

2026 Mayor's Urban Design Awards Terms of Reference

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1. Overview

The Mayor's Urban Design Awards (MUDA) celebrate excellence in urban design, architecture, landscape architecture, planning and public art in Calgary. Established in 2005, the awards aim to highlight innovative, inclusive and high-quality urban design that shapes Calgary into a livable, attractive, memorable and functional city.

The awards program is offered in partnership with the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC). Winners in many of the award categories at the municipal level are eligible, and invited to participate in, the National Urban Design Awards, hosted by the RAIC.

2. Award Categories

Civic Design Projects

This category recognizes a civic improvement project such as a park, a public space, civil engineering or infrastructure project. The design will reinforce the value of urban design through the creation of an innovative public realm which addresses inclusivity, sustainability, and engagement with community and context.

Eligibility

A construction project completed or installed after August 17, 2021, within Calgary.

Submissions must be led by a registered design professional (architect, engineer, planner or landscape architect).

Award criteria

- Positive contribution to the public realm
- Design excellence
- Demonstration of the value of urban design and its ability to creatively address equity, inclusivity, accessibility and climate resilience, while engaging with its context

Winners in this award category will be invited to participate in the RAIC National Urban Design Awards program.

Community Initiatives

This category is for any built project or community improvement program, however modest, initiated and implemented by a community-based organization or partnership that enhances the public realm. Streetscaping, public art, commemorative or interpretive installations, and environmental initiatives are examples of this category.

Eligibility

The improvement must have been completed after August 17, 2021, within Calgary.

Award criteria

- Wide community involvement: Demonstration of how the community was involved and supported the improvements
- Positive contribution to the public realm
- Innovation and uniqueness of the built project
- Design rationale should be clearly described and well-illustrated
- Reflects neighbourhood culture and resident diversity

Winners in this award category will be invited to participate in the RAIC National Urban Design Awards program.

Conceptual or Theoretical Projects

This category is for a plan or a study of a site or area within Calgary that provides a strategy for urban transformation. It is intended for **unbuilt work** and is not dependent on implementation status. Visionary urban design studies, master plans, development proposals, redevelopment strategies and community plans of high ambition and inspirational value may be submitted.

Eligibility

The plan, study or proposal must have been completed after August 17, 2021, within Calgary.

Award criteria

- Employs a holistic, systemic approach to city-building
- Demonstrates critical thinking and strategic foresight to address current and future challenges

- Reflects the city that Calgary aspires to be - inclusive, diverse, equitable, adaptable and resilient
- Clearly describes and illustrates design concepts

Housing Innovation

This category is for residential design projects, constructed or approved, of any size or scale, which demonstrate innovation in the areas of neighbourhood intensification, accessibility, affordability, “aging in place”, and promoting wellness through healthy living environments. Particularly, the award focuses on designs which contribute to providing creative solutions to the problem of housing affordability, providing improved livability for seniors, and providing simple, viable housing design options for those citizens facing mobility challenges.

Eligibility

A building or complex of buildings approved or completed construction after August 17, 2021, within Calgary.

Award criteria

- Exhibits innovations which address one or more of the challenging design issues listed above
- Illustrates an awareness of and response to existing surrounding context
- Contributes to the public realm in a positive way
- Strives to achieve a healthy and high quality of life for its occupants through design innovation
- Supports social outcomes and/or community well-being through partnerships or collaboration
- Design rationale should be clearly described and well-illustrated

Winners in this award category may be eligible to participate in the RAIC National Urban Design Awards program.

Urban Architecture

This category recognizes **a building or group of buildings** that contribute to, and support, an urban design initiative. The submission may be for an individual building or group of buildings, of high architectural standard, which achieve urban design excellence through

their unique relationship with their immediate surroundings because of siting, massing, and pedestrian amenities. The building(s) will also contribute to defining a special relationship with the neighbouring urban fabric. Interior spaces can be included if they have a strong relationship to/influence on the public realm and meet the criteria.

Eligibility

A new building, a renovated building, or complex of buildings completed after August 17, 2021, within Calgary. **Submissions must be led by a Registered Architect.**

Award criteria

- Positive contribution to the public realm
- Architectural excellence
- Demonstration of the value of urban design through their unique relationship with/influence on/creation of public realm
- Design rationale should be clearly described and well-illustrated

Winners in this award category will be invited to participate in the RAIC National Urban Design Awards program.

Urban Design Plans

This category recognizes a plan or a study of an area within Calgary that provides a development or redevelopment strategy for urban transformation. It is intended for work that has some **certainty of implementation** within a mid-term to long-term timeframe. Urban Design studies, master plans, redevelopment strategies, and community plans of high inspirational value with the potential for significant impact on the city's sustainability or development may be submitted.

Eligibility

The plan or study must have been completed after August 17, 2021, within Calgary.

