FUTURE GROUND

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

SCENARIOS FOR REUSE 2015 2025 2065

VACANT

NEW ORLEANS FORECASTING

FINANCE DESIGN STRATEGIES

POLICY LAND LANDSCAPE

A COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVE OF VAN ALEN INSTITUTE AND THE NEW ORLEANS REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

WWW.VANALEN.ORG/FUTUREGROUND
Van Alen Institute and the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority (NORA) are collaborating on a competition to make New Orleans a global leader in reusing vacant land. *Future Ground* will generate flexible design and policy strategies that forecast and accommodate changes in density, demand, climate, and landscape over the next half-century in New Orleans, transforming abandoned landscapes into resources for the current and future city.

Three teams will be selected to participate in a six-month research and design process to tackle the social, economic, and ecological challenges underlying reuse of the most prevalent types of vacant land in the city. Working closely with local stakeholders and national experts, teams will produce implementable, replicable solutions that can be applied to specific sites citywide, and that can help catalyze change in cities around the world.
Designs and plans for cities can create visions that will take decades to be fully realized. While no one can predict the future, we can outline multiple *futures*: rigorous scenarios for a changing population, market, and climate for the next 1 year, 10 years, and 50 years. These alternatives can help elected officials, businesses, philanthropic organizations, and residents understand what is possible, and make realistic, informed decisions about investments.

This approach is particularly important when addressing vacant land. In countless neighborhoods, cities, and regions across the country and the world, abandoned parcels—as small as a house lot or hundreds of acres large—may not be developed for decades to come. Too often, vacant land has been seen only as a remnant of or absence within the 20th century city. Today, with a critical mass of designers, policymakers, scholars, artists, activists, and residents creating pilot projects, thoughtful studies, and new kinds of urbanism on abandoned properties, it is possible to imagine this land as an integral part of the future city.

*Future Ground* will develop strategies to bring small, incremental projects to scale at the neighborhood and citywide level; to craft policy to support promising design solutions; to make these solutions flexible and participatory enough to be sustained into the next generation; and to share resources with a growing, national network of innovators who are repurposing vacant land.
Future Ground is the first of several competitions to be launched as an integral part of Van Alen Institute’s Elsewhere: Escape and the Urban Landscape, a multi-year initiative exploring how both the form and organization of the built environment influence our need for escape. Through competitions, public programs, and research, this unique multidisciplinary effort is bringing together innovators in design, public health, policy, and the sciences to change the way we understand cities.

The competition challenges multidisciplinary teams to address the following questions:

- How can design and policy solutions accommodate changing populations, climate, landscape, economies, and political dynamics?

- How can the current patchwork of existing vacant lots function as a more coherent system, and be integrated within other urban systems (parks, transportation, stormwater, etc.)?

- What landscape designs could be built at various scales, maximizing the benefits of open space, stormwater management, habitat, and other amenities?

- What policy changes will facilitate the implementation of innovative design, and how can design strategies galvanize support to change policy?

- How can design and policy solutions encourage the broadest, most diverse public audiences to become stewards of vacant land, now and well into the future?

- What designs can fit within the existing zoning/development envelope to allow simple and replicable interventions?
Nearly ten years after Katrina, New Orleans is a city in transition from a period of recovery and rebuilding to long-term redevelopment and resilience. However, like other coastal cities, New Orleans remains susceptible to future risk from climate change, coastal erosion, and continued land subsidence—even after $14.5 billion dollars in post-Katrina investments to the regional storm protection system.

Long before Katrina, the city’s population had steadily declined from a peak of 627,000 in 1960 to 485,000 in 2000. As in many other post-industrial cities and towns, abandoned buildings and vacant lots became increasingly fixed features of the landscape. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina and the flooding from levee breaches left 80% of the city inundated, with as much as 15 feet of water in some areas. The costliest disaster in the history of the United States left thousands of properties severely damaged.

New Orleans has come back in ways many thought impossible, and has significantly reduced blight and vacancy in recent years. But so much still remains: Approximately 30,000 empty lots and abandoned structures dot the landscape today.

The New Orleans Redevelopment Authority, which is the land bank for 2,400 vacant properties citywide, has been a leader in creatively reusing and repurposing vacant land. NORA promotes projects that enhance neighborhoods by making fresh produce available, providing community green space, reducing flood risk, and providing a healthy, stabilizing environment for neighborhoods too long neglected or marginalized. These programs include green infrastructure projects that use vegetation and natural processes to slow, store, and drain water after heavy rainfalls; low-maintenance landscape strategies that are economically and ecologically sustainable; and opportunities for residents to lease NORA properties for urban gardening and agriculture.
Applications from multidisciplinary teams for this RFQ are due September 29, 2014. (See Submittal Requirements below for more information on applying.) The RFQ Phase of Future Ground will conclude in October 2014 with the selection of three teams to participate in a six-month Research and Design Phase to develop solutions to address vacant land. Members of each team will convene in New Orleans four times: in October for a kickoff event to meet members of the Leadership Committee and other key stakeholders, and to conduct sites visits; for two interim presentations; and for a final public presentation in April 2015. (Travel costs are included in the overall competition budget, and will not come from the teams’ $15,000 stipend.)

