



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Hi-res images available upon request

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**Hillwood Executive Director Kate Markert Announces Retirement**

**The end of 2026 marks the completion of a successful 16-year tenure at Hillwood and over 40-year career**

**WASHINGTON** – Kate Markert, executive director of Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens, has announced plans to retire after 16 years of leadership. Her final day will be December 31, 2026.

Since joining Hillwood in August 2010 as the first woman to serve as executive director, Markert has led the institution through a period of sustained growth and institutional advancement, strengthening its capacity to serve the public while furthering the legacy of founder Marjorie Merriweather Post. Her leadership has been defined by a focus on strategic planning that has coalesced a committed staff around shared goals, targeted capital investments that enhanced the visitor experience, significant growth and diversification of Hillwood’s audience, and the organization’s transition from a private operating foundation to a public charity. During her time, attendance has more than doubled, reaching nearly 115,000 visitors last year, and membership has grown from under 1,000 households to over 5,000, reflecting Hillwood’s role as a cultural and educational resource for the community.

“It has been a privilege to lead Hillwood and to work alongside such a dedicated board, staff, and community of supporters,” said Markert. “I am deeply grateful to our trustees, donors, staff, and volunteers, and especially to Ellen MacNeille Charles for her trust and enduring leadership. Together, we have made Hillwood an even more dynamic and welcoming institution, building on the vision of our esteemed founder, Marjorie Merriweather Post, and expanding our reach to engage an ever-broader audience.”

A central focus of Markert’s leadership was the implementation of a comprehensive strategic planning framework that aligns departments across Hillwood toward shared institutional goals and fosters greater collaboration among staff, a complex undertaking given Hillwood’s multidisciplinary nature, spanning a renowned museum, spectacular gardens, and engaging programming, as well as its location across an expansive campus. This strategic approach to the work at Hillwood under her oversight also helped establish a more coordinated and effective structure for exhibitions, programs, and audience engagement.

“Being part of the great transformation Kate has guided at Hillwood has been both inspiring and rewarding,” said Elizabeth Odom, Hillwood board president. “Her leadership has strengthened

the institution and created a workplace where staff at every level feel empowered and supported. It has been a pleasure to work with her and see her vision come to life.”

### Positioning Hillwood for the Future: Public Charity Conversion

One of the most significant institutional changes during Markert’s time was Hillwood’s transition from a private operating foundation to a public charity. This shift broadened the organization’s base of philanthropic support and ensured its long-term sustainability, providing the flexibility to expand programs, exhibitions, and visitor experiences without being constrained by overreliance on the endowment. To achieve this, Markert increased Hillwood’s focus on cultivating relationships with individual donors, foundations, and corporate partners while maintaining careful stewardship of existing resources. She reflected on the importance of this work: “Marjorie Post was a progressive and visionary collector who wanted Hillwood to be a place that inspires and educates future generations. Our efforts to strengthen the institution and expand access reflect her intent and ensure that her legacy continues to benefit the public for years to come,” she said.

Ellen MacNeille Charles, Hillwood board president emerita and granddaughter of Marjorie Post, added, “Seeing Kate carry forward my grandmother’s vision has been truly gratifying. Grandmother believed Hillwood should be a place that both inspires and educates, and under Kate’s leadership, that spirit has come to life in so many ways. It has been a privilege to witness her care for Hillwood, its collections, and the people who bring our mission to life.”

### Enhancing Visitor Experience: Capital Projects and Institutional Growth

Visitors to Hillwood can experience the results of Markert’s leadership today in many ways across the estate. Key capital projects that she initiated and oversaw, including an expanded tented dining and program space, a Conservatory at the Visitor Center, and the creation of a new Collections & Research Center with improved library, archives, and storage facilities, have greatly improved Hillwood’s ability to welcome a growing number of visitors while cementing its profile as a respected cultural institution both nationally and internationally. These enhancements, along with a regular schedule of engaging special exhibitions and programs, have helped cultivate a diverse and growing community. Markert also authored *A Garden for All Seasons: Marjorie Merriweather Post’s Hillwood* (2020), the first book to explore the history and design of the estate’s gardens.

The Hillwood board is establishing a search committee to lead a national search for Hillwood’s next executive director.

### **About Hillwood**

When art collector, businesswoman, social figure, and philanthropist Marjorie Merriweather Post left to the public her northwest Washington, D.C. estate, she endowed the country with the most comprehensive collection of [Russian imperial art](#) outside of Russia, an [exquisite 18<sup>th</sup>-century French decorative art collection](#), and 25 acres of serene landscaped gardens and natural woodlands. Opened as a public institution in 1977, today, Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens offers a gracious

and immersive experience unlike any other. Highlights of the collection include Fabergé eggs, Russian porcelain, Russian orthodox icons, Beauvais tapestries, and Sèvres porcelain, and Post's personal collection of apparel, accessories, and jewelry. Thirteen acres of enchanting formal gardens include a [Japanese-style garden](#), [rose garden](#), [French parterre](#), and an orchid-filled [greenhouse](#).

## General Information

- Location:** 4155 Linnean Avenue, NW, Washington, DC  
Metro: Van Ness/UDC, Red Line (20-minute walk)
- Information/Tickets:** 202-686-5807 for information or [www.HillwoodMuseum.org](http://www.HillwoodMuseum.org)  
[Facebook.com/HillwoodMuseum](https://www.facebook.com/HillwoodMuseum)
- Hours:** Tuesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed Mondays, most holidays, and for several weeks in January.
- Café:** Merriweather Café is open Tuesday through Sunday from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Merriweather To Go, featuring a quick selection of sandwiches, salads, snacks, and beverages, is available Tuesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Ticketing:** \$20, \$17 seniors, \$10 college students, \$5 for visitors age 6 to 18. No donation is suggested for children under 6. Adults and seniors receive \$3 off the suggested donation for weekday visits and \$1 off for weekend visits when reservations are made online. Members receive free admission to visit the estate during regular operating hours. To join visit <http://www.hillwoodmuseum.org/membership>  
For more information visit <http://www.hillwoodmuseum.org/hours-and-tickets>

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