



“Car-centered development is going to kill us. We need to work for walkable neighborhoods and beware of washed up shopping malls, and decaying strip malls that sit empty.”

– Marvin Malecha, Dean of N.C. Design College speaking at the 8th Annual Urban Design Forum Feb 2011.

Initiated by the City-Region Studies Centre, University of Alberta, *Strip Appeal* is an ideas design competition intended to stimulate creative design proposals for the adaptive reuse of small-scale strip-malls (or mini-malls).

We ask: how might the small-scale strip be reinvented and redeveloped to local advantage? With creative thinking and design experimentation, we believe there are many ways to transform these ever-present yet ailing built forms to promote walkability, sustainability and community as suburban experience.

The winning and shortlisted submissions will form a travelling exhibit, with accompanying bookwork, that will tour planning departments and architecture/design schools across North America.

Context

In many neighborhoods across North America, small 5-8 store strip-malls, once anchors of local retail activity, have become today's suburban blights: intended for community hubs of consumption and stores, many of these places are being abandoned, becoming underutilized and dilapidated as the services move out of local neighborhoods in favour of larger-scale shopping districts serving greater catchment areas.

Long deplored for their inefficient use of space and lack of aesthetic appeal, strip malls are uncelebrated, unloved and overlooked. At the CRSC we believe it's time to rethink our relationship with the strip mall.

The small-scale strip can play a vital public role in the urbanization of the postwar suburbs. Strip malls can become as important to these communities as the old warehouse and market districts have become to the inner city.

We ask

- Can the car-orientated, aesthetically nondescript strip-mall be imaginatively reinvented?
- How can we adapt and repurpose this building stock (and its parking lots) to meet the changing needs of our suburban neighborhoods?
- What potential might there be for mixed-use renovations, community farming, social spaces and greening?

- How might landscape architecture, streetscaping strategies and creative planning make these sites more pedestrian friendly?
- What innovative new uses, forms and spaces might result?

The Competition Brief

The aim of ***Strip Appeal*** is to assemble innovative spatial strategies and design proposals for the adaptation and reuse of small-scale strip-malls. Rather than view failing and semi-vacant strip malls as architectural debris, at the CRSC we see them as 'sites of potential'.

We believe the small-scale strip has the potential to promote walkability, sustainability and community as suburban experience. Simple and sturdy, what better adaptable typology than the small-scale strip. Any community can make the small box their own.

We invite you to identify ailing strip-malls in your local neighborhoods and apply your creative ideas for their aesthetic reinvention and adaptive reuse to meet your community's 21st century needs.

This competition is open to all and encourages submissions not just from architects, designers and artists, but spatial thinkers, experimental planners and the general public.

Your responses and design ideas can be expressed using any medium: from architectural and graphic design, to photography and video, to even a sketch or doodle.

Entries will be judged on:

- clarity of idea,
- usefulness/economy of design,
- community appeal/relevance, and
- visual/aesthetic appeal of renderings.

The best ideas, designs, vignettes and videos will be shortlisted by a diverse jury of distinguished academics and professionals to be showcased in a travelling exhibit and accompanying bookwork, that will tour planning departments and architecture/design schools across North America.

Through the travelling exhibit and bookwork we aim to offer a collection of 'localized' examples for the anticipatory adaptation of small-scale strip-malls as a means to inspire city planners, developers and communities into **action**.

Submission Requirements

Reorientation of the mini-mall for community use is central to the **Strip Appeal** concept. Your chosen sites must be considered a small-box retail centre – that is, a strip-mall or mini-mall of roughly 5-8 stores and no larger than approx. 0.2-0.5 ha in total land area including parking.

While the focus of the competition is on strip-malls in mature suburban neighborhoods. Example sites from the inner-ring suburbs (which may no longer be considered ‘suburban’) or those on the outer-ring are also accepted. This classification problem highlights the difficulty of delineating where the suburbs begin and end when addressing the issue of sprawl.

Sensitivity to sustainability also lies at the heart of this project and we ask participants to recycle and repurpose as much of the existing infrastructure and space on your chosen site as possible.

Participants will be able to enter through the competition website – www.strip-appeal.com – by sending a photograph of their chosen site and up to 4 images, along with a statement explaining their design proposal.

There is no entry fee. Entrants can work individually or in collaborative teams.

For full consideration in the competition you or your team must submit the following:

Title

Give your submission an appropriate title.

“Before” Photograph of Chosen Site

You are required to submit a photograph or other visual rendering of your chosen site. This must include a short statement identifying the site’s geographical location and its current shortcomings.

Proposal Visualization

You may submit up to 4 image pages to describe and visualize the reinvention and adaptation of your chosen site. You may also produce a video or animation of up to 6 minutes in length.

Image Requirements:

These can take the form of design vignettes, photographs, plans, or sketches. The most important thing is that they clearly and artistically visualize your ideas. Each image must be in JPEG format at a resolution of 200 dpi or 3400 x 2200 pixels.

In addition, your images and statement must be compiled into a single multi-page document in PDF format.

Video Requirements:

Videos must be uploaded to a VIMEO or YOUTUBE account and should not be more than 6 mins in length. A link to your video is to be included with your Statement.

Short Statement

Provide a short statement of up to 300 words describing how your submission adapts your chosen strip-mall for community use.

Consent/Disclosure Form

With your submission you are required to complete and sign the Consent/Disclosure form, which will allow us to exhibit and publish your work. This form is available to download on the competition website: www.strip-appeal.com



Prizes

The main outcome of the **Strip Appeal** competition will be the creation of a travelling exhibit and bookwork that will tour planning departments and architecture/design schools across North America.

First Prize

- Cash prize \$1000.
- Entry showcased in travelling exhibition and bookwork.

Public Choice Prize and Runners Up

- Cash prizes (\$500 each).
- Entry showcased in travelling exhibition and bookwork.

The remaining shortlisted finalists will also be featured in the travelling exhibition. A selection of these will also feature in the bookwork, which is to be published by the University of Alberta. All the shortlisted entries will be featured in the webgallery.

Finally a special issue of CURB magazine will also be devoted to documenting the competition and its outcomes.

Timeline

Sept 5th – Strip Appeal design competition announced and website opens for entries.

November 30th, 11:59pm PST – SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Dec 1st – 8th – Round 1 of judging: selection of shortlist for exhibition in Enterprise Square Galleries, University of Alberta.

December 10th – Enterprise Square shortlist exhibit opens and public voting begins. During this time the jury will also reconvene for their vote.

December 19th – Winners announced on competition website.

New Year 2012 – Prize-winning and short-listed submissions will be curated to form a travelling exhibit and accompanying bookwork (published by the University of Alberta) that will tour planning departments and architecture/design schools across North America.

Strip Appeal exemplifies CRSC’s commitment to promote vibrant and sustainable city-regions in Alberta and elsewhere by engaging communities to research present conditions and future possibilities.

This competition will provide a unique opportunity to challenge the conventional design of strip malls and to investigate and develop new concepts for sustainable and community-centered suburban architecture for the 21st century.

Competition Contact: Dr. Merle Patchett, Postdoctoral Fellow, City-Region Studies Centre, Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta.
Email: mpatchet@ualberta.ca Tel: 780 245 8252