



Urban Design Challenge 2025

Student Ideas Competition for the National Capital Region

An Urban Interface to Connect Growing Communities

1.0 Challenge overview

Students, this is your moment to shine! Unleash your creativity and share your visionary ideas for the Bronson Channel Lands, located 1.2 km from Parliament Hill in the western downtown core of Ottawa.

This is your chance to propose innovative planning and design ideas for the Bronson Channel Lands and inspire the landscape of the emerging LeBreton neighbourhood. Your ideas to connect the national institutions, monuments, parks and waterfronts within the study area will inspire the future of this downtown core area district.

Learn more about the 2025 Urban Design Challenge [here](#).

Introduction

Urban planning and design have the potential to dramatically transform our collective surroundings, influencing and enabling the

way we use public spaces. The Urban Design Challenge is a competition that invites students from across the country to come up with design concepts for sites in the National Capital Region (NCR).

The competition is open to students enrolled in an accredited post-secondary educational institution in Canada, who are studying planning, architecture, environmental design, urban design or landscape architecture. The NCC encourages students to form interdisciplinary teams to consider all aspects of urban planning and urban design.

Capital planning

At the pinnacle of the Capital Planning Framework stands the Plan for Canada's Capital, 2017–2067. This plan lays out a blueprint for the evolution of federal lands in the NCR over a 50-year horizon; it is the NCC's pre-eminent planning document. The Capital Planning Framework also includes sector plans, which further refine the themes, goals, policies and strategies for geographic areas within the NCR. Canada's Capital Core Area Sector Plan (2005) guides decision making and informs future planning initiatives for the heart of the capital region.

Currently, the NCC is reviewing the National Capital Core Area Plan, which includes the study area. For more information on the Plan, please consult the [project webpage](#).

2.0 Context

Role of the National Capital Commission

The National Capital Commission (NCC) is the federal Crown corporation dedicated to ensuring that Canada's Capital is a

long-term planning of the NCR and is the approval authority for federal lands and buildings. In addition to its planning and approval roles, the NCC is also the steward and manager of many important properties throughout the Capital, including historic buildings and places, public spaces, parks, squares, parkways, shorelines and green spaces.

About the LeBreton Flats

Located at the heart of the National Capital Region, LeBreton Flats holds immense potential as a central public space. The district is enriched by its proximity to waterways, cultural landmarks and public transit.

Refer to the LeBreton [Master Concept Plan](#) (MCP) for more information.

3.0 Study area

About the Bronson Channel Lands

The study area, known as the Bronson Channel Lands, is located on the western edge of the downtown core, in the heart of the National Capital Region. The site is at the convergence of many planned and ongoing projects that are bringing energy to the Capital and enlivening the waterfront. This includes the LeBreton Flats redevelopment, the City of Ottawa's Pimisi LRT station, the redevelopment of Chaudières and Albert islands, the Indigenous peoples' gathering place on Victoria Island (Kabenishinân Minitig), and the construction of a new central library (Ādisōke) (Figure 1).

The currently vacant site presents an opportunity to transform the space into an important urban linkage that connects the islands and the mainland and increases the public's access to, and enjoyment of, the waterways. The NCC is interested in exploring opportunities to activate the frontages along the streets and public pathways surrounding the site, as well as to provide new mixed-use housing opportunities.

dynamic and inspiring source of pride for all Canadians, and a legacy for generations to come. The NCC is responsible for the



Figure 1: Context

Building on this momentum, the National Capital Commission (NCC) is seeking ideas to enhance and animate the four public space edges in the study area, including along the Holocaust Monument, the Ottawa River waterfront and its small stormwater subsidiary arm along the Capital Pathway, the War Museum, and the forthcoming National Monument to Canada's Mission in Afghanistan (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Urban Design Challenge Study Area

Evolving needs

In the 2005 plan for the core area (Canada's Capital Core Area Sector Plan), the lands were designated as a site for a future national cultural institution, surrounded by capital urban green space. A shifting planning context is prompting the exploration of new opportunities for the site. Key drivers of the change include population growth, mounting pressures on housing supply, and the re-urbanization of the area. The Bronson Channel Lands occupy an interesting location at the transition between the Capital's most iconic national symbols and emerging civic neighbourhoods (Figure 3). A new vision is needed for this space that introduces vibrancy through active public uses and a finer grain of development that is compatible with adjacent site uses.



Figure 3: Demonstration plan displaying the future build-out area

The NCC is updating the Core Area Sector Plan, which will guide the development of federal lands in the core area, including the Bronson Channel Lands. The Urban Design Challenge presents an opportunity to contribute to the development of the plan.

THE CHALLENGE

What should be done on the Bronson Channel Lands to contribute to the creation of a continuous urban interface between Confederation Boulevard, the Canadian War Museum, the Holocaust Monument, the emerging LeBreton neighbourhood, and the waterfront?

Proposals should:

- re-knit the urban fabric with courtyard-form buildings between Wellington Street and Booth Street;
- provide strategies for ground-level animation along the Bronson Channel, Booth Street, Wellington Street and the Holocaust Monument, while respecting the symbolic setting of the site;
- propose an appropriate range of uses that can animate and activate the area, while being sensitive to adjacent uses;
- determine a location for underground parking access, at the most unobtrusive location in relation to desired/anticipated pedestrian flow;
- retain the design intent of the National Holocaust Monument and consider the site context of the National Monument to Canada's Mission in Afghanistan while providing a fully urban interface between the monuments and the rest of the Bronson Channel Lands (i.e. formal tree line, benches, pavers);
- position the built form volumes to create and frame street and path edges first, and views second;
- define the appropriate architectural expression for the built form in terms of building height and architectural style (modern or traditional/classical);

- enhance public access to, and enjoyment of, the waterfront through landscaping (soft and hard, formal and informal), programming and animation; and
- consider opportunities for engagement in relation to diversity, equity and inclusion practices (i.e. universal accessibility, multiculturalism and Indigenous engagement).

