Enterprise®

DESIGN COMPETITION RESOURCE GUIDE

You're considering sponsoring a design competition, but where should you start?

Contents:

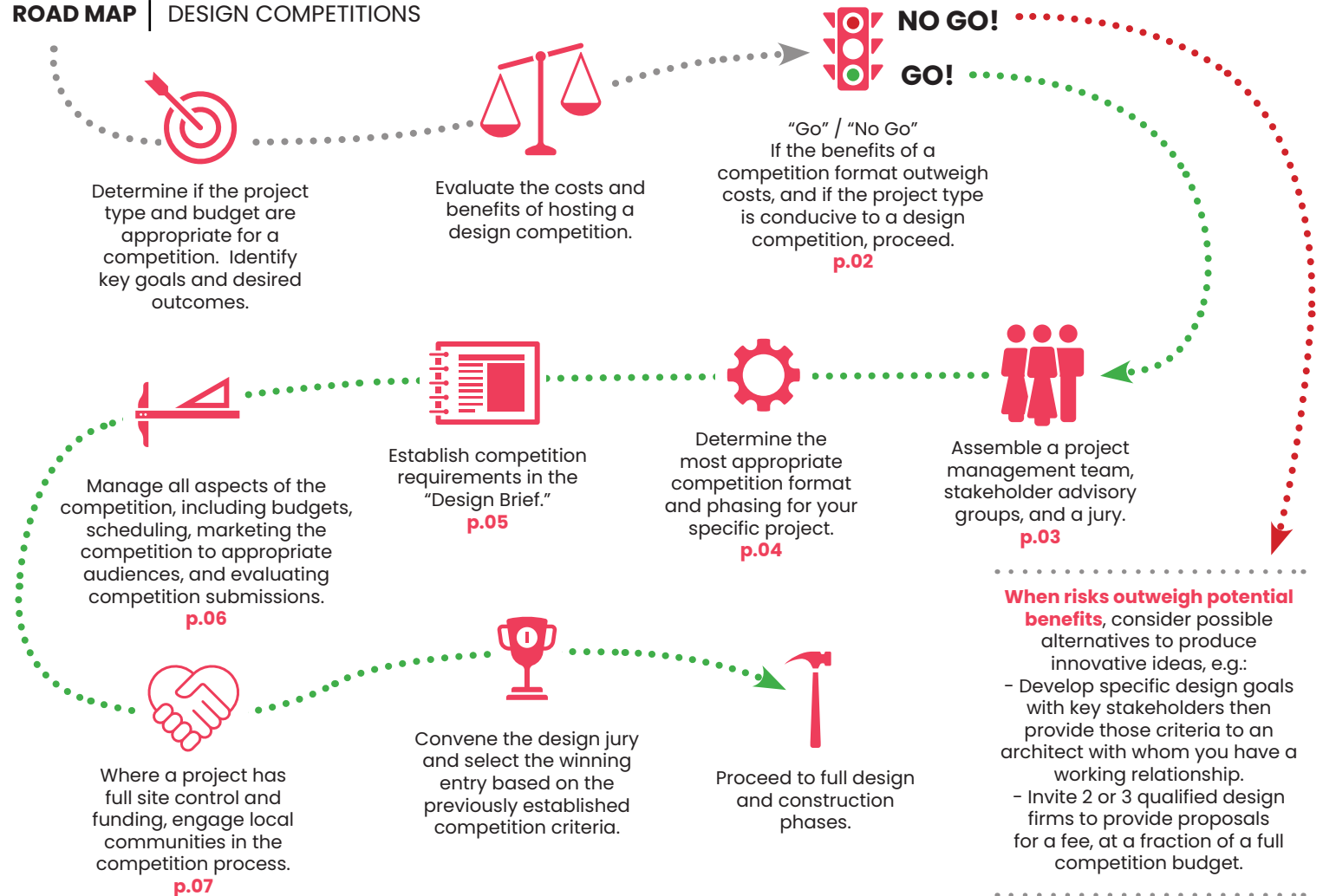The Design Competition Resource Guide provides an introduction to the primary steps involved in organizing and executing a design competition. Intended as a guide for municipalities and private organizations that are considering a competition as a method to secure designs for a potential project, this resource also highlights some basic risks and benefits inherent in the competition format.

