

# INTERIOR DESIGN

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new york: in living color

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## movershaker

been president of Lincoln Center and was on the mayor's transition team. I serve at the pleasure of the man."

Burney's agency, the New York City Department of Design and Construction, oversees the building and renovation of civic facilities in all five boroughs. That means police, fire, and EMS stations, courthouses, senior centers, libraries, museums, and theaters. Infrastructure is included; schools and housing are not. All this entails managing a portfolio of \$6.5 billion and a personnel count of 1,100, among them interior designers, architects, engineers, and administrators. On a municipal scale, the DDC is analogous to the U.S. General Services Administration. "We're a professional project-management agency," he explains. "We have no political agenda."

Priority number one when Mayor Bloomberg appointed Burney was his indefatigable quest for excellence. No longer does the A&D community deem city



**From top:** A rendering of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's Public Safety Answering Center II in the Pelham Parkway section of the Bronx. Perkins + Will's rendering of phase one of the 35-acre New York City Police Department Academy in College Point, Queens. Slade Architecture's Montessori Progressive Learning Center in St. Albans, Queens. A rendering of Caples Jefferson Architects's Weeksville Heritage Center in Crown Heights, Brooklyn.

commissions jobs of accommodation. Instead, A-list firms large and small are hungry for these plums. So how did Burney up the city's game to the level of Grimshaw, UNStudio, and Work Architecture Company? He started by reaching out to the AIA, letting it be known that commissions would be granted through "quality-based selection." No bidding wars. No assumptions that larger firms with more experience were necessarily right for the job.

Here's how it works. Essentially, Burney and the DDC operate on a request-for-proposals basis, tied to size. For projects under \$15 million, only firms with a staff of 10 or less can submit a mini proposal. Burney then establishes a pool of 20 contenders. As projects come up, he matches them with firms. "It's like a dating agency followed by a marriage counselor," he says. For jobs with budgets up to \$25 million, his pool is eight larger firms. Think Steven Holl Architects, Selldorf Architects, Snøhetta. For projects over \$25 million, the DDC puts

