Wanted: 
Real Solutions

VIBRANT COMMUNITIES 
Design Competition

Urban Systems, along with the City of Spruce Grove, the Town of Stony Plain, the Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta (Treaty 8), and the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues (EFCL) are sponsoring a design competition aimed at engaging post-secondary students within the capital region by challenging them to solve real-world problems faced by local communities. The community issues may include engineering, planning, urban design, landscape architecture, economic, community, and/or social challenges. Three challenging projects have been identified for student teams to tackle. Over $3,000 in prize money is to be awarded for each project, and students will have the opportunity to work closely with industry professionals from the private and public sectors as well as people working directly with these community challenges.
Competition Process

In order to give student teams an authentic experience, the process of this design competition is modeled on the process that organizations often follow to award project work to consultants.

Step 1 – Expression of Interest

- Student teams are invited to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) for the project they are interested in tackling. Teams are welcome to submit on one, two, or all of the three projects, though they must submit separate EOIs for each project they wish to pursue.
- The EOI submission should include descriptions of the team (including what school and program of study each team member is registered in), project understanding, and the proposed project methodology to be followed.
- Digital submissions in PDF format are preferred and should be no more than 3 pages in length (single-sided, 8 ½” x 11” size pages).
- Submission of the EOI is due January 26, 2015, via email to vcdc@urbansystems.ca
- From the EOI submissions each client (or client group), along with Urban Systems, will select a shortlist of student teams to complete the design competition. Selection will be based on demonstration of an understanding of project objectives and the creativity and innovation in the team’s approach. Shortlisted entries will be announced February 2, 2015.

Step 2 – Project Work Stage

- An Urban Systems employee will be available to mentor and provide guidance to each student team as they complete their project.
- Each student team will have the opportunity to meet with their client and Urban Systems to discuss their progress and any questions they may have about the project.

Step 3 – Project Deliverables and Presentation

- Project deliverables include a written report, a presentation to the judging panel, and a separate presentation to the public at the project gala.
- The written report is due March 23, 2015 and presentations to the judging panel will be held March 27, 2015. The project gala will be held the evening of April 9, 2015, location to be determined.
- The winning projects will be decided by the judging panel and will be announced at the project gala after the public presentations. $3000 will be awarded for each project to each first place team and $500 will be awarded for each project for each first-runner-up.
- The judging panel may be made up of representatives from the City of Spruce Grove, the Town of Stony Plain, Treaty 8, the EFCL, Urban Systems, and industry association representatives.

Winning teams from last year
1. Clients: City of Spruce Grove & Town of Stony Plain  
Project: Transforming Inter-municipal Planning Challenges into Opportunities

**Background:**
Municipalities typically create long range, community development plans that focus solely on the opportunities and challenges that exist within their own boundary. While it is understood that municipalities can only exert their influence on initiatives within their boundary, it must be acknowledged that planning in one community will generate impacts on its neighbour.

Because Spruce Grove and Stony Plain share a boundary, this challenge is a part of their long-term planning considerations along their western and eastern boundaries, respectively. While traditional tools exist, such as Inter-Municipal Development Plans, Joint Servicing Agreements, etc., the communities are looking for new and innovative thinking around the following considerations:

- Transition of land uses across municipal boundaries;
- Interconnectivity for all modes of transportation;
- Continuity of design standards;
- Multi-jurisdictional public engagement opportunities; and
- Joint governance and implementation along common boundaries.

**Your Challenge:**
1. Be innovative and spark our imagination.
2. Consider the unique development occurring and/or proposed on either side of the municipal boundaries within the context of each community’s policy and regulatory framework.
3. Explore opportunities to build a more coordinated and collaborative process to jointly realize project outcomes that reinforce mutual benefits for both municipalities.
4. Propose methods or a course of action for the two municipalities to follow moving forward. Identify opportunities and barriers to implementation, and how potential barriers could be overcome.