ROAD MAP | DESIGN COMPETITIONS

NO GO!

GO!

Determine if the project type and budget are appropriate for a competition. Identify key goals and desired outcomes.

Evaluate the costs and benefits of hosting a design competition.

"Go" / "No Go"
If the benefits of a competition format outweigh costs, and if the project type is conducive to a design competition, proceed.
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Manage all aspects of the competition, including budgets, scheduling, marketing the competition to appropriate audiences, and evaluating competition submissions.
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Establish competition requirements in the "Design Brief."
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Determine the most appropriate competition format and phasing for your specific project.
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Assemble a project management team, stakeholder advisory groups, and a jury.
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Where a project has full site control and funding, engage local communities in the competition process.
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Convene the design jury and select the winning entry based on the previously established competition criteria.

Proceed to full design and construction phases.

When risks outweigh potential benefits, consider possible alternatives to produce innovative ideas, e.g.:
- Develop specific design goals with key stakeholders then provide those criteria to an architect with whom you have a working relationship.
- Invite 2 or 3 qualified design firms to provide proposals for a fee, at a fraction of a full competition budget.

02   IS A **DESIGN COMPETITION** RIGHT FOR MY PROJECT?

Design competitions are a popular method for quickly developing innovative ideas for a project; however, competitions also have inherent costs and can have unintended impacts on communities and design partners. When considering whether to proceed with a competition, organizers should identify and review potential benefits and risks to all stakeholders, then work to minimize negative impacts through careful planning and structuring of the competition.

ADVANTAGES & BENEFITS | DESIGN COMPETITIONS

OWNER / DEVELOPER:

Foster diverse, creative, and out-of-the-box ideas for implementation.

• • •

Promote broad public interest & publicity for a potential project.

• • •

Provide opportunities to work with new designers and architects.

• • •

Generate many unique design ideas for a pre-determined amount of monetary investment.

ARCHITECTS & DESIGNERS:

Potential for public recognition and exposure to new markets and clients.

• • •

Chance to explore wildly-creative concepts that wouldn't typically be developed in traditional practice models.

• • •

Opportunity for fledgling firms or individuals to compete on a level playing field with larger or more well-known firms. If successful, competitions can kick-start a small firm's path toward success.

COMMUNITY:

Opportunity for community engagement and feedback from stakeholders who may not otherwise be engaged in the design process.

• • •

Venue for equitable design solutions that meet unique community needs.

• • •

Forum to cultivate leadership among community members as they engage in organizing neighbors and providing feedback to competition sponsors.

DISADVANTAGES & RISKS | DESIGN COMPETITIONS

OWNER/ DEVELOPER:

Significant upfront cost and effort to organize, manage, market, and jury a design competition.

• • •

Obtaining schematic designs from an architect with whom the developer has an ongoing relationship may only cost a fraction of the competition prize amount.

• • •

The competition may not generate any workable designs within a project's budget, which can frustrate important community and design partners, making them less likely to collaborate in the future.

ARCHITECTS & DESIGNERS:

Significant cost and effort to prepare a competition proposal, with little chance for return on investment (i.e.: 30 to 300 competing entries in a competition, vs. only 2 to 5 other firms in an RFQ or RFP).

• • •

Even if selected as the winning entry, owners may not proceed with the project for any number of reasons (cost, lack of site control, team compatibility, etc.).

• • •

Competition organizers typically retain intellectual property rights to the design ideas generated by all contestants.

COMMUNITY:

Community burn out and disillusionment occur when competitions don't result in concrete change ("lab rat" effect). This can lead to a perception of broken promises, and communities may lose trust in or become adversarial towards the owner/developer.

• • •

Community frustration is generated when final projects don't incorporate ideas that were proposed by the community during the competition process.

WHO WILL **ORGANIZE & STAFF** MY COMPETITION?

Begin by designating an organizing committee and identifying key stakeholders.

The project management team, or "organizing committee" is the backbone to a successful competition— the committee is responsible for everything from identifying competition goals to selecting jury members and preparing the design brief. Third-party stakeholders and jury members, while not involved in day-to-day management, also play a role in shaping the competition and its outcomes.

