal was based on a concept for the building, which continues to be developed and refined through ongoing consultation with leaders from across the girls' and women's rights movement. Berke and her team will now be an active partner in these discussions.

"We were inspired by each and every proposal we reviewed," said [Rusti Miller-Hill](#), a member of the Selection Committee. "But from the ambition and scale of their Women's Building design, to their collective strength, creativity, and shared focus on activism, Deborah Berke's team truly stood out." Miller-Hill, who was formerly incarcerated at Bayview in 1992, is a community advocate and consultant on topics of addiction, reentry, housing, correctional health, and the needs of women impacted by these issues.

"Many of the design elements were intriguing," said [Suad Amiry](#), also a member of the Committee. "But perhaps most importantly, Deborah Berke and her team were exceptionally aligned to the mission and values of The Women's Building. From the language in their written proposal and spoken presentation, to the composition of their own organization and team, to their collaboration plan and design goals – it all just fit." Amiry is a conservation architect, writer, and political and social activist.

Now that Deborah Berke Partners has been selected, the team will join in and contribute to discussions with the girls' and women's rights community to further define the program for the building and begin schematic design.

"We are deeply honored by the opportunity to be design partners in this important work," Deborah Berke said. "In my more than 30 years of practice, few projects have resonated with me as personally as this one has. Turning the old correctional facility into a place of hope and action, and the transformational nature of the project's mission embodies values that my team holds dear."

Deborah Berke Partners maintains gender parity, actively creates a diverse and inclusive working environment, and has an equal number of women and men in leadership positions.

The NoVo Foundation and Goren Group estimate that construction of The Women's Building will begin in 2017, and it should be open by 2020.

#### **ABOUT THE NOVO FOUNDATION**

*The NoVo Foundation is dedicated to building a more just and balanced world. Founded in 2006 by Jennifer and Peter Buffett, NoVo has become one of the largest private foundations in the world to support initiatives focused explicitly on girls and women. It also works to advance social and emotional learning, support indigenous communities in North America, and promote local living economies. Across all of its work, the NoVo Foundation supports the development of capacities in people—individually and collectively—to help create a world based on mutual respect, collaboration, and love.*

#### **ABOUT GOREN GROUP**

*Goren Group is a registered WBE woman-owned and operated real estate development and investment company devoted to making buildings that create change and foster community. Founded in 2007 by Lela Goren, Goren Group develops complex, significant and historic buildings with entrepreneurial finesse and an unwavering commitment to social engagement.*

#### **ABOUT DEBORAH BERKE PARTNERS**

*Deborah Berke Partners designs buildings of lasting value that enhance the lives of their users. The firm's work is known for its simplicity, clarity, thoughtful use of materials, and a sensitivity to the landscapes and the local contexts in which it builds. Based in New York City, the firm's current work includes the distribution headquarters for Cummins Inc. in downtown Indianapolis, Indiana, the 122 Community Arts Center in New York, and new residences on the East and West Coasts and in the Midwest. Deborah Berke leads the firm with two partners, eight principals, and a staff of 50 people, including an equal number of women and men. She is the Dean of the Yale School of Architecture, the first woman to hold the position. In 2012, Deborah received the inaugural Berkeley-Rupp Prize at the University of California at Berkeley, which recognizes individuals who contribute to the advancement of women in architecture and whose work demonstrates a commitment to sustainability and to strengthening community.*