Concerned that the caliber of federal construction was declining, in 1962, President Kennedy convened an Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Architecture to ensure that such architecture continued to represent American ideals—from dignity, stability, and vigor to embodying the finest architecture of its time. That Ad Hoc Committee, chaired by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, set forth Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture. Those guiding principles are just as relevant today as they were nearly 50 years ago—although today they would very likely be expanded to include the importance of security, sustainability, and flexibility in our resource constrained and rapidly changing world.

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO)—following in the footsteps of the General Services Administration (GSA) and the Design Excellence program it developed nearly 16 years ago—is renewing its commitment to design excellence and implementing a Design Excellence program for U.S. embassy and consulate facilities.

**PURPOSE AND FUNCTION** Embassies and consulates have two essential purposes: to be safe, functional, and inspiring places for the conduct of diplomacy and to physically represent the U.S. Government to the host nation. A facility that represents the best of American architecture, design, engineering, and construction will be an appropriate workspace, and will also be contextually appropriate and become a respected landmark—representing the best of American Government, enterprise, and culture—in the host nation.

**SITE** The site and location of an embassy has practical, as well as symbolic implications. OBO will develop sites that best represent the U.S. Government and its goals, and enhance the conduct of diplomacy. Whenever possible, sites will be selected in urban areas allowing U.S. embassies and consulates to contribute to the civic and urban fabric of host cities. Special attention will be paid to the general ensemble of surrounding buildings, streets, and public spaces of which embassies and consulates will form a part.

**DESIGN** The design of buildings and sites is a comprehensive process of understanding and balancing requirements and incorporating them into a thoughtfully conceived cohesive and coherent whole. OBO will evaluate designs on the basis of their success in skilfully balancing requirements and on how well the design represents the U.S. to the host nation. Designs are to be functionally simple and spatially flexible to meet changing needs and be enduring over time. An official embassy style will be avoided. Buildings are to be welcoming, while representing dignity, stability, innovation, humanity, and openness. Ostentation is not appropriate. Designs will be cost effective, employing an economy of means and methods. The design will be responsive to its context, to include the site, its surroundings, and the local culture and climate. The design will make use of contextually appropriate and durable materials. The grounds and landscaping will be as important as the architecture and together are to be conceived as an integrated whole. The grounds will be viewed as functional and representational space, and will be sustainable, include indigenous plantings, and incorporate existing site resources, such as mature trees.

**ENGINEERING** The engineering of facilities will incorporate the most advanced methods, systems, technologies, and materials appropriate to the facility and local conditions, including the site, climate, natural hazards, and the practical reality of construction, operations, and maintenance in the host nation.

**SAFETY AND SECURITY** The safety and security of staff and visitors is paramount. Designs and construction will meet or exceed all security and safety standards and specifications. Architects and engineers will be challenged to design and develop ever improving methods, materials, and solutions and to thoughtfully integrate these into overall designs.

The Guiding Principles of a new Department of State program, based on the 1962 Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture, are articulated below. The Principles are the foundation of OBO’s new Design Excellence program and are a conceptual road map to guide the work of each person and office in OBO as we pursue our mission to provide secure, safe, and functional facilities that represent the U.S. Government to the host nation and support our staff in the achievement of U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Delivering design excellence is a comprehensive process that seeks to utilize the best methods, technologies, and staff abilities. Each office, person, and action in OBO will contribute to the realization of this goal. If the guiding principles below are applied, OBO will produce facilities that are outstanding in all respects. OBO project teams are challenged to apply all of these principles, coordinate their efforts and deliver built embassy complexes that represent the best of American architecture, engineering, technology, art, and culture.

**SUSTAINABILITY** Buildings and grounds will incorporate sustainable design and energy efficiency, and these features will be integrated into their design. Construction, maintenance, and operations practices will be sustainable. Particular attention will be given to the climate, context, and site conditions.

**ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES** OBO will seek to hire the highest quality of American architects and engineers to produce the best designs. Their selection will be based on the quality of their design achievements and portfolio of work; and the selection methodology will be open, competitive, and transparent.

**CONSTRUCTION** Construction professionals are partners in Design Excellence and will be engaged throughout the process to ensure the best possible design and implementation. OBO is committed to using the best construction practices and craftsmanship possible and every effort will be made to utilize the most qualified building contractors with a record of delivering high quality projects.

**OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE** Operations and maintenance professionals are also partners in Design Excellence and will be engaged throughout the process. Buildings and sites will be economical to operate and maintain and will utilize equipment and materials that are durable, dependable, and suitable. Designs will be based on lifecycle analysis of options that take into account long-term operations and maintenance concerns. Design intent and features will be maintained throughout the life of the facility, using the best stewardship practices.

**ART** Embassy buildings and grounds are an opportunity to showcase the best of American and host nation art and culture. OBO is committed to integrating such art into its facilities such that each property will be both an individual expression of Design Excellence and part of a larger body of work representing the best that America’s designers and artists can leave to later generations.

**HISTORICALLY, ARCHITECTURALLY, OR CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT PROPERTIES AND COLLECTIONS** OBO is committed to preserving the Department's historical, cultural, and architectural legacy. The Secretary of State's Register of Culturally Significant Property is the official listing of important diplomatic overseas architecture and property that figure prominently in our country's international heritage. OBO is also committed to the development of a world class stewardship program, dedicated to the proper conservation and maintenance of the Department's culturally significant historical properties and assets.
DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

OBO began the process of developing its Design Excellence program with the “Guiding Principles of Design Excellence in Diplomatic Facilities.” We knew that it was important to start with broad and timeless goals that would guide us; but we also knew they were only the first step. Over the last year, OBO established seven internal Working Groups and asked them to examine OBO policies and procedures and to provide a Steering Committee with concrete recommendations as to how best to integrate Design Excellence into all of OBO’s activities.

These multidisciplinary teams, with membership across OBO and other Department offices, covered the following areas: Overall Program Planning and Execution; Site Planning; Programming, Project Planning and Development; Design Goals and Standards; Project Construction; and Operations and Maintenance. The Steering Committee included the core leadership of OBO, as well as the chairs of the Working Groups and the GSA’s Director of Design Excellence & The Arts. The development of these recommendations provided an invaluable forum for colleagues to discuss goals, ideas and experiences; and to look at our work and organization in ways in which we rarely have the opportunity. More importantly, we were able to participate in shaping the direction of the organization for years to come. The Steering Committee referred over 60 recommendations to the Director of OBO for approval. Below are highlights of these recommendations, as well as strategies to achieve Design Excellence.

ENSURING LONG-TERM VALUE OBO will use sustainability principles and lifecycle cost analysis to ensure that facilities provide the lowest overall long-term cost of ownership, consistent with quality and function. Low capital costs will not be traded for high operating costs.

CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTOR SELECTION The Department will recruit, prequalify, and award projects to contractors committed to the best D-B-B and D-B practices with verifiable records of consistent success with owners. The Department will work to expand the pool of contractors and reach out to new emerging firms to promote competition and ensure the best outcome for the U.S. Government.

BEST VALUE CONTRACT AWARD Current policy emphasizes low first cost at the expense of design quality and lifecycle costs. The Department will use the Best Value method which includes factors such as past performance and team qualifications, as well as consideration of lifecycle costs in the evaluation process.

EARLY CONTRACTOR INVOLVEMENT (ECI) The Department will involve the construction contractor in the early stages, in particular on long-term and complex projects, to ensure the best possible overall outcome and reduce risk. ECI will encourage establishment of good-faith and cooperation by bringing different stakeholders to the table earlier in the process.

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE OBO will develop a reference guide and training program for each major project. The guide will include information such as design intent, systems information, maintenance requirements, and troubleshooting. This will ensure that facilities are operated and maintained consistent with the goal of long-term use and asset protection, and that future modifications to the building are in keeping with the original design intent. This program will include special guidance on the preservation of historic assets.

GUIDE TO DESIGN EXCELLENCE A new Guide to Design Excellence for OBO will be released in summer 2011, in hard copy and on the OBO website (www.state.gov/obo). The guide will be comprehensive and structured, in large part, to mirror the phases through which our projects move. The guide will be an overview of the different programs and processes in OBO and will highlight how Design Excellence goals and priorities will be achieved in each phase of a project. The guide is a basic “How to” manual, but will also include references or links to more detailed documents in each subject area.

REVISED ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING DESIGN GUIDELINES This existing multi-volume collection of design requirements is being revised in light of Design Excellence. The updated requirements will emphasize high-performance buildings, focusing on flexibility and best design practices, while moving away from a fixed solution.