

Digger

Source: Redskins advance plans to relocate, hire Google's architect for new stadium

By **Jonathan O'Connell** January 6 at 4:20 PM

The Washington Redskins have hired Danish architecture firm Bjarke Ingels Group to design a new stadium for the team, according to an official familiar with the decision, a first formal step signifying the team's intention to depart FedEx Field in Landover and build a new stadium elsewhere in the region.

Bjarke Ingels Group is one of the industry's buzziest architecture firms, having made headlines last year when it was [selected](#) to design Google's futuristic greenhouse-style [headquarters campus](#) in Mountain View, Calif. Locally the firm is working with the Smithsonian on a 20-year [master plan](#) for museums on the National Mall and has held a number of [exhibitions](#) at the National Building Museum, including a [life-size maze](#) it created in the museum's great hall.

Before signing a deal with Bjarke Ingels, Dan Snyder's team considered other firms with more experience designing NFL stadiums, according to executives familiar with the selection process. Team spokesman Tony Wyllie did not return a request for comment on the selection. Daria Pahhota, a spokeswoman for Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG), declined to comment. "We are working on an NFL stadium, but we can't identify who the client is," she said.

[\[Tug of war for new Redskins stadium is complicated by name debate\]](#)

The firm's selection was [reported earlier](#) Wednesday by the Sports Business Journal.

For more than a year the Redskins have been [angling for support](#) among local elected officials for a new stadium location despite the fact that the team's lease at FedEx Field does not expire until 2027.

Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe (D) has pitched the team on locations in Loudoun County along the unbuilt second leg of Metro's Silver Line, and the team hired lobbyists from McGuire Woods to advance support for a stadium among state legislators. D.C. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D) meanwhile has inquired with federal officials controlling the land beneath RFK Stadium about building a new stadium there.

The team's stadium efforts, however, have been hampered by its unwillingness to change its name, which many Native American groups consider a racist slur. Many elected officials in the Washington area do not use the name, and when Bowser inquired about the RFK land, she was [rebuffed by Interior Secretary Sally Jewell](#), who has likened

it to calling a team the ‘Brownskins’ or the ‘Whiteskins.’

Bowser says she considers the name offensive and that it needs to be changed for the team to return to the District, and Capitol Hill residents have repeatedly [voiced opposition](#) to the idea of a new NFL stadium in their neighborhood.

But in an interview Tuesday, the mayor reiterated her commitment to returning the team to the District. The District is studying what to do with the RFK property when D.C. United departs for its own new stadium in 2018. Bowser also said she plans to attend the team’s playoff game Sunday against the Green Bay Packers.

“I know they want to be at RFK,” Bowser said. “It’s the only place that makes sense.”

The selection of Bjarke Ingels represented “a very interesting and different kind of choice” because of the firm’s splashy work on an assortment of other projects and recent foray into sports said Christopher S. Dunlavey, president of the D.C.-based planning and architectural firm Brailsford & Dunlavey, which worked on Nationals Park.

“People involved in building stadiums are usually very reliant on the firms who have demonstrated a strong record in understanding sports sites,” Dunlavey said. “BIG is known very well for very innovative architecture and design, but they haven’t been known for that kind of expertise.”

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Jonathan O’Connell has covered land use and development in the Washington area for more than five years.

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