Small-scale competitions may have an organizing committee consisting of only the funder and project manager, while large competitions may require involving additional staff and stakeholders.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE | Composition

- Project Manager
- Funder / Sponsor Representatives
- Owner Representatives
- Other Key Stakeholders:
  - Professional Organizations (AIA, etc.)
  - Public Relations / Media
  - Municipal Representatives
  - Community Representatives
- Legal Council

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE | Meeting Schedule

Organizing team members should meet as frequently as required to keep the competition progressing—this could be weekly at the beginning, or bimonthly or monthly at certain phases of the competition process.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE | Duties

- Budget & Project Expense Management
- Competition Scheduling
- Competition Design Brief Preparation
- Community Engagement
- Website Design, Marketing, & Media Relations
- Jury Selection, Stipend Allocation, & Travel
- Facility Rentals & Catering for Public Events
- Award Distribution
- Post-competition Publications / Exhibitions

THIRD-PARTY STAKEHOLDERS | Composition

- Community Residents Affected by Competition
- Non-profit Organizations
- Park / Water / Road / Infrastructure Managers
- Community Groups
- Planning / Building Officials
- Elected Officials
- Property Manager (site-specific competitions)

Meetings with third-party stakeholders might be held two to three times at the beginning of the competition (e.g. to solicit input prior to preparation of the design brief). Meeting again with third party stakeholders following the conclusion of the competition to present outcomes and discuss next steps is essential. In multi-phase competitions, third-party stakeholders could also be invited to provide direct feedback to contestants obout potential benefits or impacts of their design proposals.
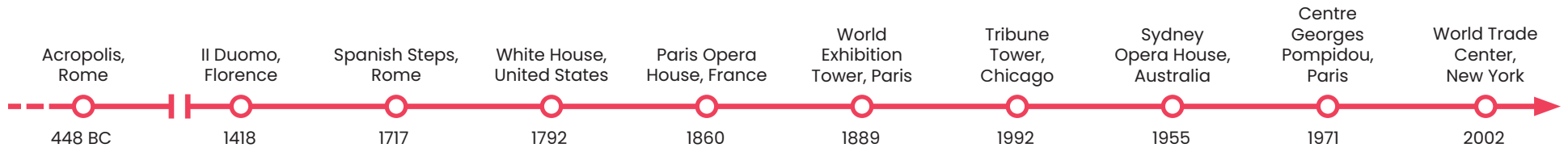
DESIGN JURY | Composition & Details

The design jury is a critical component to adding credence to the competition and attracting high-quality entrants. Appropriate juror compensation should be offered. The jury might include the following individuals:

- Representatives of Key Stakeholders
- Name-recognition Architects
- Local Design Professionals
- Community Representatives
- Academic Experts in Relevant Fields

Identifying competition phasing & structure that align with your desired outcomes is critical to the success of a design competition.

					World Exhibition Tower, Paris	Tribune Tower, Chicago	Sydney Opera House, Australia	Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris	World Trade Center, New York
Acropolis, Rome	Il Duomo, Florence	Spanish Steps, Rome	White House, United States	Paris Opera House, France					
448 BC	1418	1717	1792	1860	1889	1992	1955	1971	2002

Design competitions have been used for centuries as a method to select the best design or designer for a project. Intentional phasing and structuring of design competitions can limit risks to community participants, owners, and designers. Several common phasing and structuring models are identified below, along with recommended structuring based on desired outcomes.

PHASING	Single-Phase	Proposals are prepared based on competition requirements during a single design phase, with all entries due on a specific date. Winning proposals are selected by a jury from all submissions. Typically, only winning entries receive compensation. Single-phase competitions are common and may work for **small projects**; however, they require significant effort from designers with little chance of pay, which may diminish the quality of submissions.
	Two-Phase (or multi-phase variations)	Competitors submit project proposals or portfolios during Phase I, with a limited list of submission requirements. A jury identifies a short list of finalists to proceed to Phase II, with additional design requirements. Phase II finalists may receive a stipend, incentivizing higher-quality work . A jury will then select a winning proposal from Phase II submissions, which may be awarded additional prize money or a work contract. Two-phase competitions reduce required effort from designers during the uncompensated Phase I, increase the chance of reward for finalists, and are suitable for both **large and small projects**; however, they require additional effort and funds from organizers.