Award criteria

- Addresses a wide range of factors affecting development
- Highlights new ideas and/or approaches to interventions in the city
- Addresses Calgarians' shared priorities and vision around inclusivity, diversity, equity, climate, and resilience
- Design rationale should be clearly described and well-illustrated.

Winners in this award category will be invited to participate in the RAIC National Urban Design Awards program.

Urban Fragments

Urban fragments are single or multiple **small-scale pieces** of a building or landscape that contribute significantly to the quality of the public realm. This category includes elements such as street furniture, lighting elements, interpretation media, memorials, public art, or other forms of intervention that contribute to the beautification, sustainability, enjoyment, and/or appreciation of the urban environment. Projects can be of a temporary (but not ephemeral) or permanent nature.

Eligibility

Completed or installed after August 17, 2021, within Calgary.

Award criteria

- Positive contribution to the public realm
- Design excellence
- Innovation and uniqueness of the element
- Design rationale should be clearly described and well-illustrated

Winners in this award category will be invited to participate in the RAIC National Urban Design Awards program.

Student Projects

Submissions may be made directly from individual students or groups of students enrolled in architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, planning or related programs. Students and student groups may also be nominated by their schools to submit. Submissions must be the result of a studio project or a final project or thesis.

Eligibility

This category is open to students enrolled in architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, planning or related programs, at the undergraduate or graduate level, after August 17, 2024.

Awards will be given for student work completed at both the undergraduate and graduate level; however, *only students at the graduate level will be invited to participate in the RAIC National Urban Design Awards program.*

Projects must investigate sites or be implementable on sites within Calgary.

Award criteria

- **Comprehensiveness:** Addressing a wide range of factors affecting development and providing solutions to the stated problem
- Conceptual clarity and urban design excellence, as demonstrated in the illustrations showing physical improvements
- Design rationale should be clearly described and well-illustrated

Climate Resilience

The Jury may also give special commendation to those projects which embody excellence in climate resilience. These projects should exemplify both technical innovation and creative, thoughtful design which advances our climate goals while enriching the human experience and creating great places.

Confluence Award

Lastly, the jury may select up to two projects, from any category, to receive a Confluence Award. Awards in this category will be given to a public space, building, or group of buildings that embody urban design excellence and creativity through awareness of the Calgary context, particularly its history and culture. Award winners will embody visionary city-building and aspire to be culturally and historically reflective and aesthetically significant.

3. Submission Requirements

General

- Submissions should clearly present the creative solutions to help the jury make informed decisions related to each of the jury evaluation criteria.
- Submissions must be anonymous. Do not put the firm name or any other identifier on any documents in the submission.
- Make sure images do not contain any identifiable private individuals.
- No video clips will be accepted.
- You can submit your project in any or all the categories it qualifies for. All entries will require a separate entry form and fee together with and associated visual and written materials.

- Projects may be submitted multiple times over various years if they have not been awarded previously and are six years or less from conception. If a project has received an award in a conceptual category then a resubmission may be made for the built work.
- Submissions will be accepted from students enrolled in architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, planning or related programs in the last two years, as per eligibility.
- There is a \$150 submission fee per entry. Student entries are free.
- Submissions will be accepted until August 17, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. (local time).

Written materials- Each item must be saved as a single PDF file, in minimum 11-point font:

1) Eligibility Statement

- A brief statement summarizing the applicability of the project to the award category and highlighting how the project responds to the defined award criteria
- Maximum 250 words

2) Project Description

- A summary which includes the project site and context, intent, design concept and descriptions of features which respond directly to the award criteria
- Describe how the design meets the expectations of the Urban Design Elements described in *Calgary's Guide to Urban Design Review*
- Maximum 500 words
- This summary may be used by the City to prepare promotional material exclusively for the MUDA program

Visual Materials – Should fully explain the project, and include:

1) One Digital Presentation Board – PDF image, size A1

Each team is to determine what information is needed to communicate their project most effectively. Suggested visual materials to be included on the board:

- Clear and well annotated concept and/or masterplans
- Site plans and/or photo imagery to communicate the project location and context
- Annotated landscape / site plans
- Floor plans and/or building sections which best convey the urban design impacts

- Project elevations and perspective renderings which fully describe the project and clearly show the relationship to the public realm
- Accurate portrayals of materiality and details
- Photographs of completed projects
- Written annotations to describe the design features or components
- Each board must be saved as a single PDF of high resolution (150 dpi or above)

2) Design Drawings – Up to three sheets, PDF

- All plans, maps, sections and elevations must have a scale applicable to that drawing
- Sheets should include a maximum of four drawings chosen to illustrate significant design elements in greater detail than the presentation board format allows
- These materials to be used for adjudication only, not for exhibition or promotion

3) Photographs or Renderings – Up to six individual images

- Minimum image size 1000px x 1000px; Maximum image size 2500px x 2500px
- Images must be submitted in either JPEG, TIFF, GIF, PNG, or PDF format. No video-clips will be accepted
- Images are intended for the purpose of online viewing only (print resolution is not needed)

