

# **New Art Gallery of Nova Scotia as part of a Waterfront Arts District Design Competition – Jury Report**

October 14, 2020

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## **Table of Contents**

- A: Introduction
  - B: Jury Recommendation
  - C: Project Objectives
  - D: Evaluation Criteria
  - E: Adjudication Process Overview
  - F: Jury Commentary – Overview
  - G: Jury Commentary – Winning Submission
- 

## **A: Introduction**

The jury members invited by the Province of Nova Scotia to adjudicate the entries for the New Art Gallery of Nova Scotia as part of a Waterfront Arts District Design Competition are, in alphabetical order:

**Claude Cormier**

Landscape Architect, Principal Associate, Claude Cormier + Associés, Montreal

**Sylvia D. Hamilton**

Artist, Filmmaker, Writer, Inglis Professor, University of King's College, Halifax, Nova Scotia

**Gregory Henriquez**

Architect, Managing Principal, Henriquez Architects, Vancouver, British Columbia

**Francine Houben**

Architect, Founding Partner/Creative Director, Mecanoo, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

**Ursula Johnson**

Ursula Johnson, Interdisciplinary Artist, South Brookfield, Nova Scotia (originally from Eskasoni First Nation in Cape Breton)

**Nancy Noble**

CEO and Director of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Nova Scotia

**Claire Weisz (Jury Chair)**

Architect, Founding Partner/Principal in Charge, WXY Architecture + Urban Design, New York City, USA

The jury would like to thank the technical review team with representatives from the AGNS, Develop NS, Halifax Regional Municipality, Dr. Ted Kesik (U of T, Sustainability), Vincent Leys

(CBCL, Coastal Resilience), Mark Gardin (QSolv, Costing) and representatives from the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

This report has been prepared with the assistance of Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, Building Design Group staff, as well as the Competition Professional Advisor, Joe Lobko of DTAH Architects who was engaged to assist the Province of Nova Scotia with the execution of the design competition process.

## **B: Jury Recommendation**

***The jury for the New Art Gallery of Nova Scotia as part of a Waterfront Arts District Design Competition has selected the submission from the KPMB Architects with Omar Gandhi Architect, Jordan Bennett Studio, Elder Lorraine Whitman (NWAC), Public Work and Transsolar team, as the design that best demonstrated excellence in the evaluation criteria identified by the Province of Nova Scotia in the Design Competition Brief and recommends that the Province of Nova Scotia now proceed to engage that team as consultants for the design of the Project.***

***The jury makes this recommendation with confidence that the winning team, working with experts and staff at the Province of Nova Scotia, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia and Develop Nova Scotia, will be able to address the recommendations found in this report to successfully deliver this exciting project. It is important that moving forward from the competition, the team engages with Mi'kmaw leadership to determine how Indigenous culture will be reflected on the Halifax Waterfront and at the New Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. The jury recommends that the team, through the engagement process, will work to ensure that the Project reflects the diversity of all Nova Scotian communities.***

## **C: Project Objectives**

The Competition Brief outlined for the teams the following Project objectives:

1. A Welcoming Visitor Experience
2. Programming with and for the Community
3. Strengthen our Identity
4. Public Space and Art
5. Uniqueness
6. Sustainable Design
7. Functionality
8. Professional Standards
9. Rental and Special Event Venues
10. Art is Everywhere

In addition, the design of the Project needs to support the fundamental belief pillars of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, which allows them to deliver on their new ways of thinking. These pillars are (to be): **Welcoming, Contemporary, Challenging** and **Ambitious**.

## **D: Evaluation Criteria**

The following selection criteria was included in the Design Competition Brief issued to each team and was provided to the jury to assist in focusing the discussion around the key objectives for the Project.

Each of these criteria were deemed to be essential for a design concept to succeed. The jury is recommending the design concept which was the most successful in demonstrating excellence in these criteria.

1. Overall quality of proposed design.
2. Capacity of the proposed design to achieve the objectives for the New Art Gallery of Nova Scotia and public space as part of a Waterfront Arts District as described in the design brief.
3. Capacity of the proposed design to achieve the technical and performance targets identified.
4. Capacity of the proposed design to meet the construction budget, and cost effectiveness of the proposal.

