



Innovative Ideas for Backyard Homes

Laneway Housing Design Competition

City of
NELSON
BRITISH COLUMBIA

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

All photo/design credits: Smallworks (Vancouver, BC)

Competition Task: To generate high-quality, versatile laneway house building plans that will be purchased by the City of Nelson and offered to the public as “pre-reviewed plans” to make it easier and cheaper for the average homeowner to build a laneway house on their property, thus increasing uptake of laneway housing.

Objective: To generate high-quality, pre-reviewed laneway house building plans for the City of Nelson that will offer exceptional value-for-money for homeowners and make it easier for them to build a laneway house on their property, thereby increasing uptake of laneway housing.

Why Participate: Laneway and backyard infill housing is increasingly popular across Canada and the American West Coast, both amongst homeowners, renters, and municipalities. This type of structure is essentially a mini single-family house, but given the size constraints that they are subject to as accessory buildings, designing them requires innovative thinking, both in order to make them liveable, but also to help reduce neighbourhood opposition to this type of infill housing. In the City of Vancouver, 45% of new homes are being built with an accompanying laneway house. Other challenges are present, too, such as achieving project costs that are affordable to enough homeowners and adapting designs to individual backyards and lot coverage restrictions, as well as achieving energy efficiency for a smaller building. Architects and home designers would do well to hone their skills in laneway house design and broaden their portfolio in this market.

Over the course of 2018, the City of Nelson undertook public engagement and best-practice research and ultimately adopted significant amendments to its policies on laneway housing, allowing for more flexibility and larger laneway homes and above-garage suites. In the past year, the City of Nelson has received as many laneway house applications as it had in the previous

five years in total. Seven laneway houses have been built in Nelson since 2017, with others having been approved. In fall 2018, the City published a reader-friendly “How-To” guide on laneway house development. Many Nelson residents have expressed interest and regularly contact the City inquiring about pre-approved designs. Nelson is a dense, growing city with a high percentage of renters, with a vacancy rate well below 1%. City Council has supported laneway housing as a key initiative to gently densify the city and create new housing in existing neighbourhoods.

Winning designs will be awarded prize money along with a \$1,000 royalty each time the design and plans are purchased. Winning contest participants may benefit from additional paid work (at their own set rate) resulting from clients’ desire for modifications. Furthermore, they will benefit from free, ongoing publicity by the City of Nelson of their winning design through traditional media, social media, the City’s website, laneway house application documents, and other events. The City intends to use the contest as an educational initiative, showcasing the creative, high-quality architecture generated through this contest as a means to promote laneway housing. Non-winning designs from the first and second rounds may also be marketed by the City, with full credit given to the designers (once the results have been announced and anonymity lifted) and the original designers retaining full copyright of their designs, to be sold at their own discretion.

Monetary Prizes
1 st prize: \$5,000
2 nd prize: \$3,000
3 rd prize: \$2,000
Non-monetary prizes (awarded to 1 st /2 nd /3 rd prize winners)
<u>People’s Choice</u> : after the above prizes have been announced, Nelson residents will have two weeks to vote.
<u>Affordable Choice</u> : the design review panel will award this designation to the design that it feels will be the most economical to build.
<u>Eco-Choice</u> : the design review panel will award this designation to the design that it feels achieves the highest ecological standards.

Stages: The competition consists of two rounds. The first round is prototypical: we are looking for the concept, costs, performance, and design interest of your design. Exterior drawings only are required. At this stage, you must submit all the documents required in the “Submission Requirements and Rules” section below.

Up to five of the top entrants from the first round will be invited to continue on to the second round. If you are invited to this stage, you will be asked to provide interior floor plans, specs, and a more refined affordability and eco-sustainability report, and be able to show your design's adaptability. Second-round participants will be asked whether they are interested in having their contact information shared with other second-round participants and/or unsuccessful first-round participants for possible collaboration.