2. Client: Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues (EFCL)  
Project: Supporting and Sustaining a Spirited Community League

**Background:**
Community Leagues have served Edmonton neighbourhoods for nearly 100 years. Their contributions have been varied and diverse but they have perpetually sought to provide spaces and facilities where community members can come together in common purpose and strengthen the social fabric of the neighbourhood. This vision has not changed; however, the methods to achieve it are ever changing. As the City grows and new neighbourhoods form, the desire for recreational facilities and halls by new community leagues are real. This raises many questions regarding what actually creates a sustainable community such as: What kinds of facilities or programming should be considered? How can these facilities be better utilized to strengthen the financial independence of community leagues? If a Community Hall is an appropriate amenity, what is the appropriate size and features required in order to meet overarching needs? What are the typical capital costs of a community hall in the present day?

**Your Challenge:**
1. Surprise us with your creative solutions!
2. Analyze the current state of community leagues in Edmonton and other comparable municipalities. What barriers exist that prevent community leagues from both flourishing and implementing creative solutions? What successes have been realized?
4. Identify what facilities, amenities, and supports (community, municipal, etc.) that are required to maintain a sustainable community league. Taking a triple-bottom line approach (economic, social, and environmental), what is the cost of providing services and amenities?
5. Propose innovative solutions, approaches, and/or partnerships that will strengthen the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of community leagues and provide the services and amenities that community league members and neighbourhoods require.
Project: Student Housing Development for Treaty 8 Post-Secondary Students

Background:
Access to affordable housing for First Nations students is a challenge in Edmonton. It has been reported that housing affordability has contributed to First Nations students foregoing attending college or university because they can’t afford housing costs. To help solve this challenge, Treaty 8 is assessing their potential to purchase a mixed use property that could house students as well as provide additional revenue through commercial leasing through a business feasibility study. To supplement the feasibility study, we are seeking assistance from students to start conceptualizing this idea. Urban Systems is currently preparing a business feasibility study to determine whether or not this investment makes sense for Treaty 8. To supplement the feasibility study, we are seeking assistance from students to start conceptualizing this idea.

Your Challenge:
1. Create a project that is inspiring and functional.
2. Identify an existing 4-6 story mixed-use (residential and commercial/retail) building available for purchase and create a plan to renovate/redevelop the property to fit the client’s needs:
   a. The property should be able to accommodate 12,000 sqft for Treaty 8 offices, 35,000 sqft for residential apartments and 2,500 for daycare facilities, as well additional commercial space for Treaty 8 to lease.
   b. Analyze the building’s context and neighbourhood. The property should be within walking distance to amenities (transit, schools, grocery stores, etc.).
   c. The development should be attractive to students with young children.
   d. Research municipal plans to ensure the project aligns with City of Edmonton policies and standards. The building does not have to be currently used for mixed-use, however, it would preferably be zoned to accommodate mixed-use. If a rezoning is required please identify the timing and budget implications of the rezoning process.
3. Create conceptual plans and rendering and utilize precedent images as necessary to help explain your proposed project.
4. Calculate the overall project budget including the purchase cost of the property, consulting fees, and renovation construction costs.
5. Employ a triple-bottom line approach to sustainability, assess the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of the project.

Assumptions:
- Your total project budget is $10 million. This budget includes all project costs including the purchase of a property, consulting fees, and renovation construction costs.
- Typical ‘rule-of-thumb’ costs will be provided to assist in your analysis.

Competition Rules and Registration
The Vibrant Communities Design Competition is open to all students currently registered in programs of study at the University of Alberta, NAIT, and MacEwan University. All of the members that make up a team must be current students at one of those three institutions. Student teams are encouraged to be multi-disciplinary, made up of students from different areas of study, though it is not mandatory. All project materials become the property of Urban Systems and of the client whose project it is submitted for. Urban Systems, the City of Spruce Grove, the Town of Stony Plain, the Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta, and the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues may use any submitted project materials for promotional purposes related to the Vibrant Communities Design Competition.

Please email your intent to submit to vcdc@urbansystems.ca so that your team may be kept up to date on any changes or additions to the EOI submission requirements. Updates will also be posted to the project website:
www.urbansystems.ca/VCDC

Questions about the project may be sent to vcdc@urbansystems.ca up to and including February 2, 2015. Copies of all questions and answers will be sent to all who have registered their intent to submit via email.