



For Immediate Release

Urbanarium announces winners of Decoding Density

\$44,000 in prize money was distributed to winners from Canada, New Zealand, South Korea, and the US

APRIL 16, 2024 (VANCOUVER, CANADA) — Urbanarium is pleased to announce the winners of Decoding Density, an affordable housing ideas competition that highlighted and challenged current building codes in order to explore new apartment designs. Eighty-five proposals were submitted from nine countries. Participating teams spanned from students to housing advocates, design and architectural professionals to urban planning enthusiasts — aging from individuals in their 20s to their 70s.

“We were blown away by the innovation and thoughtfulness of the submissions,” says competition co-chair Sara Stevens. “It’s clear that there are some exciting and compelling directions that architects, designers, and city planners can explore in the future. Collective solutions to shared space, adaptability to extreme heat events, and porosity as communities become more spatially connected — the only limits are our creativity and current building codes.”

Jury member Cedric Yu, architect AIBC, adds: “The fact that we have landed on a pair of co-winners identifies how challenging it truly is to resolve all of the problems in front of us — namely, affordability and climate change. These challenges will require innovation in many areas.”

Decoding Density winners were decided over a rigorous day of deliberations by two groups: the main competition jury of architects, developers, educators, and sustainable housing experts, and the Planners Prize jury of urban planners.

The winners are:

- 1st Place (tied) + Planners Prize Winner: \$20,000 prize
Towerhouse by Studio Oh Song | New York, United States
Team members: Ericka Song, Justin Oh
- 1st Place (tied): \$10,000 prize
Shared Density by Switch | Vancouver, Canada
Team members: Jonas Thalamas, Charlie Petit, Kareem Negm, Chris Quigley

- 3rd Place: \$4,000 prize
Cul-de-sac Nouveau by PAC Lab | Auckland, New Zealand
Team members: Nadthachai Kongkhajornkidsuk, Xian Chris Li, Elitsa Vutova, Liam Lautze

Honourable Mentions: \$2,000 prize each

- *From NIMBY to NIMBY* by Bobo | Vancouver, Canada
Team members: Daichi Yamashita
- *Sharing is the Core Thing!* by Catlab | Seoul, South Korea
Team members: Sang Hoon Youm, Sumin Hong, Seungho Jeong, Mina Kim, Dongmin Lee
- *Co-Finity Village* by Co-Finity | Burnaby, Canada
Team members: Alvin Wang, Melanie Vanco, Cyrus Wu
- *Micro-hood* by Micro-hood | Vancouver, Canada
Team members: Minsu Kim, Ronak Shah, Austin Mills, Kathleen Fu, Chris Hill, Antoine Morris, Emily Rennalls, Kevin Wu
- *Lots! of Bundles* by Rebuild Collective | Cincinnati, United States
Team members: Peter Yi, Peter Loayza, Amanda Skyler, Leah Roodhouse

Jury statement about Towerhouse by Studio Oh Song: “Towerhouse proposes an open ground plane with a design that makes it a very desirable space. A number of submissions proposed similar checker-board site plans that toggled open space and built form, but this solution was the most successful and elegant among them. Also similar to many entries, it eliminated underground parking on-site and included a few spaces for car shares. Its climate strategies are solid and proven, and importantly link the technical design decisions about reducing carbon to the more social side of climate resiliency by designing to encourage active transportation over driving and connections with neighbours through the community room and shared outdoor spaces. It does not require land assembly, yet with one or two lots is able to add density and challenge the status quo.”

Jury statement about Shared Density by Switch: “The jury was swayed by the practicality of this scheme. A simple set of changes — adding height, hiding cars from the street, and reducing the front setback — would be very applicable in the Lower Mainland. The scheme has a great section that includes a small commercial or community space at the street, and draws people in and up to an elevated outdoor courtyard space in the midblock. What it does at the street with the lack of setback, generous public program, and welcoming entry up toward the courtyard, is very successful. At the back, cars are hidden and their presence minimized. With 16 units on one lot, it densifies and has the potential to greatly improve on affordability.”

During the deliberations, the Planners Prize committee identified a number of potential policy impacts that could be made to increase the affordability, sustainability, and sociability of future housing. These included reductions in setbacks, the provision of community amenities on-site,

mechanisms to facilitate multigenerational housing, modular and pre-fab construction, mixes of tenancy types in one building, and many more. For a full list of potential impacts, [click here](#).

The winning proposals can be viewed online this week at www.decodingdensity.com. A publication about the finalists and a solutions video by [About Here](#) will be launched on June 3, 2024 at The Polygon Gallery.

The competition jury included:

- Cedric Yu, Architect AIBC
- Frances Bula, Urban Issues/Housing Journalist
- Inge Roecker, Architect AIBC and Associate Professor, SALA, UBC
- Ly Tang, Senior Development Manager, Rize Alliance Properties
- Marta Maj, Principal, Timber Engineering Inc.
- Richard Henriquez, Architect AIBC
- Sara Muir, Planning Institute of British Columbia, Climate Action Committee
- Shirley Shen, Architect AIBC
- Travis Hanks, Architect AIBC

The Planners Prize jury included:

- Dr. Gary Hack, Fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners
- Kevin Spaans, Assistant Director of Development Planning, City of Vancouver
- Sam Maleknia, Senior Urban Design Planner, City of Surrey
- Suzanne Carter-Huffman, Program Manager, Urban Design, City of Richmond

Technical Advisors included two cost consultants from BTY Global: Directors Neil Murray and Ping Pang, as well as Wilma Leung, Mobilizing Building Adaptation and Resilience at BC Housing.

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About Urbanarium

Urbanarium was first founded in 1985 by a group of urbanites passionate about city making. A registered charity since 2015, the mostly volunteer-run organization's mandate is informing and engaging the residents of Metro Vancouver to help guide community decisions. Through a variety of programs, very often in partnership with other organizations, Urbanarium provides the region with stimulating information and creative solutions for how our urban system works, the forces acting upon it, and what alternative futures might be realized.

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bit.ly/DecodingDensityWinners

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