Only the contest winners will be required to submit complete, buildable plans.

Review Process: Submissions will be evaluated through a blind jury process. The Design Review Panel will consist of five jurors, plus the competition organizer (Alex Thumm, City Planner) as a non-voting chairperson. The five members are:

1. **Damon Hayes Couture** is Creative Director and Design Manager of Studio North, an interdisciplinary design + build practice based in Calgary, Alberta. The Studio North team has been collaborating for the past decade on projects of a variety of scales, from flat pack furniture and public art installations to laneway housing and mountainside hotels. Their work has been featured in a growing number of local and international publications such as Canadian Architect, ArchDaily, and Dwell. Having completed several laneway housing projects, Matthew Kennedy and Mark Erickson, the principals of the firm, can now enjoy the fruits of their labour by living the laneway lifestyle themselves. Damon also lives in a Studio North home, tending to the many tropical plants in the solarium of their Home Away project.
2. **Ross Chapin** is an architect and community planner based on Whidbey Island, Washington, and author of *Pocket Neighborhoods: Creating Small Scale Community in a Large Scale World*. Since 1996, Ross has partnered in developing seven pocket neighbourhoods in the Puget Sound region—small groupings of homes around a shared commons. Additionally, Chapin has designed more than 40 neighbourhoods across the U.S., Canada and the U.K. for other developers. Among current work are communities for multi-generations, elders and mentally ill clients, and whole neighbourhoods with connected pocket neighbourhood clusters. His built projects and innovative ideas have received international media coverage, professional peer review and national design awards, and are shifting the thinking of homebuyers, builders and policy makers.
3. **Jake Fry** started Smallworks in late 2005 and became a strong advocate for the introduction of laneway housing. He established Smallworks Studios and Laneway Housing Inc., which has built over 100 laneway houses, and worked with the City of Vancouver and other municipalities to help develop zoning by-laws based on his experience and interaction with hundreds of potential small home clients. “My desire in starting Smallworks was to build simple, elegant modern homes which, with basic

maintenance, would look as good a generation after they were built as when they were new.” In 2012, Jake was one of two founding directors of SmallHousing BC, a non-profit society. In 2014 Jake was named Ernst & Young’s (EY) Entrepreneur of the Year in Manufacturing. Today, Jake focuses on finding new ways to broaden the range of housing types in Vancouver to create affordable options for single-family home ownership.

4. **Ed Olthof** of Pacific West Builders is a local builder, chair of the City of Nelson’s Advisory Planning Commission, and past president of the Nelson & District Chamber of Commerce. His role on the Design Review Panel is to bring the pragmatic perspective of a local builder who is intimately familiar with the Building Code and local construction limitations and costs.
5. **Pam Mierau** has been the Director of Development Services and Approving Officer for the City of Nelson for over four years. She previously worked in urban planning at the City of Calgary and a Calgary-based architectural firm. She holds a Masters of Environmental Design, an Urban Design Certificate, and a Bachelor’s Degree in Communication. Her role on the Design Review Panel is to bring a city planning perspective to the table, to speak to Nelson’s experience with laneway house builds thus far, and to represent the City’s broader planning objectives.

In the event of a panel member being unable to continue to act through illness or any other cause, the Competition Organiser reserves the right to appoint an alternative panel member. The competition organiser may submit an analysis of the submissions’ compliance with City bylaws to the panel. The panel will select the competition winners, if possible, by consensus. If no consensus can be achieved, awards will be determined by majority vote.



All submissions will be judged anonymously. Only the contest organiser will know participants’ identity. It is therefore imperative not to include any identifying material in your submission.

If there are at least three competitive entries from designers based in the West or East Kootenay, the Design Review Panel will be expected to designate at least one of the top three prizes to a “local” submission. Submissions will nonetheless remain anonymous.

City of Nelson residents will also be invited to vote for their favourite designs (a “people’s choice” award). This vote will not be anonymous, as it will occur after the first, second, and third prizes have been announced.

