

Niagara Biennial Design Awards Program

Presentation to Niagara Region Planning and Economic Development Committee
May 08, 2019

Introduction

- The Region is creating a new and improved design awards program
- The ‘Niagara Community Design Awards’ was the former design awards program that wrapped up in 2016
- The new program is being rebranded as the “Niagara Biennial”
- The new program will take the best components of the previous awards program and deliver it as an updated Biennial event
- The new format will align with best practices of other design awards programs throughout GTHA and beyond
- The new program will expand beyond typical design fields of architecture, landscape architecture, urban design and planning to encompass a broader segment of the Region’s design community

History of former design awards program

- 'Niagara Community Design Awards' was organized by Region for the 12 local area municipalities
- Design categories included: architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, planning and design leadership
- The program ran annually from 2005 to 2016 for 12 installments
- It celebrated excellence in community design in Niagara
- Evaluation criteria were based upon the Smarter Niagara growth principles
- Awards were organized into 12 categories, typically awarding one project per category:
 - Small or large scale projects, public realm improvements, architecture: small or large budget, façade improvement, adaptive re-use, brownfield, sustainability, policy & plans, leadership & legacy

Some Past Winners: 2011 - 2012



Inniskillin Wines,
Niagara-on-the-Lake



Scotiabank Convention Centre,
Niagara Falls



Gateway Secondary Plan,
Fort Erie



Niagara College – Welland Campus,
Welland



Niagara Falls History Museum,
Niagara Falls



Beamsville Community
Improvement Plan, Lincoln

Some Past Winners: 2013 - 2014



Pelham Street Mixed-Use, Pelham



Vale Health & Wellness Centre, Port Colborne



Façade Improvement, Thorold



Lundy's Lane Battlefield Gateway, Niagara Falls



Meridian Centre, St. Catharine



Canal Terrace Park, Welland

Some Past Winners: 2015 - 2016



East Fonthill Secondary Plan,
Pelham



Brock U - School of Fine and
Performing Arts, St. Catharines



Civic Gateway,
Grimsby



First Ontario Performing Arts Centre,
St. Catharines



Old Firehall,
Thorold



John Brant Public School,
Fort Erie

What is a Biennial?

- A Biennial is a large contemporary international exhibition
- Submissions are for contemporary works (i.e. current or new)
- Typically organized by a full-time curatorial team which evaluate the submissions through a jury panel
- They are held every two years (i.e. bi-annually), hence the name “Biennial”
- Art and design categories range from visual arts, performing arts, design, architecture, landscape architecture and urban design
- Various events occur over a time frame of weeks to months. Events include: exhibitions, installations, presentations, performances, workshops, tours and collaborations with community organizations
- **Biennials are a source of local pride, tourism and cultural capital, bringing revenue to host city**

Famous Biennials throughout the world

- There are over 100 Biennials in major cities throughout the world
- Some of the most famous Biennials include:

La Biennale di Venezia (Venice, Italy)

- The oldest biennial, established in 1895
- Known as the “Olympics” of Art
- In alternating years, hosts an architecture biennial

London Design Biennale (London, UK)

- In alternating years, hosts an art biennial
- Receives submissions from over 40 countries and territories

Chicago Architectural Biennial (USA)

- Attracts over 500,000 visitors



CHICAGO
ARCHITECTURE
BIENNIAL



LONDON
DESIGN
BIENNALE
2020

Design Awards in Canada

- Canada does not host any international design Biennials
- There are however, 3 art biennials that exist across the country: Vancouver, BC, Toronto, ON, and Bona Vista, NF
- Canada has many design awards programs held bi-annually
- Design categories focus on: architecture, landscape architecture, urban design and planning
- Programs held at national, provincial and municipal levels
- Function as design competition with a half day or evening event
- Culminates in awards ceremony

Why hold a Biennial in Niagara?

