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By Mark Sommer

Richardson Complex study set

Future development of the H.H. Richardson Complex took a step forward Wednesday with the announcement that a team has been selected to study reuse of the historic buildings and grounds.

Goody Clancy, a design firm based in Boston, and Simpson Gumpertz & Heger, an engineering firm with an office in New York, will be producing a Historic Structures Report, an important step in the development of major sites of cultural heritage.

The team, which was selected in a competitive process that drew the attention of more than two dozen firms, includes historians, preservation and landscape architects, and forensic and structural engineers.

Both Goody Clancy and Simpson Gumpertz & Heger have worked on Richardson restoration projects in the past and are steeped in evaluating and documenting historic landmarks. Interviews and workshops with members of the community and regional experts are also expected to be part of the process.

“We did a thorough, open and transparent national search, even international, and these folks came out on top. I think it’s a great fit,” said Clinton E. Brown, head of the Richardson Center Corporation’s selection committee.

“This is an essential first step in creating the vision outlined in the Urban Land Institute report. They will help us scout the right path going forward,” he said.

The team’s hiring follows recommendations made by the Urban Land Institute in May to put housing, retail, office space and a hotel onto the sprawling 19th century buildings, along with other uses such as classroom space for Buffalo State College.

An architecture and visitors center is slated to go into the site’s twin towers.

The Richardson Center Board was appointed in July 2006 to plan the future use of the former Buffalo State Hospital, whose grounds were designed by Frederick Law Olmsted.