Timeline

* *May, under extraordinary circumstances, change without notice.*

Date	Goal
June 19 th , 2019	Official Launch of Competition
July 31 st	Deadline to submit questions. (<i>Answers will be provided by August 8th.</i>)
September 2 nd	Deadline for first-round submissions <i>If a satisfactory number of submissions hasn't been achieved, the competition organiser reserves the right to re-open and extend 1st round.</i>
September	Design Review Panel evaluates and narrows down to top 5 for second round
Approx. October 1 st	Invite successful candidates to second round and submit feedback to them; the Design Review Panel may direct questions to entrants continuing on to the second round
Oct 1 st – Dec. 31 st	Second Round
January 2020	Design Review Panel evaluates second round submissions and announces winners
February 2020	City of Nelson publicizes the winning designs. Then, public has two weeks to vote for “People’s Choice”. City awaits full building plans from winners, followed by plan review by building officials. Prize money is rewarded once received and approved by the Building Official.
March 2020 - on	Plans made available to the public.

Design Parameters: What You’re Designing and Where

1. A “Laneway House” in the R1 zone of the City of Nelson, British Columbia, a small but dense city characterised by its heritage architecture. Laneway houses are essentially backyard houses and they may not be subdivided off. They are an accessory use to a single-family home. Think of them as a detached secondary/basement suite. They are often used as rentals or housing for young or aging family members. In Nelson, they are not permitted to be used as short-term rentals (i.e. Airbnb).

2. Most, but not all properties in Nelson back on to a laneway/alley, but lane access is not required to build a laneway house. Residents may choose to design their laneway house so that their primary, everyday access is via the lane, but for emergency access purposes there must be a 1m-wide foot access from the primary street.
3. We recommend reading the City's "Laneway House How-To Guide":
www.nelson.ca/lwh_guide
4. The competition organiser generally expects the construction costs of a 950-sq. ft. laneway house in Nelson to average \$220 per square foot.
5. Compliance is required with City bylaws as they pertain to "Laneway Houses" in the R1 zone, the City's Development Permit Guidelines for Laneway Houses, and the BC Building Code 2018 (note: Nelson is located in Climate Zone 5).
 - a. The zoning bylaw can be accessed at www.nelson.ca/zoning
 - b. The Development Permit Guidelines: www.nelson.ca/lwh_guidelines
6. In some areas of the City there is a Wildfire Development Permit restricting wood siding, open soffits, shingles, or shakes are not permitted as roofing or siding. Refer to Development Permit Area #3 in the Official Community Plan.
7. Site characteristics and variations:
 - a. Most lots in Nelson are steeply sloped, although many are flat, too. Lots that we expect to be interested in a laneway house are 500 to 650 square metres in size and 15-18 metres wide.
 - b. In most cases (R1 zoning), the required side and rear setbacks are 1.5 metres.
 - c. You may wish to consider designs that can easily be modified to be a single-storey (4.5 metres in height or less) and designs that include, for example, a single-car garage that could easily be modified to be additional living space if the client so chooses (note that the maximum height drops from 6.1 metres to 5.8 metres if no garage or carport is included).
8. Building restrictions (for terms in quotation marks, refer to their definition in the City's Zoning Bylaw for calculation rules):
 - a. "Height": 5.8 metres, but 6.1 metres if the "building footprint" includes a carport or garage
 - b. "Building Footprint": 65 square metres (note: the zoning bylaw allows for an 80 sq. m. footprint for laneway houses 4.5 metres in height or under). In most cases, maximum lot coverage is 35% (in others, this can go as high as 45%). Due to the lot coverage of existing houses, designers may wish to balance the observation that not every property may accommodate a 65 sq. m. footprint, and that in many cases 55 sq. m. may be required, with the general desire to maximise living area.
 - c. "Gross Floor Area": between 26 and 89 square metres

