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At Van Alen Institute, we believe design can transform cities, landscapes, and regions to improve people's lives.

INSTITUTE

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Photo by Scott McIntyre

VAN ALEN INSTITUTE AND THE CITY OF NORTH MIAMI ANNOUNCE RFQ FOR DESIGNS THAT TRANSFORM FLOOD-PRONE, VACANT LOTS

**Multi-Disciplinary Teams Worldwide Are Invited to Submit Qualifications to
Develop Transformative, Accessible, and Well-Used Community Spaces that Support Well-Being
in North Miami**

New York, NY (April 25, 2019) — Van Alen Institute, in collaboration with the City of North Miami, announce the release of a **Request for Qualifications (RFQ)** for an interdisciplinary design team to reimagine public uses of the City of North Miami's current and future portfolio of flood-prone vacant lots, known as repetitive loss (RL) properties. The competition asks: How can we reimagine underutilized communal spaces to bring the community together and adapt to climate impacts over time? How can these sites be repurposed to reduce the cost of flood insurance for communities?

Through a two-stage, 7-month competition, Van Alen and the City will select three finalist teams and will ultimately award a winning team \$80,000 for masterplan

development and pilot design implementation at one RL site. The RFQ deadline is **May 26, 2019**. To download the RFQ solicitation documents and learn how to prepare a submission, please visit the link [here](#).

Repetitive Loss Properties builds off both Van Alen's work through *Keeping Current*, a multi-year initiative to identify and implement innovative solutions to sea level rise in the Greater Miami region, and the organization's previous competition *Future Ground*, a project to activate vacant lots in New Orleans. For *Repetitive Loss Properties*, Van Alen is focusing on the management of flooding impacts to inland communities through the innovative use of vacant lots.

Van Alen is spearheading this initiative, leading the process from competition design to implementation. Van Alen, in collaboration with the local based non-profit, Urban Impact Lab, is creating a robust community engagement program to guide the design process. Community members are encouraged to provide input for design teams by [completing a survey](#). Van Alen's introduction to the project catalyzed the City's prioritization of this important initiative. In doing so, Van Alen aims to inspire local governments across the country to increase accountability to their communities by incorporating similar strategies identified through the competition and providing the resources needed to address challenges presented by sea level rise.

"Environmental stewardship is, and has always been, a top priority in the City of North Miami," said **Mayor Smith Joseph of North Miami, D.O., Pharm.D.** "This collaboration with Van Alen Institute will not only create an environmentally sustainable asset for our local community to enjoy, but it's also setting a precedence for creative and intentional environmental sustainability in our region and far beyond. We are definitely excited to see the outcomes that this project will yield. This is a great opportunity."

"It's critical that we start identifying ways for flooding landscapes to become assets to our communities. We can't ignore estimates that repetitive loss properties are on trend to increase by 5,000 a year," said **Van Alen Institute's Director of Strategic Initiatives, Jessica Lax**. "This competition is an opportunity to be proactive in our response to the impacts of climate change and reimagine the value of these spaces for communities and municipalities."

About Repetitive Loss Properties

The City of North Miami is one of the most flood-prone areas in Miami-Dade County, as land elevations are at or below the maximum tide levels. Over the years, the City has acquired a considerable number of vacant and flood-prone properties. Many of the vacant lot sites are located in low-income and minority and communities, predominantly home to people of Haitian descent.

The presence of vacant lots exacerbates perceptions of neglect and may shift neighboring home values. Some of these properties are categorized as “repetitive loss” properties, insurable buildings for which two or more claims of more than \$1,000 were paid by the National Flood Insurance Program within any rolling ten-year period since 1978. The competition aims to identify contextually relevant, low-maintenance uses for these properties in an effort to improve quality of life through urban design.

Scientists and policy experts warn that as seas continue to rise and extreme weather becomes more frequent as a result of climate change, more properties will flood more often, causing further strain on an already financially stressed system.

Repetitive loss (RL) properties constitute a significant drain on the resources of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), costing about \$200,000,000 annually. Very few RL properties are insured under NFIP, although they account for 25-30% of insurance loss claims.

Van Alen and the City of North Miami want to identify strategies to address the social and financial strains RL properties place on communities and government, so that other cities can benefit from our learnings and investment. This is a national issue, that we are looking to pilot solutions at a local level.

Repurposed areas preserve the original stormwater management functionality of the sites to meet the broad economic and infrastructural needs of the City as a whole while providing an opportunity to address deficiencies in public amenities within the properties’ immediate neighborhoods. New uses must align with allowable uses per the FEMA grant code.

About the Repetitive Loss Properties RFQ

Through this RFQ, Van Alen and the City seek a masterplan and pilot design that transforms vacant public space into valuable, accessible, and well-used community spaces that support well-being. The masterplan and pilot design should develop strategies that serve as stormwater management solutions for their adjacent communities and contribute to the raising of the Community Rating System (CRS) points. They should identify future opportunities for the acquisition of RL properties while detailing a visionary pathway to establish an adaptive network of such sites, and recommending policy changes where relevant. The masterplan and pilot design should also generate solutions that can be implemented at various scales, with low maintenance costs. Selected Finalists will develop a high-level conceptual design at the end of Phase I. The Winner will develop a masterplan and refine conceptual designs for implementation by the City in Phase II.

About the Jury

The jury, comprised of local and national leaders in climate change, design, and community engagement, will play a critical role in selecting finalist and winning teams, and in helping to shape their concepts.

- Germane Barnes, *Director, Studio Barnes*
- Jennifer Bolstad, *Principal Landscape Architect, Local Office Landscape & Urban Design*
- Jessica Lax, *Director of Strategic Initiatives, Van Alen Institute*
- Debbie Love, *City Planner, City of North Miami*
- Jayantha Obeysekera, *Director & Researcher, Sea Level Rise Solutions Center, Florida International University*
- Akin Ozaydin, *City Engineer, City of North Miami*
- Jeremy Alain Siegel, *Associate, BIG - Bjarke Ingels Group*
- Marta Vicedo, *Founding Partner & Strategy Director, Urban Impact Lab*

About Van Alen Institute

At Van Alen Institute, we believe design can transform cities, landscapes, and regions to improve people's lives. We collaborate with communities, scholars, policymakers, and professionals on local and global initiatives that rigorously investigate the most pressing social, cultural, and ecological challenges of tomorrow. Building on more than 125 years of experience, we develop cross-disciplinary research, provocative public programs, and inventive design competitions.

Keeping Current: A Sea Level Rise Challenge for Greater Miami is a project of Van Alen Institute that encompasses a series of initiatives seeking innovative solutions to protect South Florida's 6 million residents from the potentially catastrophic consequences of sea level rise. To fund the initiative, Van Alen raised \$850,000 from The Rockefeller Foundation, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, The Miami Foundation, Target, and Terra. Van Alen employs its expertise and network to help South Florida residents gain a better understanding of sea level rise and new ways to respond to their changing environment. This initiative builds upon Van Alen's leadership in organizing projects that generate innovative solutions to complex climate change problems. After Hurricane Sandy, we worked with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to develop nearly \$1 billion worth of infrastructural improvements in the Northeast region. We also recently worked in Lower Mississippi River Delta, where we collaborated with dozens of stakeholders to make the New Orleans region more sustainable over the next 100 years.

Keeping Current is made possible with support by:

