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## **D.C. COURTS BREAK GROUND ON RENOVATION OF HISTORIC OLD COURTHOUSE**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the District of Columbia Courts hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for one of the most significant historic preservation projects in the District. “The ‘Old D.C. Courthouse,’ one of the oldest public buildings in D.C., will be restored over the next two years to house the District’s highest court, the D.C. Court of Appeals,” said D.C. Appeals Court Chief Judge Annice Wagner. Participating in the ceremony with Chief Judge Wagner were Superior Court Chief Judge Rufus G. King, III, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, and architects for the project, John Belle and Hany Hassan of Beyer Blinder Belle.

Built from 1820 through 1881, the Old Courthouse, an architectural jewel and the centerpiece of Judiciary Square, will be restored to its original grandeur and function as a modern court building. Chief Judge Wagner said “When completed, this historic, national treasure will not only meet the critical space needs of the court, it will also revitalize the Judiciary Square area for the use and enjoyment of the public.” A new, universally accessible grand entrance for the courthouse will be constructed at 430 E Street, N.W. “We are grateful to the President, members of Congress, the Commission of Fine Arts, the National Capital Planning Commission, and the Historic Preservation Review Board who have supported this effort and shared our vision,” concluded Chief Judge Wagner.

The architectural and historic preservation firm of Beyer Blinder Belle designed the restoration of the Old Courthouse. The firm is internationally known for creating new uses and contemporary design solutions for major works of historic architecture. Among its notable projects, past and present, in New York City are Grand Central Terminal, Ellis Island Museum of Immigration, the expansion of the Pierpont Morgan Library (with Renzo Piano) and the restoration and upgrade of the historic Thurgood Marshall United States Courthouse. The firm’s projects in Washington, D.C., include two award-winning planning studies for the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative; the D.C. Vision Plan; historic preservation work undertaken for the Architect of the Capitol; and award-winning security plans for the perimeters of the Smithsonian Institution’s buildings on the National Mall.

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Renovation of the Old Courthouse is scheduled for completion in December 2007. The expansion and renovation of the Old Courthouse is part of the Judiciary Square Master Plan that the D.C. Courts developed at the request of the National Capital Planning Commission. The Master Plan, which provides a long-term framework for urban renewal of Judiciary Square, was drafted by Gruzen Samton LLP and Metropolitan Architects & Planners.

“The expansion and renovation of the Old D.C. Courthouse provides a wonderful opportunity for the Courts and the city alike,” said John Belle, FAIA, RIBA, a founding partner of Beyer Blinder Belle. “The Courts will function within a fully modern facility, created within a glorious and venerable landmark that is suited to their dignity. The city will benefit from the new life and new architectural presence being brought to Judiciary Square, one of the most historic public places in the nation’s capital.”

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