Submission Requirements and Rules

1. Deadline to submit for the first round: September 2nd, 2019 at 11:59pm, PST. *Submit by email to the competition organiser, Alex Thumm (see contact information below).*
2. Building specifications are to use the metric system. Drawings should normally be shown at a scale of 1:50 to 1:200.
3. Submissions shall be in PDF format and sent by email. Files should not exceed 20mb. If your files are too large to email, please contact the competition organiser. All file submissions will be acknowledged by the Organiser within 48 business hours (Monday to Friday). If you do not receive an acknowledgment of receipt, your submission may have been caught in a spam filter and you should contact the organiser.
4. Submission contents shall not name the entrant(s) or their firm, in order to keep the contest anonymous. Entrants and their affiliation will be identified in the contest entrance form and waiver.
5. Initial (first-round) submissions are to include:
 - a. A design board [sent as a PDF only], legible if printed in A3 (or 11" x 17"), including high-level specifications indicating materials used, compliance with zoning, the City's laneway house design guidelines, the BC Building Code, and other relevant information (e.g. floor area)
 - b. At least one exterior perspective of the building and/or proposal in context of a sample site; renderings or quality drawings
 - c. In addition to inclusion in a design board, any images shall be submitted separately in .jpeg or similar format; one version high-resolution and another low-resolution version that is easier to email.
 - d. A written description (between 200 and 1,000 words) indicating how the evaluation criteria (see below) are met. Entrants may include information on additional opportunities for affordability, if applicable.
 - e. Complete and sign the entrance and declaration of authorship and rights form. Submission of the form acknowledges authorship of the design ideas, and by signing it, Competitors accept all conditions pertaining to the competition and agree to abide by the decisions of the Design Review Panel and the City.
6. Second-round submissions (invite-only) are to include:
 - a. Updated first-round contents, if necessary
 - b. Interior floor plans and, preferably, interior renderings
 - c. Exterior: elevation drawings (including height calculation) and renderings
 - d. (For the above, you may include plans and drawings/renderings for various configurations, e.g. flat-lot and hillside; 1-storey and 2-storey, as desired by the designer)

- e. Specifications/stats indicating compliance with zoning, the City's laneway house design guidelines, the BC Building Code, and other relevant information (e.g. floor area)
- f. May include sample site plan, if desired
- g. A written "pitch" (up to 400 words) to interested homeowners. The text's target audience are potential purchasers of the plans. Why should they pick your design? Name the design.

7. Submissions should avoid structure-specific or site-specific engineering.
8. By entering this competition, entrants declare that the designs in their submission have been developed solely for the purposes of this competition and represent no infringement on any existing copyright or patent.
9. Entrants must be based in Canada and be of the age of majority.
10. Design teams may be modified at the second-round stage with written notice to the competition organiser, so long as the primary entrant remains the same.
11. Group submissions are encouraged, as well as student submissions. Student submissions must be supported by at least one professional, such as a professor or practitioner.
12. Members of the Design Review Panel and their immediate family, employees, employers, or associates are ineligible to participate. Current employees of the City are also ineligible.
13. No member of the Design Review Panel may assist an entrant or act in any other capacity to advise or aid an entrant in the development or presentation of their submission. Entrants shall not communicate in any manner with any member of the Design Review Panel regarding this competition prior to the public announcement of the results.
14. Any submission that is received after the submission deadline, is incomplete, or violates any provisions of the Competition rules or Terms and Conditions, will be disqualified. Upon evidence of any infraction of the competition conditions, the entrant(s) shall be informed, in writing, of disqualification.

If design entries do not meet appropriate standards, the Design Review Panel reserves the right to not award one or more prizes. If a satisfactory number of submissions have not been received, the competition organiser reserves the right to extend the contest. Winners will be announced as soon as possible.

