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UCLA cityLAB announces finalists for WPA 2.0 competition

Proposals focus on water, energy, borders, green infrastructure designs

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UCLA's cityLAB has announced the finalists for "[WPA 2.0: Working Public Architecture](#)," the urban think tank's open competition seeking innovative, implementable proposals that place infrastructure at the heart of rebuilding American cities during this next era of metropolitan recovery. Finalists' projects will be featured at a November exhibition in Washington, D.C.

The six finalists — selected from nearly 200 submissions by teams from 25 U.S. states and 13 countries — represented some of the most original and workable plans for rethinking and transforming existing urban infrastructure, including proposals to use automobile emissions in tunnels for alternative-fuel production, to transform neglected city streets into neighborhood parks, to rethink U.S.–Mexico border infrastructure to address the energy crisis and other critical issues, and to creatively use water resources to help revitalize depopulated cities, undo ecological damage, and develop urban beaches and pools.

The goal of the WPA 2.0 is to refocus the national discussion about, and encourage investment in, infrastructure as part of the big picture of urban — and architectural — renewal. The competition recalls the Depression-era Works Projects Administration, which built public buildings, parks, bridges and roads across the nation as an investment in the future. The organizers hope WPA 2.0 will help lead the way to a new legacy of federally supported infrastructure hybrids across America.

Finalists were chosen by a blue-ribbon jury of world-renowned architects, landscape architects, engineers and educators. The jury, which included Pritzker Prize winner Thom Mayne, Stan Allen, Cecil Balmond, Elizabeth Diller, Walter Hood and Marilyn Jordan Taylor, evaluated proposals based on the participants' ability to explore the value of infrastructure not only as an engineering endeavor but as a robust design opportunity to strengthen communities, revitalize cities, and redirect urban and public works policy.

The announcement of the finalists was made by Dana Cuff and Roger Sherman, co-directors of cityLAB, which is housed in the UCLA Department of Architecture and Urban Design. The finalists will present their work Nov. 16 during a symposium and exhibition at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C. The finalists are:

Urban Algae: Speculation and Optimization

PORT Architects

Proposal: Use algae pontoons to capture mobile-source carbon-dioxide emissions along New York City's transportation arteries and employ them in bio-fuel production.

Coupling Infrastructures: Water Economies | Ecologies

Lateral Office | Infranet Lab

Proposal: Address America's impending water-resource crisis while creating new economic opportunities and restoring the ecological balance of sites like California's Salton Sea.

Border Wall as Infrastructure

Rael San Fratello Architects

Proposal: Physically, as well as philosophically, rethinking national security infrastructure along the U.S.–Mexico border.

1,000,000,000 Global Water Refugees

UrbanLab

Proposal: Reviving Rust Belt towns through new markets for water-related ecological services.

Hydro-Genic City, 2020

Darina Zlateva and Takuma Ono

Proposal: Transforming waterworks into active public architecture.

Local Code: Healing the Interstitial Landscape

Nicholas de Monchaux & Associates

Proposal: Converting 1,600 unused, neglected San Francisco rights-of-way into locally responsive neighborhood parks through a technique of mass-customization.

Finalists will attend an experts workshop Sept. 26 at UCLA to discuss policy and the logistics and economic impact of proposal realization with leaders in the areas of public works, civil engineering, land use and urban sustainability. The workshop will help finalists further refine the proposals' potential architectural and policy impacts.

UCLA's cityLAB is simultaneously sponsoring a competition on the same themes for design students. Registration for the student competition closes Oct. 16, with proposals due Nov. 2. Awards will be presented at the Nov. 16 symposium and exhibition in Washington.

Sponsors of WPA 2.0 include the Graham Foundation for the Arts, the UCLA School of the Arts and Architecture, the Richard S. Ziman Center for Real Estate at UCLA, Sarah Jane Lind, The Architect's Newspaper and the National Building Museum.

To learn more about the WPA 2.0 competition and related events, visit www.wpa2.aud.ucla.edu.