- Niagara Region is equipped to host a design awards program on behalf of the 12 local area municipalities
- Some of the municipalities do not have the resources to host an individual design awards program
- The Niagara Biennial will build on Niagara's globally recognized name, evolving into an international event
- By collaborating with Economic Development and Tourism initiatives, the awards program will create synergies
- As experienced by other International Biennials, a Biennial program will contribute to increased regional pride, investment, economic uplift and cultural capital

Highlights of the Biennial Program

- Expand beyond standard design categories to encompass broader segment of design community
- Potential new categories:
 - Interior design (accessible to the public)
 - Outdoor Art (visible from the public realm)
 - Student design projects (post-secondary students at Niagara institutions)
- Creating a “Made in Niagara” theme to program and recognize work of local designers with a “Niagara-based Designer” award
- Highlight projects that enhance built environment and design context of Niagara
- Promote engagement with design and development communities, providing learning and networking events
- Collaborate with post-secondary institutions and students to celebrate learning and to encourage youth retention

Niagara Region's Creative Cluster

- Design fields are part of the “Creative Cluster”
- Creative Cluster includes: design services, media, publishing, marketing, entertainment, music, visual arts, performing arts and culture
- In 2018, the creative cluster had 1,314 businesses with 7,538 jobs
- Between 2011 to 2018, job growth increased by 29%
- The first Niagara Biennial will focus on several of the design services
- Future biennials will grow and celebrate other areas of the creative cluster

DESIGN SERVICES Architectural, Landscape Architectural, Interior, Industrial, Graphic and Specialized design, Computer design
MUSIC Music publishers, Sound recording studios, Record production and distribution
VISUAL ARTS Independent visual artists and artisans
PERFORMING ARTS Independent actors, comedians, performers, and writers and authors, Performing arts promoters (presenters)
CULTURE Festivals, Non-commercial art museums and galleries, History, Science and other museums, Historic and heritage sites
MEDIA AND PUBLISHING Newspaper, Periodical, Book and software publishers, Radio, Television and Internet broadcasting, Pay and Specialty TV, Web search portals, Computer systems Design
MARKETING Advertising Agencies, Public Relations, Photographic Services
ENTERTAINMENT Video Game Design, Development, Publishers and Post-production, Motion Picture and Video Production, Distribution, Exhibition and Post-production

What is special about Niagara?



Agriculture, including Wineries, Breweries, Distilleries and the Wine Route



Tourist Attractions, Hospitality, Restaurants and Culture



Parks, Trails Recreation, Natural Features and waterways

Alternatives Reviewed

- Staff considered continuing to deliver the former awards program, however; many aspects are no longer relevant:
 - Holding the event annually produced limited submissions, resulting in a decline in the number of submissions
 - Same jury members participated throughout most years of the program
 - Same design categories were used for each program
 - Submitted projects could be up to 10 years old (not current)
- It was agreed that a fresh approach to a design awards program should be implemented
- Staff considered postponing the new program until 2020 or later
 - However, staff discovered a lot of interest from design and development communities
 - It was determined that there was an appetite to create more vital and relevant awards program now

Relationship to Strategic Priorities

Fostering Investment, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

- Design and development communities compete for awards, creating a design legacy in Niagara
- Program will showcase variety and breadth of design happening within the Region to a wide audience
- Events will provide opportunity for design and development communities to network and learn from one another

Positioning Niagara Globally

- Program will be promoted via many avenues: publications, website, social media, emails, posters, advertisements and presentations
- Design awards will promote Niagara's brand name by showcasing design excellence to a global audience
- Collaborating with Economic Development and Tourism allows program to reach broader audience and create synergies with other initiatives

Financial Considerations

- Annual Budget of previous awards program was \$15,000
- Investment in new program (2019 – 2020) is \$45,000
- New awards program will be more extensive with more events
- First Biennial can be accommodated within Council approved 2019 operating budget
- Some projected expenses could be offset with:
 - Entry fees for submissions
 - Sponsorships
 - In-kind donations
- The program is regarded as investment in Niagara's economy by collaborating with tourism and economic development

Project timeline and phases