Feedback will only be sent to the winners. Competitors will be expected to maintain confidentiality and must not release their designs



for publication, or identify the name of the successful or unsuccessful designers to any third parties until after an official announcement has been made and/or anonymity lifted. The Competition Organisers reserve the right to publicise the Competition, any design submission, and the result in any way or medium they consider fit. Illustrations of any design - either separately, or together with other designs, with or without explanatory text written by the Organisers or by the entrant - may be used without cost. Once anonymity has been lifted, authors will be credited and recognised in all associated media and publicity.

Copyright rests with the author of the submitted design, until and unless a prize has been awarded. It is a condition of entry that winners will transfer ownership of the design and plans to the City of Nelson. Prior to the prize money being issued, the plans must be approved by the City's Building Official for Building Code compliance. If the winning design ultimately does not meet regulatory requirements to the satisfaction of the City's Building Official, the prize will not be awarded to that entrant and the Design Review Panel may award the prize to another design.

The Architectural Institute of British Columbia (AIBC) has, in writing, reviewed this competition and approves it for participation by its members, as well as designers.

The deadline for questions is July 31st, 2019. Questions shall be submitted by email and answers will be posted online on the project page at www.nelson.ca/designcompetition. The competition organiser is:

Alex Thumm
City Planner, Development Services, City of Nelson
Suite 101 - 310 Ward Street
Nelson, British Columbia V1L 5S4
P: 250.352.8253 | E: athumm@nelson.ca

Post-Competition

The City of Nelson owns the rights to the designs and plans and sells them for \$1,000 (reserving the right to add on an administrative cost-recovery fee) per project within the City of Nelson. \$1,000 goes to designer as a royalty for each use of the design. The designer may sell the design/plans (this includes designs/plans that are substantially similar to the winning design) outside of City limits at the price of their choosing; however, they may not allow the plans/design to be used for more than 15 individual builds outside of City limits. In the case of a team submission, payment will be made to the primary entrant or their firm, as desired.

If the City chooses to retire the designs from this program, the rights return to the original designer.

If pre-reviewed designs are used, the applicant will benefit from an expedited review process. Furthermore, the \$450 development permit fee (if applicable) will be refunded to the applicant

if Step 3 of the BC Step Code is met. If a plan purchaser wishes to modify the plans, the original winning designer will be recommended to the applicant by the City. However, the applicant is free to choose another designer to modify the plans for their building permit. The City may also indicate to the applicant which builder(s), if any, have built their chosen design previously.

Evaluation Criteria

1. Design: successful designs will be high-quality, attractive, and practical. Contestants would therefore benefit from knowledge of the real estate preferences of locals. Designs will fit as wide of a range of contexts and neighbourhoods as possible (i.e. fitting with contemporary and heritage primary homes alike), giving consideration to Nelson's context and architecture.
2. Good home, good neighbour: successful designs will be appreciated by both neighbours and occupants of the laneway house. They will have street appeal (attractive design that will be attractive to most) and afford privacy to both occupants and adjacent neighbours. Limit bulk. Occupants will benefit from a high-quality interior that will be as house-like as possible (e.g. high ceilings, 'quiet walls' to reduce noise within the home).
3. Affordability: in their use of materials, successful designs will strike a balance between affordability and sustainability that will be attractive to Nelson property owners. The ongoing costs of maintenance must also be taken into consideration.
4. Flexibility and longevity: the winning designs will be those that are the most elastic, meaning adaptable to and replicable across a variety of lots, neighbourhoods, lot configurations, and topographies in Nelson (which are often steep). Maximise opportunities for easy customisation to accommodate individual appetites for affordability, finishing, and sustainable design features. Entrants will be rewarded for designs that show promise of a high shelf life.
5. Eco-Design: green materials are used where appropriate and maximum possible energy efficiency is achieved (strive to achieve the highest-possible step code level). Other sustainability features (e.g. living roofs) will be rewarded, but weighted against affordability. Ideally, such features would be including as 'options' for the client.