STRUCTURE	Open vs. Closed	Open competitions allow anybody from anywhere to participate and can generate diverse and unique ideas. Closed competitions limit contestants based on qualifications, geography, or direct invitation. Closed competitions are well-suited for **projects that require specialized expertise or geographic familiarity**.
	Project Based vs. General Idea Based	Project-based competitions focus on a specific site or product, whereas Idea-based competitions generate innovative and replicable solutions not related to a specific site. **Project-based competitions should only be undertaken when the owner/developer has full site control and funding** to proceed with the project. Project-based competitions where the owner lacks site control or funding are rarely built and may negatively impact professional and community relations; as such, idea-based competitions are better suited for these scenarios.
	Anonymous vs. Known Contestants	Anonymity supports greater objectivity during jury evaluations. **Anonymity is encouraged** during initial phases.
	Student Competitions	Competitions are perhaps most successful when implemented at a student level: they help students expand their portfolio and public exposure, and tease out **incredibly creative solutions to challenging problems**.

The design brief is the primary tool for communicating competition goals & judging criteria to potential contestants and should include detailed information about site or theoretical context.

A well-written design brief provides an overview of the competition and its desired outcomes, design and programming requirements, site or theoretical context, judging criteria, competition timeline, submission requirements, awards structure, legalese, and links to supplemental materials. The brief can be prepared as a downloadable or published document, as information on a web page, or both. Including a downloadable document is recommended, as it provides a fixed reference for contestants.

"WHY" | COMPETITION OVERVIEW & OUTCOMES

The overview identifies the primary impetus, or "why," for conducting the competition, and may include rationale for selecting the competition format as the tool for soliciting design ideas. Desired outcomes should be identified and a brief overview of awards, competition phasing, and competition structure provided. This section may also include an official announcement from the competition sponsors and other general information.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION | DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

The project description lays out a specific design problem to be solved by the contestants and will indicate anticipated occupants, uses and typologies. Design requirements are identified, which may include sizes and relationships of programmed spaces, performance standards, budget constraints, and land use requirements where applicable.

SITE DESCRIPTION | THEORETICAL CONTEXT

A detailed description of site and/or theoretical context will directly impact the ability of contestants to fully address the design problem, as contestants may not be personally familiar with the site. Site access, topography, geology, environment, transportation connections, history, impacted communities, and surrounding context should be identified.

JUDGING CRITERIA | TIMELINE | SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS & AWARDS

Judging criteria should directly relate to the competition's desired outcomes. A weighted scoring rubric will convey judging priorities and provides a basis for later jury deliberations. The competition timeline should include all applicable dates and deadlines (registration, Q&A, and submission deadlines; and dates for jury convenings and winner announcements). Submission requirements should specify required materials (boards, project books, models), format (digital / print), submission location (online / physical address) and minimum team qualifications, if any.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Basic legal requirements help protect both competition organizers and participants, and should be included in all design briefs. Legal language will establish standards for liability, intellectual property rights (i.e. who will retain the copyright of the design proposals), contestant obligations, conflicts of interest, and post-competition processes.
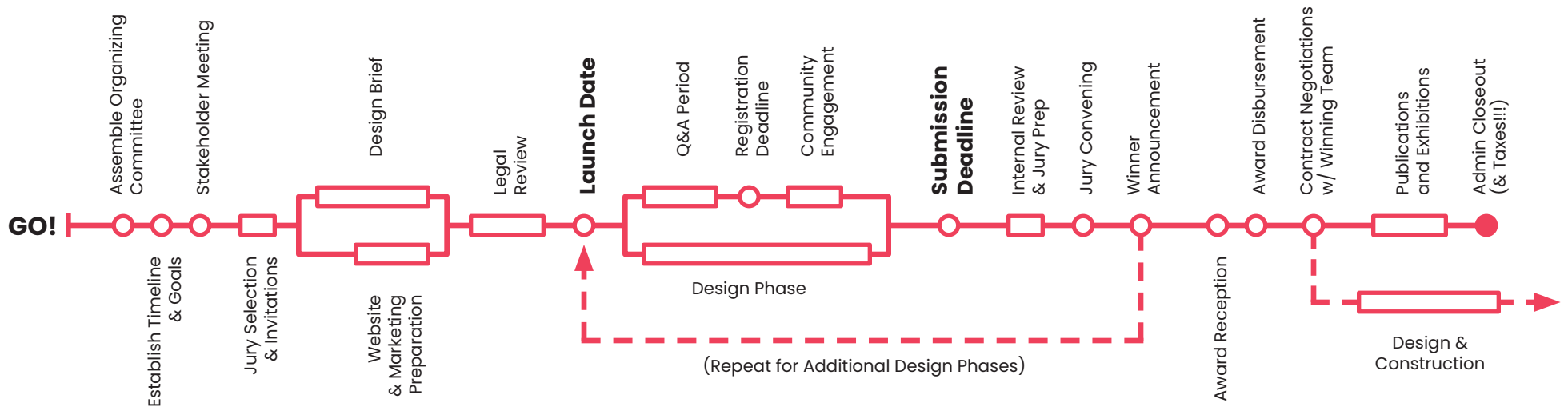
SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Additional supplemental materials should be referenced in the design brief, including links to site plans and surveys, site images, aerial maps, zoning, etc. Community goals and concerns may also be included, if community input was gathered prior to releasing the design brief.