4.0 Awards

The winning project team will receive the first-place award of **\$750** and a trip to Ottawa. The second-place team will receive **\$500**.

The jury may determine honourable mention awards as well. There are no monetary prizes associated with these awards.

The winning team will be invited to present their ideas at a special session of the NCC’s Urbanism Lab on **May 29, 2024**. Travel and accommodation expenses for the winning team will be covered (see competition terms and conditions to learn about the [rules and regulations](#)).

5.0 Contest details

Eligibility

The competition is open to students who are currently enrolled in a design-focused program at an accredited educational institution in Canada. The maximum number of participants per team is three.

The NCC encourages students to form interdisciplinary teams. Proposals should consider aspects of urban planning and design, architecture, landscape architecture and design, and transportation planning. A diverse team of complementary skills is likely to result in a more successful submission.

Registration

There is no registration fee to participate in the Urban Design Challenge. However, participants are required to register to receive a team number that ensures anonymity of the submissions throughout the evaluation process. One registration is required per project submitted. Participants may register on the competition website: ncc-ccn.gc.ca/2025-challenge.

By registering, participants agree to all [competition terms and conditions](#). Registration will remain open until **Thursday, January 23, 2025**.

Schedule

December 12, 2024	Competition launches
January 23, 2025	Last day for registration
February 13, 2025	Last day to send questions
February 26, 2025	Student information session
March 27, 2025	Submissions due
April 2 to 15, 2025	Jury consideration
April 29 to May 1st, 2025	Winners will be contacted
May 29th, 2025	Awards presentation in the Capital

Questions and answers

Questions about the competition will be accepted until **Thursday, February 13, 2025**. Questions should be emailed to: kelly.mcrae@ncc-ccn.ca or public.affairs@ncc-ccn.ca. All emails sent should include “**Student Competition**” in the subject line. Answers to all questions will be posted on the competition website: ncc-ccn.gc.ca/2025-challenge.

Regarding the level of detail: We want conceptual drawings, not construction drawings, for architectural elements. You may

provide information in the plan, elevations, sections and pedestrian eye-level views. See the most frequently asked questions under [FAQs](#) section.

Submissions

Submissions may be prepared in either of Canada's two official languages (English or French). Competition submissions are due no later than **11:59 pm Eastern Daylight Time on Thursday, March 27, 2025**. All submissions will be made via the NCC's SharePoint site; further details will be provided to participants after registration. No hard copies of materials will be accepted.

The Urban Design Challenge is an anonymous competition. No names or identifying symbols of participants shall appear on submitted material or in filenames.

Submissions should consist of the following elements:

1. Up to two 60.96-cm x 91.44-cm (24-in. x 36-in.) boards in PDF format. The filenames should include the registration number (e. g. "Board_12345"). All drawings and architectural scales should be expressed in metric.
2. A written statement not exceeding 500 words explaining the ideas. The file should be in .txt or Word format. The filename should include the registration number (e. g. "Written_12345").

A document with contact information for the participating individual/team. The document should include the project title, participant name(s) and email address for primary contact. The filename should include the registration number (e. g. "ID_12345"). The sources of any third-party material incorporated in the entry must also be included.

Jury and evaluation criteria

A jury of interdisciplinary planning, design and site management professionals will review the submissions and select competition

winners. A winning submission will provide bold design concepts that consider the following:

- site context
- compatibility with surrounding institutional uses
- leading sustainability elements
- inclusive design principles
- environmental and ecological features
- public access and four-season use
- tourism and recreational opportunities
- integration with current transit and multimodal systems
- active mobility
- universal accessibility

FAQs

1. Is there a budget that our proposals should work within? If there is not an exact budget, should the project be idealistic or realistic?

There is no specific budget. Plans should be aspirational, but keep in mind that proposals must also be feasible.

2. If there is interest in some small to medium-sized infrastructure, what level of detail would be best for architectural elements?

We are interested in infrastructure that reflects the objectives of the various plans that are relevant to this year's site. Regarding the level of detail, we want conceptual drawings, not construction drawings, for architectural elements. You may provide information in plan, elevations, sections and pedestrian eye-level views.

3. Is the use of artificial intelligence (AI) allowed?

No. We are interested in seeing **original** designs and conceptual renderings that demonstrate the skills and talents of the participating student teams.

Ownership and copyright

Each participant shall retain ownership of the copyright associated with the entries submitted.

By submitting an entry, each participant grants the NCC a non-exclusive perpetual licence to use, reproduce, publish, modify, incorporate into other work, distribute and promote, in whole or in part, the materials submitted by the participant for any non-commercial or commercial purpose, in any format whatsoever, including print, digital publication, audio, video and all other media (whether now known or later developed), in any form, without territorial limits and without attribution.

Warranties

By submitting an entry, participants warrant that their entry is original and created solely by them. See the design contest rules and regulations for further information.

Rules and regulations

For complete rules and regulations, [click here](#).

6.0 Resources and references

General

- [National Capital Commission. The Plan for Canada's Capital, 2017–2067](#)
- [National Capital Commission. Sustainable Development Strategy, 2018–2023](#)
- [Capital Urban Lands Plan](#)
- [National Capital Core Area Plan](#)
- [LeBreton Flats Master Concept Plan \(2021\)](#)
- [Capital Pathway Strategic Plan \(2021\)](#)
- [Capital Design Guidelines](#)
- [Capital Illumination Plan, 2017-2027](#)
- [National Capital Commission, Canada's Capital Views Protection, 2007](#)
- [Policy on planning practice and reconciliation](#)