In June 2015, NORA and Van Alen Institute will release a report summarizing design and policy recommendations emerging from the three teams. As part of its commitment to this competition, in the third and final Implementation Phase, NORA will implement an initial phase of some of the proposed designs on NORA-owned vacant lots. Teams will be guided in this work by an Advisory Committee comprised of local and national leaders in addressing vacant land. In particular, teams will work closely with the Futures Team, a group of regional experts in landscape architecture, demographics, geography, climate change, and real estate, to forecast scenarios for New Orleans in 2015, 2025, 2065. Teams will incorporate these forecasts into proposals that include design, policy, financial, engineering, and other strategies. Additionally, NORA together with the Tulane City Center will help teams refine their strategies to respond to community, economic, ecological, zoning, and other relevant contexts, and connect teams with local stakeholders who will be invested in realizing the proposed strategies. The large portfolio of NORA properties should be central to the overall design/implementation proposals, but the most compelling proposals might be applicable to the thousands of other vacant parcels citywide.
The three selected teams will each receive a $15,000 stipend to participate in the research and design process. Teams must include at least one designer (architect, landscape architect, urban designer, or urban planner) and one member with policy expertise, and are encouraged to include members with expertise in ecology, housing/community development, and/or real estate/finance. Teams are encouraged to include at least one local representative in New Orleans as well as members representing national and/or international perspectives. Van Alen Institute will work closely with the selected teams to leverage this modest stipend to promote their work nationally and internationally and develop networks among the competition’s Advisory Committee.

**EVALUATION**

Phase One RFQ submissions will be evaluated by the Jury according to the following criteria:

- Responsiveness to key opportunities and challenges facing vacant land reuse, as well as to the goals of the competition
- Overall strength, clarity and innovation of initial analysis and approach
- Demonstrated capacity to develop policy recommendations, or other implementation tools that support design strategies
- Multidisciplinary nature of team members and partners
- Experience working on research and design projects that incorporate long-range planning, forecasting, or phasing
- Experience engaging diverse public audiences
JURY

NICOLE BARNES
Jericho Road Episcopal Housing Initiative, New Orleans

MAURICE COX
Tulane City Center, Tulane School of Architecture, New Orleans

RENIÄ EHRENFEUCHT
University of New Orleans, New Orleans

WILLIAM A. GILCHRIST
City of New Orleans, New Orleans

JEFF HEBERT
New Orleans Redevelopment Authority, New Orleans

ARTHUR JOHNSON
Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement & Development, New Orleans

DAN KINKEAD
Detroit Future City, Detroit

DAVID VAN DER LEER
Van Alen Institute, New York

ELIZABETH MOSSOP
Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge

TOM MURPHY
Urban Land Institute, Washington, D.C.

Elon Rauh Pulitzer
Pulitzer Arts Foundation, St. Louis

BRENT RYAN
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ROBIN BARNES
Greater New Orleans Inc., New Orleans

SONJA BEECK
University of Kassel, Berlin

ADRIAN BENEPE
Trust for Public Land, New York

ROBERT RIVERS
City Planning Commission, New Orleans

FUTURES TEAM

RICHARD CAMPANELLA
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RENIÄ EHRENFEUCHT & MARLA NELSON
University of New Orleans, New Orleans

ELIZABETH MOSSOP & WES MICHAELS
Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge

ALLISON PLYER
The Data Center, New Orleans

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LAURIE JOHNSON
Laurie Johnson Consulting, San Francisco

MAGGIE HANSEN
Tulane City Center, Tulane School of Architecture, New Orleans

ANGELA LAWSON
State of Louisiana Comprehensive Resiliency Program, New Orleans

GREG LINDSAY
World Policy Institute, New York

ALAN MALLACH
Brookings Institute, Washington, D.C.

MICHAEL MARRELLA
Waterfront and Open Space Planning, New York City Department of City Planning, New York

STEPHEN ZACKS
Amplifier Inc. & Flint Public Art Project, Flint
The deadline for registration and electronic submission of the RFQ is 11:59 p.m. EDT on September 29, 2014.