Careful management and intentional marketing will attract the right designers to your project and will help determine the quality of competition outcomes.

The timeline diagram includes the following labeled milestones:

GO!

- Assemble Organizing Committee
- Establish Timeline & Goals
- Stakeholder Meeting
- Jury Selection & Invitations
- Design Brief
- Website & Marketing Preparation
- Legal Review
- **Launch Date**
- Q&A Period
- Registration Deadline
- Community Engagement
- Design Phase
- (Repeat for Additional Design Phases)
- **Submission Deadline**
- Internal Review & Jury Prep
- Jury Convening
- Winner Announcement
- Award Reception
- Award Disbursement
- Contract Negotiations w/ Winning Team
- Design & Construction
- Publications and Exhibitions
- Admin Closeout (& Taxes!!!)

MANAGEMENT	Timing	Design competition duration, from inception to completion, can be as little as a few months or may span multiple years. Identifying each step of the competition (and anticipated durations), coupled with developing a "critical path" schedule early in the process, will help ensure required timelines are met. The time required to organize a larger competition may merit a full-time project manager and/or additional paid staff.
	Other Costs & Resources	In addition to project management expenses and competition prize money, organizers should identify other costs and resources necessary for a successful competition. These may include: advertising and legal fees, public relations expenses, jury travel and per diems, printing fees, facility rental for events or exhibitions, and catering.
MARKETING	Branding	Unique branding will help the competition have greater visibility. Selecting a unique but easy-to-remember name improves internet searchability. Identify available internet domain names prior to finalizing branding.
	Media Outreach & Public Relations	Competitions increase public awareness of a project. Press releases at the announcement and conclusion of the competition will provide concise messaging. Magazines, blogs, and other media outlets may provide news coverage if there is sufficient public interest; however, media coverage shouldn't be relied on for marketing.
	Targeted Advertising	Targeted advertising and direct invitations are the best way to attract potential participants. Websites such as archdaily.com and designboom.com provide competition boards and inexpensive advertising. Contact individual AIA chapters to help notify local design professionals and / or schools of architecture to notify students.

Where appropriate, competition organizers should engage individuals and organizations potentially impacted by the project early in the planning process.

Residents, neighbors, and other "end users" live daily with the impacts of new developments and will continue to do so, long after the development team has moved on to the next project.

Involving community members early and regularly throughout the competition process will help ensure that design proposals meet underlying community needs, will foster a sense of ownership among residents, and will increase mutual trust between the community and developers.

WHEN? | Community Engagement

In some communities, residents are regularly invited to participate in planning processes; however, when community-led ideas are not implemented, residents may feel ignored, experience "planning burnout," or lose trust in city officials. Soliciting community participation in design competitions can be problematic, as competitions may produce unbuildable or financially-unfeasible projects. Competition organizers may therefore consider the following:

- **Engage Community** as early as practicable when the development team has full site control, has clearly-identified priorities and architectural programs, and has secured full financing for the proposed project.

