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Finalists in the Ballpark

Virginia, D.C. Groups Seek Stadium Design and Site

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By Mark Asher, Washington Post Staff Writer

The Virginia Baseball Stadium Authority last night narrowed its list to four finalists, including renowned sports architectural firm HOK of Kansas City, Mo., for the design of a new ballpark in Northern Virginia. Meantime, proponents of a team in the District unveiled Washington-based sports facility consultants Brailsford & Dunlavy as manager for a site evaluation project for a new ballpark in the city.

As they wait for Major League Baseball to resolve contraction, economic and labor issues before it considers relocation of an existing franchise to the Washington area, the area groups seeking teams are progressing to have all planning in place in case MLB decides to return to the Washington area after a 31-year absence, possibly as early as 2003.

In addition to HOK, the Virginia Baseball Stadium Authority's list of design finalists includes:

* HKS, Inc. of Dallas, the principal designer of Miller Field in Milwaukee and the Ballpark at Arlington, Tex., as well as a baseball theme park in Orlando.

* CDFM 2 of Kansas City, Mo. The firm has not designed a ballpark, but one of the firm's principals, Bill Johnson, was design principal for Ellerbe Becket when he designed BankOne Ballpark in Phoenix, Turner Field and Olympic Stadium in Atlanta, and new arenas in Cleveland and Phoenix.

* The partnership of LDA Companies of Pittsburgh and Robert A.M. Stern Architects of New York City. The firm worked with HOK -- and is the architect of record -- on the critically acclaimed PNC Field in Pittsburgh.

HOK is the most prolific sports facility architect in the country, having a hand in a dozen new MLB ballparks, including Camden Yards, Pacific Bell Park in San Francisco and Coors Field in Denver.

"We have every new ballpark designed in the last 15 years," said Gabe Paul Jr., executive director of the VBSA.

Paul said the four groups tentatively are scheduled to make presentations July 1-2, and the authority plans to rank the groups' proposals by its Aug. 8 meeting. The authority then will begin a "negotiated bid process," about Aug. 19, Paul said. The chosen group cannot also be involved in the D.C. ballpark design.

In the District, project partners D.C. Sports and Entertainment Commission, Washington Baseball Club LLC and the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development announced Brailsford & Dunlavy as its consulting team at a Board of Trade meeting. The group

will handle financial planning and oversee five firms, each concentrating on a specific discipline such as urban planning and transportation.

"The D.C. Sports and Entertainment Commission has emphasized to us they have no preconceived notion about sites and financing, so it's up to us to educate them enough to make good decisions in both those areas," said Chris Dunlavey, president of Brailsford & Dunlavey.

Bobby Goldwater, D.C. Sports and Entertainment president, said the results of the site evaluation project will be submitted to MLB by the end of the season.

Brailsford & Dunlavey will not be involved in the selection of a design firm. Washington Baseball Club is handling that process.