Submit your proposal electronically as a single PDF document via the competition website. The PDF should be formatted 8.5-by-11 inches in landscape orientation, and no more than 10MB. Title your PDF file with your team lead last name followed by “_FutureGround_RFQ”. Hard copies of submission materials will not be accepted.

APPLICATIONS MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING CONTENT IN THE ORDER LISTED:

1. COVER SHEET
Include a one (1) page cover sheet with the name of the Team Lead and that person’s phone number and email address. Team Leads will serve as the sole point of contact and liaison to the sponsors throughout Phase I of the competition.

2. TEAM DESCRIPTION
Describe your team and key team members. Include each team member’s name, experience, and qualifications in a one-paragraph biography, as well as a description of any collaborating community or university partners (if applicable).

3. PROJECT APPROACH AND INITIAL FINDINGS
   a. No more than 500 words of text describing the team’s overall assessment of and approach to reusing vacant land in New Orleans, including key opportunities and strategies to be pursued.
   b. Include relevant visuals needed to illustrate and support the team’s initial assessment. These may include maps, diagrams, renderings, plans, etc..

4. PREVIOUS WORK
Include a maximum of five projects, at least three of which should have been realized. For each project, please include the following items in a maximum of five (5) pages total:
   a. A 150-words description of the projects relevance, innovative design and/or policy strategies, and its implementation.
   b. A list of participating team members, including his or her role within the scope of the project.
PRE-REGISTRATION

QUESTIONS
Please submit any questions about the competition to:

Stephen Klimek
Competitions Coordinator
Van Alen Institute
sklimek@vanalen.org

PRE-REGISTRATION
Teams are encouraged to signal their intent to respond to this RFQ by registering via the competition website with the team lead name and contact information including email address and phone number by September 5, 2014. Answers to any questions submitted about the RFQ will be emailed to teams that have preregistered.
**RULES AND ELIGIBILITY**

This competition is open to designers and other professionals with expertise in architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, urban planning, policy, engineering, finance, real estate, community development, and other fields relevant to the topic. Entrants are encouraged to partner with at least one individual or organization in New Orleans.

No partner or employee of any Jury member, Advisory Committee member, or Futures Team member may participate in the competition, nor may any Jury member compete in association with, advise, or assist a team in any way. Similarly, no employee or family member of Van Alen Institute or NORA may participate in this competition, advise or assist RFQ applicants in any way.

All competition submission text must be in English. In submitting an entry, entrants warrant that the material is their original work, does not infringe upon copyright law, and that they have permission to publish the material. Individuals may participate in only one team RFQ submission.
LANDSCAPE VACANT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS FOR REUSE NEW ORLEANS 2015 2025 2055 FORECASTING POLICY LAND DESIGN STRATEGIES

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ABOUT VAN ALLEN INSTITUTE
At Van Alen Institute, we believe design can transform cities, landscapes, and regions to improve people’s lives. We collaborate with communities, scholars, policymakers, and professionals on local and global initiatives that rigorously investigate the most pressing social, cultural, and ecological challenges of tomorrow. Building on more than a century of experience, we develop cross-disciplinary research, provocative public programs, and inventive design competitions.

Since 1894, we have created and managed public design competitions in New York City and across the country, producing solutions to critical social, economic, and environmental issues—including vacant and underutilized land. In 1996 our competition Public Property was the first initiative to re-imagine the grounds of the decommissioned military base on Governor’s Island as a public space. In 2006 Van Alen Institute and City Parks Association of Philadelphia invited participants from around the world to propose compelling ideas for Philadelphia’s vacant land in Urban Voids: Grounds for Change.

ABOUT NORA
The New Orleans Redevelopment Authority is a catalyst for the revitalization of the city, partnering in strategic developments that celebrate the city’s neighborhoods and honor its traditions. Our work addresses three core community needs: affordable housing, commercial revitalization, and land stewardship.
## NEW ORLEANS RESOURCES
- NORA Green Initiatives Nourish Neighborhoods
- The Post-Disaster Shrinking City: Vacant Land Types, Patterns, and Strategies in Post-Katrina New Orleans
- Vacant Land: Site Strategies for New Orleans
- Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan
- Is It Time to Think About Post-Post-Katrina New Orleans?

## CLIMATE FUTURE RESOURCES
- Louisiana’s 2012 Coastal Master Plan
- A Stronger, More Resilient New York
- Surging Seas: Sea level rise analysis by Climate Central

## VACANT LAND RESOURCES
- Center for Community Progress
- Legacy Cities
- Re-Imagining a More Sustainable Cleveland: Citywide Strategies for Reuse of Vacant Land
- Detroit Future City
- Urban Voids: Grounds for Change
- Gap Filler, Christchurch, NZ
THANK YOU