## **E: Adjudication Process Overview**

The members of the jury were provided the Design Competition Brief ahead of receiving the submissions to familiarize themselves with the project objectives and the detailed parameters of the Design Competition.

Due to COVID-19 the Province moved the Design Competition to a virtual format and provided both the jury, and the teams, supplemental video and other digital material to aid in the understanding of the site and the surrounding context.

A technical review report, prepared by various experts in categories specific to this project, was circulated to the jury on September 25<sup>th</sup>, the day following a public live-streamed presentation which was also recorded for viewing by the jury, and the public, at their convenience.

The jury met virtually for the adjudication on October 1<sup>st</sup> and October 2<sup>nd</sup>. The technical review team presented their reports in a concise form and responded to the juror's questions. The technical presentations included:

1. Art Gallery Design – Art Gallery of Nova Scotia staff presented by Sarah Fillmore, Chief Curator and Deputy Director, Programs, with Michael Lundholm, Museum Planning Consultant, Lundholm Associates
2. Public Space Program and Design – Develop Nova Scotia Staff presented by Kristin O'Toole, Senior Manager Planning
3. Municipal Planning – City of Halifax Planning and Development staff presented by Carl Purvis, Planning Applications Program Manager
4. Sustainability – Ted Kesik, Ph.D, P.Eng. Professor Building Science, University of Toronto
5. Resiliency, Climate Adaptation, Extreme Water Levels - Vincent Leys, Senior Coastal Engineer, CBCL Limited
6. Budget – Mark Gardin, Quantity Surveyor and Cost Consultant, Qsolv

Following the technical review presentations, the jury began its deliberations. All members of the jury were present for all discussions, as well as the competition Professional Advisor, Joe Lobko of DTAH Architects, Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal representatives and Senior Architects Anna Sampson and Sheena Moore, and Internal Services and Service Nova Scotia Procurement representative Najah Ibrahim.

The designs were discussed in detail against the criteria, beginning with capacity of the proposed design to achieve the objectives, followed by capacity of the proposed design to achieve the technical and performance targets, followed by cost, and ending in a detailed discussion about design quality.

A design competition captures a short moment in time, and the jury would like to acknowledge that the work produced by all three teams in only 10 weeks is nothing short of incredible. There were, however, areas of concern in all three of the designs related to art display, circulation, and art handling which dominated parts of the jury discussion.

The jury also spent a great deal of time discussing what would be appropriate representation of different cultures, and the importance of engaging with community to reflect a diversity of cultures. All three designs drew inspiration from the place, and the history and the culture of the first people of this place, the Mi'kmaq. Recognizing that the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia is looking to create greater diversity and inclusion, and become a more open and welcoming place for all Nova Scotians, the jury questioned how the process allowed a design and program to encompass Mi'kmaw culture without direct involvement of Mi'kmaw leadership. With this said, the jury believes that the process has room for humility. The jury recommends that the owner and the consultant team should use this moment in time to learn, grow and move forward together.

Through a process of review and discussion, the jury unanimously decided that the design direction established by the KPMB Architects with Omar Gandhi Architect, Jordan Bennett Studio, Elder Lorraine Whitman (NWAC), Public Work and Transsolar team best demonstrated the objectives, technical, and quality aspirations for the project, and recommended that the Province name this team the winner of the design competition.

## **F: Jury Commentary – Overview**

All three design teams brought forward ambitious and quality design visions for the New Art Gallery of Nova Scotia to anchor this new Arts District. Each excelled in embracing the multitude of challenges and desires for the Project to be welcoming, sustainable, accommodate a wide spectrum of programming, and challenge the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia to rethink what it means to be an Art Gallery for now and into the future.

## **G: Jury Commentary – Winning Submission**

It is the DNA of the proposed design, its sensitivity to people, public space, and its incredible ambition to deliver on the brief's many aspirations and criteria for the Project, which lead to a unanimous recommendation by this jury.