Document Formats

- Make sure all individual files are in a folder with the following naming format for upload:
 - Photographs should be submitted using the following naming format:
 - Photo_description-photographer_credit.jpg
 - All other files should be submitted using the following naming format:
 - Award_Category-Material_Category-Material_Number-Item_number.pdf
- Maximum file size: 100 MB

4. JURY



David Fortin PhD, OAA, RAIC

Born in Calgary and raised in Alberta and Saskatchewan, David Fortin is a Professor in the School of Architecture at the University of Waterloo and a registered architect in the provinces of Ontario, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and Alberta. He completed his doctoral studies at the University of Edinburgh in 2009 and has since taught undergraduate and graduate courses in architectural design, history and theory, in the UK, USA, and Canada. David is of Red River Métis heritage and a citizen of the Manitoba Métis Federation, as well as a founding member of the RAIC Indigenous Task Force. His research and practice focus on questions surrounding speculative futures, Métis architecture and design, critical relationalism, and the role of design in reconciliation.



Joseph Fry BCLSA, FCSLA

Joseph Fry is the founding principal of Hapa Collaborative and a contemporary voice for landscape architecture and urban design in Vancouver. With over 32 years of experience, Joe has dedicated himself to deepening the discussion around the economic, societal and environmental values of civic placemaking. He has advocated for these ideals as a member of the Vancouver Advisory Urban Design Panel, the chair of the Richmond Urban Design Panel, a director of the BCSLA, and as an adjunct professor and advisory board member for UBC's School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture. Joe is a coach, a

parent, a volunteer and a committed participant in our city's discussion about design and the public realm.

Born and raised in northern Ontario, Joseph graduated with a BLA from the University of Guelph in 1994 and immediately settled on the west coast, working in Vancouver and Seattle. In 2009, Joe established Hapa Collaborative, which has flourished as one of Western Canada's leading landscape architecture practices. Their award-winning projects include Sp'awk'us Feather Park in Squamish, the Museum of Anthropology at UBC, and the Foot of Lonsdale Plaza in North Vancouver.



John Lewis FCIP

John Lewis is President & Founder of Intelligent Futures and a Fellow of the Canadian Institute of Planners. Intelligent Futures is a Certified B Corporation recognized nationally for innovative practice and the recipient of more than 25 awards from provincial, national, and international organizations.

John believes planning is uniquely positioned among the professions: interdisciplinary by nature, focused on balancing the needs of the present and the future, and built for working across intersecting systems. His work spans communities across Canada and addresses housing, climate adaptation, economic development, arts and culture, agriculture, community well-being, and organizational design, with a consistent focus on positive, lasting impact. A dedicated educator, mentor, and public voice, John continues to advance the common good through teaching, global facilitation, community initiatives, and podcasting.



Claire Weisz FAIA, OAA, Hon. FRAIC, Hon. ASLA, NCARB

Claire Weisz, FAIA, Hon. FRAIC, Hon. FASLA, is Founding Principal of WXY architecture + urban design, a New York and Toronto-based practice recognized for community-centered work at the intersection of architecture, planning, infrastructure, and the public realm. Raised in Edmonton and educated at the University of Toronto and Yale, Weisz brings a long-standing commitment to cities as shared civic environments, shaped through design, policy, ecology, and public engagement. Her work includes the redesign of Astor Place in Manhattan, the reconstruction of the Rockaway Boardwalk following Superstorm Sandy, and the Glass City Riverwalk in Toledo. She is also a co-founder of The Design Trust for Public Space and a recipient of the AIA New York Medal of Honor and Architectural Record's Women in Architecture Award.



Betsy Williamson OAA, FRAIC

Betsy Williamson is a principal in the architectural design studio Williamson Williamson Inc. She holds a Master of Architecture from Harvard University and is a Fellow of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada. In 2024, she was awarded the King Charles III Coronation Medal for her contributions to architecture in Canada.

Williamson's work has been published widely and has received numerous awards over the years, including a Governor General's Medal in Architecture. Notable practice-based awards include the Ronald J. Thom Award for Early Design Achievement and the Professional Prix de Rome from the Canada Council of the Arts, the Emerging Architectural Practice Award from the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, and the Young Architects Prize and the Emerging Voices Award from the Architecture League of New York.

As vice-chair of the Waterfront Toronto Design Review Panel, Betsy actively contributes to a culture of quality at an urban scale by signaling that high quality design is a critical consideration for the development of Toronto's waterfront and the city. She is also an advocate for equality in the profession. She co-founded BEAT, Building Equality in Architecture Toronto. For the last decade, BEAT has been dedicated to the promotion of equality by providing mentorship, networking, and leadership opportunities for architects and students in Toronto and across Canada.