Des Moines Water Works and Iowa State University’s Department of Landscape Architecture Announce Partnership for Design Competition for Water Works Park

Des Moines Water Works, working in partnership with Iowa State University’s Department of Landscape Architecture, today (June 9) launched “Parkitecture,” an international design competition for Water Works Park. The competition, aptly named for its emphasis on the fundamental role landscape architecture and design play in re-envisioning Water Works Park, will seek proposals from professional designers and will offer students the opportunity to submit design concepts in an honorarium category.

The goal of the design competition is to draw awareness to the rich identity of Water Works Park and the value of the Raccoon River in serving the needs of Central Iowans, said Ted Corrigan, Director of Water Distribution and Grounds for Des Moines Water Works.

“The competition is intended to generate discussion about watershed issues and best practices and offer innovative design solutions to address ecological and recreational challenges specific to Water Works Park” (e.g., prone to frequent flooding), he said.

Water Works Park, a 1,500-acre park in the heart of Des Moines, has provided the main water supply for the city since the early 1900s. It is also a major component of the city’s open space system and trail network.

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Through this visioning process, Des Moines Water Works seeks to limit the impact of flooding on park features; restore the character of the Arie den Boer Crabapple Arboretum; provide opportunities for memorials and donations to the park; enhance vehicular and pedestrian circulation in the park and provide a visually appealing experience for both; improve parking throughout the site; separate park and operational activities; and enhance the entrance to the park.

Thirty-two Iowa State University students in the Landscape Architecture 401 Professional Practice course, taught by Associate Professor Carl Rogers, have worked this spring semester to collect current and historical site information on Water Works Park and develop the competition brief. They also designed the website for registration and proposal submission.

“The partnership between the Department of Landscape Architecture and Des Moines Water Works has enabled landscape architecture students to learn first-hand how a design project is conceived from the perspective of both the client and the user,” Rogers said.

“Water Works Park offers a tremendous opportunity for design firms to engage in contemporary issues of river hydrology and urban public space to re-examine the urban landscape. The design competition will showcase the park and provide Des Moines Water Works and the City of Des Moines a new perspective of the role the park plays in the form of the city,” he said.

Online registration began today, June 9, and will close Aug. 1. First-round submissions will be due Oct. 3.

Proposals will be evaluated by a panel of jurors representing the design industry, Des Moines Water Works, and the community, and up to five finalists will be selected for the second round of competition. Finalists will have eight weeks to revise and resubmit their proposals for consideration. A winning design concept will be announced by the end of the year. For more information on the design competition, visit http://parkitecture.design.iastate.edu.

“Des Moines Water Works is pleased to partner with Iowa State’s Department of Landscape Architecture to develop this international design competition. The result will be an innovative park design showcasing Water Works Park as a model component of the larger watershed and recreational destination for current and future generations of Central Iowans,” Corrigan said.

Funds for implementation of the winning design will be obtained through private fundraising and will not be borne by water rate payers.

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