- **Consider an Ideas Competition** that is not site specific and that doesn't necessitate community engagement if full site control or financing have not yet been secured.
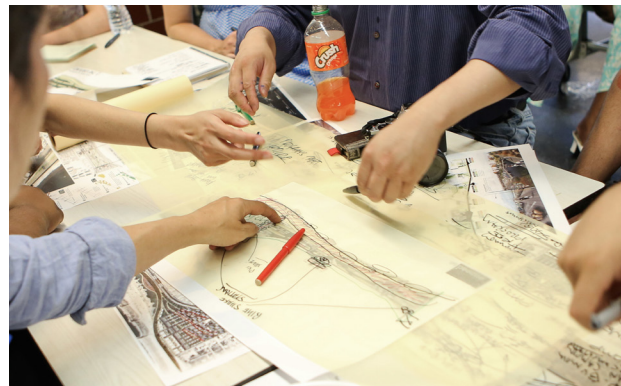

Photo Credit | **DANIELLA ZALCMAN**

HOW? | Community Engagement

Create a plan for ways to engage community members throughout the competition, such as:

Pre-Competition

- Invite community leaders to participate in developing desired competition outcomes.

- Identify specific focus areas of the project to discuss with community members (e.g. access to transportation, desired amenities, etc.) then host community meetings to solicit feedback specific to those areas. Small breakout groups can help all community members have opportunities to express their interests.

Design Jury

- Include community members on the design jury; they will be most familiar with specific site circumstances and needs.

Mid-Competition

- Multi-phase competitions can facilitate opportunities for finalists to present designs to and solicit feedback from community members.

- While meeting with finalists, community members can brainstorm ideas for possible uses on the site. The finalists can in turn help graphically illustrate those ideas.

Post-Competition

- Incorporate community-led proposals in competition exhibitions and documentation.

- Regularly involve community leaders in making decisions throughout design development.

- Inform community members of schedule.

ATLANTA, GA

domestiCITY A Competition for an Affordable Atlanta
Domesticity Design Competition URL: http://domesticity.org

COMPETITION CONTEXT

The domestiCITY Design Competition for an Affordable Atlanta aimed to establish a replicable design precedent for affordable housing development that can be implemented along low-density commercial corridors in already-developed urban areas. Participants showcased their concepts by developing design solutions specific to the redevelopment of Santa Fe Villas (an existing 4-acre, 147-unit SRO housing development for formerly homeless individuals) and the adjacent Town & Country Hotel Courts site to accommodate a mix of incomes and uses.
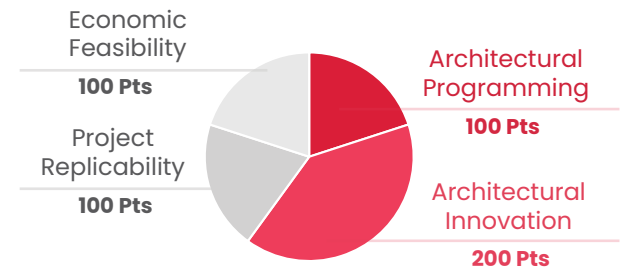
COMPETITION TIMELINE

Concept Launch	Community Meeting	Develop Criteria & Design Brief	Competition Announcement	Question Submissions	Registration Deadline	Phase I Submission Deadline	Jury Convening	Phase I Winners Announced	Phase II Final Submission	Competition Exhibition
MAY 2017	JUN 2017	MAY AUG 2017	AUG 2017	NOV 2017	NOV 2017	DEC 2017	JAN 2018	JAN 2018	FEB 2018	MAR APR 2018

COMPETITION COST SCHEDULE (as percent of total budget):

Competition Prize Money	30-50%

PHASE I	PHASE II
$20,000 AWARD PER FINALIST (x4) TOTAL $80,000	$50,000 AWARD PER FINALIST (x2) TOTAL $100,000

Competition Project Management Team	30-40%
Website Development, Marketing, & Legal Fees	6-10%
Jury Stipends, Travel, & Technical Review	3-7%
Community Engagement	2-5%
Competition Exhibition	2-5%

