

urbanvoids

GROUNDS FOR CHANGE
AN INTERNATIONAL DESIGN IDEAS COMPETITION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VAN ALLEN INSTITUTE AND CITY PARKS ASSOCIATION OF PHILADELPHIA ANNOUNCE THE GRAND WINNER OF THE URBAN VOIDS: GROUNDS FOR CHANGE, INTERNATIONAL DESIGN IDEAS COMPETITION FOR PHILADELPHIA'S VACANT LAND.

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION ATTRACTED 220 ENTRIES FROM 25 COUNTRIES
WINNING TEAM HAILS FROM PHILADELPHIA.



The Executive Director of the City Parks Association, Deenah Loeb, and Van Alen Institute Chair Sherida E. Paulsen today announced the grand winner of Urban Voids, an international design ideas competition sponsored by the City Parks Association of Philadelphia. The \$10,000.00 prizewinner was chosen from five finalists selected in January.

Waterwork, the winning project, was designed by a Philadelphia team of four: Juliet Geldi, Gavin Riggall, and Charles Loomis Chariss McAfee Architects. The team proposes a strategy to



reclaim vacant sites throughout Philadelphia by recreating them as public green filters by capturing and redirecting water flow.

This design strategy offers ecologically sound recreational and infiltration solutions for the use of naturally cleaned storm-water run-off. Waterwork proposes physical solutions at both a micro-scale and a macro scale. Waterwork incorporates a system to capture water on all the houses in a neighborhood and also proposes using existing city transit systems; railways and roadbeds, as sites for new underground gravel cisterns and byways. This would create and activate new urban streams, community spray parks and new biking and pedestrian trails. Radical in the simplicity of its premise, Waterwork illustrates groundbreaking and poetic ideas that add social and economic value to urban watershed. Resonant of Philadelphia's industrial water-based past, Waterwork reinvents the precious symbiotic relationship water and cities once had.

"The Urban Voids competition has asked an ecological question, a sociological question, an economic question and a built-environment and governance question," said Carl Anthony, Program Director, Sustainable Metropolitan Communities Initiative at the Ford Foundation and a judge. "The winning project, Waterwork deals with all these issues; with social reality, a sense of the ecological story of water, a sense of the built environment, infrastructure and so forth. The beauty of Waterwork is that it beautifully recaptures the value of the hydrological cycle that in the 19th century drove the industrialization of our cities, including Philadelphia. This project has potential application in a lot of places that would actually move an agenda."

Urban Voids was launched in the spring of 2005, as the second phase of Philadelphia LAND visions. LANDVision first phase began with a series of community education and 'visioning' sessions that looked at natural land and water resources at the regional scale as well as neighborhood structure at a local scale. At that time community participants learned from experts about the city's ecological foundation - its hydrology and geology, and studied maps of Philadelphia's extensive vacant lands, natural resources, and built environment. Out of these sessions grew the brief for Urban Voids competition which asked the question, "How can a city respond to the crisis of vacancy?" The competition, which was funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, challenged registrants to present compelling ideas that would address vacancy as an opportunity, creating long-term solutions for the 40,000 vacant properties in Philadelphia. The competition was launched in September 2005 and attracted over 220 entries from 25 countries including Canada, Chile, Finland, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Poland, Romania, United Kingdom, and Uruguay.

In January 2006 five finalists were selected and then awarded \$5,000.00 to develop their ideas further. Each team was carefully matched with an existing site. Philadelphia City Parks Association and the Van Alen Institute worked closely with a selected group of city agencies to identify real public vacancy, and real community groups, sites that had identifiable relationships to natural resources and a relationship, or the presence of rivers.

This May, all five teams (including a four-member team of architects, Ecosistema Urbano, who had traveled from Madrid) made fascinating presentations contributing a treasure trove of new



ideas that address the myriad complexities and issues that Philadelphia's vast acreage of vacancies pose.

"It is so exciting that each of our five finalists brought forth thoughtful, modern strategies that have great potential implications for the city of Philadelphia." says Deenah Loeb, the Executive Director of the City Parks Association of Philadelphia and a judge. "As we had hoped from the outset of the Urban Voids competition, the work of our grand winner and the four finalists represent terrific examples of the power ecological thinking can have on contemporary urban design."

Eva Gladstein Director of the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative, City of Philadelphia and a judge said, "Since its inception in 2001, Mayor Street's Neighborhood Transformation Initiative has sought to transform vacant land from a liability into a community asset. We are thrilled that this competition has generated such creative responses, and look forward to helping turn these ideas into achievable projects."

A distinguished panel of 10 jurors from across the United States, representing a diverse cross section of disciplines and interests served as judges for the competition.

Carl Anthony
Program Officer and Director
Sustainable Metropolitan Communities
Initiative
Ford Foundation

Deenah Loeb
Executive Director
City Parks Association (CPA) of
Philadelphia

Diana Balmori
Landscape Architect Founding
Principal, Balmori Associates

Rick Lowe
Director
Project Row Houses

Julie Bargmann
Landscape Architect
Principal, D.I.R.T. Studio

Christopher Sharples
Co-founder and Principal
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J. Blaine Bonham, Jr.
Executive Director
The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

Brigitte Shim
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Eva Gladstein
Director
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City of Philadelphia

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Vice President
Pennsylvania Environmental Council

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Van Alen Institute and City Parks Association's project partners include the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, and The Reinvestment Fund. Additional funding has been provided by the City of Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development, the Claneil Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Samuel S. Fels Fund.

About City Parks Association

City Parks Association has stimulated visionary thinking about natural resources and open space in the urban community. Founded in 1888, City Parks' programs foster ongoing dialogue and collaborative action among people committed to the stewardship of our city's natural resources. For more information please visit www.cityparksphila.org

About Van Alen Institute: Projects in Public Architecture

Van Alen Institute is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving design in the public realm through a program of exhibitions, competitions, publications, lectures and forums. The Institute is located at 30 W 22 St, NY, NY 10010. For information about contributions and supporting Institute programs please visit www.vanalen.org or contact 212 924 7000 x 10.

To view finalists, honorable mentions and all other entrants to this competition please visit www.vanalen.org



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