In the KPMB led submission, the design is wholly inspired by Mi'kmaw culture. The project is being led by the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Develop Nova Scotia, and the Government of Nova Scotia. It is not being led by a Mi'kmaw organization and therefore presents the conundrum: is it appropriate? The jury would like to see that as part of its first steps working together, the owner and the winning team engage with Mi'kmaw leadership.

The jury has confidence that the team of KPMB Architects with Omar Gandhi Architect, Jordan Bennett Studio, Elder Lorraine Whitman (NWAC), Public Work and Transsolar team and all of their partners can make something beautiful, together with Nova Scotians, and for all Nova Scotians.

### *1. Overall quality of proposed design*

The design used beautiful forms and materiality to create a seamless integration from building to landscape. "There seems to be an elegance". The team made "a beautiful beacon on the shores of Halifax." The design answers the request to be local, "even though shape may well change....[the design] will be attractive to the eye, people will want to know what that is, and they will want to go to it." The scale, use of wood, and the light is compelling. It has a rapport with the street that is open and on cue with the landscape, while finding its place in the urban setting.

This design has the most potential for people to engage with it in a compelling way. The forms are free-flowing, organic, where the space outside of the art spaces, has no start and stop. The design is unique and takes its inspiration from natural phenomenon. The design team understands the issue of the site and the context.

### *2. Capacity of the proposed design to achieve the objectives for the New Art Gallery of Nova Scotia and public space as part of a Waterfront Arts District as described in the design brief*

One of the important objectives for both the AGNS and Develop Nova Scotia is for the Project to be welcoming to all Nova Scotians, and those who visit the Arts District. The design by the KPMB team is "interesting in its welcome". "Welcoming has to do with the concept of being of this place in the world. It is not a physical attribute that is separate." It was, however, identified that the design needs to go further to welcome a diversity of cultures.

Though it needs further development, the design has potential to deliver on the "Art is Everywhere" goal. It is positive that the design centres on people, but there are places where art is entirely missing.

"The design is complex, ambitious and...that's good for people in the Province". The jury felt that the design best addressed the seasonality of the site and the building. The landscape design delivered on the challenge of being designed to accommodate a few thousand people amongst an authentic shoreline while introducing elements of being unique, where one can be alone (e.g. single rock at the entrance).

It was identified that the shipping/receiving and back-of-house requires a major overhaul. The relationship between the galleries, the location of the paywall, and some critical program elements such as the lecture theatre need revisions. Careful attention will need to be paid to these areas with the guidance of the AGNS team. The AGNS wants to focus on contemporary art, and the jury felt that further development of the design could introduce flexibility and

planning to achieve its exhibition goals. Though the back of house requires re-work, the placement of the loading further within the site appropriately prioritizes the urban realm on Lower Water Street.

The design interferes with view plane #6 under the municipal planning bylaws. The jury would recommend that the design be amended to address what is an unnecessary approval challenge for the project.

*3. Capacity of the proposed design to achieve the technical and performance targets identified*

The design team presented a “living, breathing building.” The design excelled in meeting Natural Ventilation, and Indoor Air Quality targets, featuring a demand-controlled and occupant-controlled hybrid ventilation strategy. The design has the capacity for excellent energy efficiency and management of GHG emissions. The sizeable use of wood provides considerable embodied carbon reductions. The design has the capacity for improvement by developing a more thermally resilient building enclosure and developing more comprehensive strategies for enhanced durability and adaptability.

*4. Capacity of the proposed design to meet the construction budget, and cost effectiveness of the proposal*

The suggested capital cost of the proposal was assessed to be above the identified project construction budget, based on the information provided by the team, and reviewed by the Technical Review Cost Consultant. The jury felt that the project design has the capacity to maintain its fundamental approach, and achieve a beautiful, functional design within the maximum construction budget. The jury saw the design as “over-programmed” and recommends that the team look at ways to work with the owner team to design a more compact building to help with costs, sustainability and operations moving forward.

The jury understands that the construction budget outlined in the brief is an absolute maximum for this project, and recommends that the design team work closely with the Province, and once procured the Construction Manager, to design the project and rethink the program to align to the maximum construction budget. They acknowledge this may take some “re-prioritizing of program, ...belt tightening and maybe eyesight sharpening.”