GOALS & JUDGING CRITERIA

Economic Feasibility **100 Pts**

Project Replicability **100 Pts**

Architectural Programming **100 Pts**

Architectural Innovation **200 Pts**

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOCUS AREAS
Community Relationships
Access to Transportation
Supportive Services
Architecture / Physical Infrastructure

STAKEHOLDERS
Santa Fe Villa Owners & Residents
Local Neighborhoods

SPONSORS & ORGANIZING COMMITTEE
City of Atlanta Department of City Planning
Enterprise Community Partners
Atlanta City Studio
ASSIST Inc. Community Design Center

Everyone Wants a Home of Their Own | **UTILE** | Boston, MA

09   COMPETITION **PRECEDENT**

NEW YORK, NY
FAR ROC [for a Resilient Rockaway]
FAR ROC Design Competition URL: http://farroc.com *(inactive)*

COMPETITION CONTEXT

Organized in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, FAR ROC was a two-phase design ideas competition that explored best practices and innovative strategies for the planning, design, and construction of resilient and sustainable developments in waterfront areas. The competition specifically focused on the development of a master plan for Arverne East, an 80+ acre site located in a FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area "Zone A" section of the Rockaways that experienced significant storm surge inundation during the storm. FAR ROC also addressed issues of land development in low-income communities.
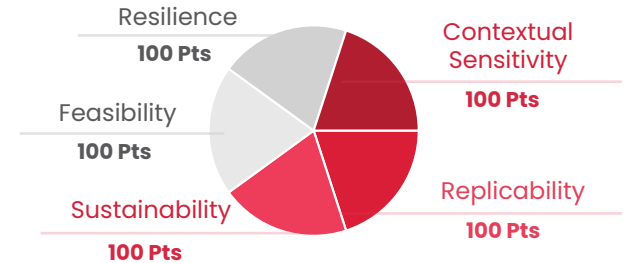
COMPETITION TIMELINE

Hurricane Sandy	Competition Conception	Community Engagement	Develop Criteria & Design Brief	Competition Announcement	Phase I Submission Deadline	Jury Convening	Finalists Announced	Community Input (SURDNA grant)	Phase II Final Submission	Phase II Jury Convening	Competition Exhibition
OCT 2012	DEC 2012	MAR 2013	MAR APR 2013	APR 2013	JUN 2013	JUN 2013	JUL 2013	AUG 2013	OCT 2013	OCT 2013	NOV 2013

COMPETITION COST SCHEDULE (as percent of total budget):

Competition Prize Money	43%

PHASE I	PHASE II	AWARD
MINIMAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS	$30,000 STIPEND/FINALIST (x4) TOTAL $120,000	$30,000 PRIZE (x1) TOTAL $30,000

Competition Project Management Team	34%
Website Development, Marketing, & Legal Fees	10%
Jury Stipends, Travel, & Technical Review	3%
Competition Exhibition & Community Engagement	23%
SURDNA Grant for Additional Community Engagement	7%

GOALS & JUDGING CRITERIA

Resilience
100 Pts

Contextual Sensitivity
100 Pts

Feasibility
100 Pts

Replicability
100 Pts

Sustainability
100 Pts

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOCUS AREAS

Architectural Programming
Infrastructure & Transit
Resilience & Sustainability
Replicability
Built Environment

SPONSORS & ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

NYC Housing Preservation & Development
L+M Development Partners
The Bluestone Group
Triangle Equities
Enterprise Community Partners
American Institute of Architects - NY Chapter

Small Means Great Ends | **WHITE ARKITEKTER** | Stockholm

ENTERPRISE COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Author:
Jason Wheeler, AIA
ASSIST Community
Design Center

In 2013, Jason Wheeler managed the FAR ROC Design Competition while completing a Rose Fellowship with Enterprise Community Partners. In partnership with NYC HPD and AIA NY, FAR ROC represented one component of Enterprise's multi-faceted response to the disproportionate impacts of Hurricane Sandy & global climate change on vulnerable populations.

In his current capacity as director of ASSIST Community Design Center , Jason partnered with Enterprise in managing the 2018 domestiCITY design competition. domestiCITY focused on innovations in affordable housing development for the City of Atlanta.

Editor:
Carrie Niemy
Enterprise Community
Partners

Image:
domestiCITY Competition Entry
"GARDEN" | Sadyr Khabukhayev