

A  
STUDENT  
DESIGN  
COMPETITION

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2025

# Filling the Gap

New approaches to  
diversion, healing and  
rehabilitation



CAAJ/AAJC

CANADIAN ACADEMY OF ARCHITECTURE FOR JUSTICE  
ACADÉMIE D'ARCHITECTURE DE JUSTICE CANADIENNE

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## Filling the Gap: Designing for new approaches to diversion, healing and rehabilitation

Present day societies are facing a wide variety of crises, ranging from the influx of highly addictive drugs to climate change, war, poverty, discrimination, homelessness, the suppression of Indigenous culture, as well as an increasing need for mental health care and support facilities. This in turn is leading some marginalized and struggling members of society towards anti-social behaviour and crime.

While they are often on the frontline of these situations, traditional justice institutions such as police stations, courthouses, and custodial facilities are not always designed to respond effectively to these challenges facing society. As a result, many affected people are falling through the gaps.

Various formal and informal strategies are emerging to address this shortfall, from tent cities and squatter villages to transitional housing, safe injection sites, Indigenous community centres, organizations providing access to social and mental health services, substance abuse programs, crisis centres, and diversion programs for certain criminal charges. These new typologies seek to avoid institutionalization of the individuals involved and instead try to set them on a path to healing, recovery and rehabilitation.

### The Challenge

The Canadian Academy of Architecture for Justice (CAAJ) invites architecture students to speculate on these issues in a design competition for a new community-oriented building that helps to fill a gap. This involves the selection of a site in a community of the competitor's choice, identification of the specific crisis (or crises) being addressed, and the development of an architectural or urban design solution. Design submissions will be evaluated by a jury of justice experts, architects and industry professionals. Participants are highly encouraged to explore a wide spectrum of architectural responses from functional and practical at one end to philosophical and social at the other, including ways in which the building integrates into the community, and acts as a catalyst for building positive relationships with the community it serves.

### Design Parameters

- A community-oriented justice facility that includes program elements that are seen as contributing to help solve the specific crisis that the competitor is addressing, such as health and/or social services, transitional housing, library, educational facility, place of worship, etc.
- A site located in a community of the competitor's choice
- New, adaptive re-use and/or additions to existing buildings are acceptable, as well as other architectural interventions

## Goals

Goals of the community-oriented building could be one or more of the following:

- To reduce crime and recidivism by addressing issues that are relevant to the community such as homelessness, substance abuse, mental health, or poverty
- To provide health and/or social services appropriate to the chosen context, in order to address root causes of criminal behaviour
- To divert individuals away from incarceration through community service, addiction programs and other rehabilitation services
- To bridge the gap between the community and its marginalized members
- To give justice-involved individuals a place to feel comfortable, welcome and safe
- To repair fractures within the community.

Through their design submission competitors are asked to:

- Contribute to the public realm and surrounding context
- Integrate principles of sustainability
- Incorporate features into the physical environment that promote calm, healing and stress relief.

## The Canadian Academy of Architecture for Justice

The Canadian Academy of Architecture for Justice (CAAJ) is a group of architects, designers and allied professionals working in the field of justice architecture, with the aim of sharing knowledge, advancing Canadian expertise in the field, and advocating for a justice system that is accessible and equitable for all members of society. The Academy focuses on the four areas of justice architecture – courts, corrections, law enforcement, and allied facilities.

## Competition Requirements & Timelines

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**Registration & Eligibility**

Participants must register for the competition on the CAAJ website ([www.caaj.ca](http://www.caaj.ca)).

Each participant must be enrolled as a student at a recognized school of architecture. Winners will be required to provide proof of enrollment.

Individual competitors or teams are welcome to participate.

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<b>Timelines</b>	Competition package released.....February 01, 2025
	Competition submission due.....June 30, 2025
	Winners notified.....August 31, 2025
	Results posted on CAAJ website.....September, 2025

**Submission Requirements**

- Location plan
- Site plan
- Floor plans
- Elevations
- Key sections
- Planning diagrams and explanatory illustrations, including 3D images
- Maximum 500-word narrative

All submissions must be in PDF format, on a maximum of two A1-size panels, in a horizontal (landscape) format. All text on the panels must be in English. No names or identifying information is to be included on the panels.

Submissions must be uploaded to the CAAJ website ([www.caaj.ca](http://www.caaj.ca)) by 11:59pm ET on the date specified above. The maximum combined file size for the submission is 10MB.

**Jury**

**Carlos Augusto Garcia** | Associate Principal, Brooks + Scarpa Architects



Carlos Augusto Garcia is an architect, designer, and artist. He is currently the Associate Principal and Studio Director at Brooks + Scarpa in Los Angeles, California. His focus is on design research, master planning, sustainability, and wellness, touching myriad spheres within the design and construction industry. In the studio, he manages staff and projects, while developing systems, operations, and procedures. Outside of the office, he's worked with various organizations dedicated to advancing design technology, sustainability, climate action, and inclusivity in the architecture industry; including AIA, ICC, NCARB, ASHRAE, and the National Endowment for the Arts. His passion for the built and natural environments began with his work in emergency management & disaster recovery in post-Katrina New Orleans, and he continues to advocate for equity & dignity in the practice of architecture

**David Clusiau** | Vice President of Design, NORR Architects & Engineers | CAAJ Chair



As Vice President of Architectural Design at NORR, David provides strategic direction and leads design teams for large international projects and small-scale assignments, working collaboratively with clients and partners to find an inspired and appropriate vision, including award-winning designs for a number of Justice facilities. He has served on juries for the RAIC, AIA AAJ, CAAJ, and Design Review Panels for Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton. David is a regular contributor to AIA Academy of Architecture for Justice Conferences and is the founding Chair of the CAAJ.

**Khalil A. Cumberbatch** | Director of Strategic Partnerships, Council on Criminal Justice



Cumberbatch is a nationally recognized, formerly incarcerated advocate for criminal justice and deportation policy reform. Previously, he served as chief strategist at New Yorkers United for Justice and as associate vice president of policy at the Fortune Society. Pardoned by New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo in 2014, Cumberbatch earned a master's degree in social work from CUNY Lehman College, where he was awarded the Urban Justice Award for his work with underserved and marginalized communities. He is also a lecturer at Columbia University.





**Susan Davis** | Executive Director, Gerstein Crisis Centre

Susan Davis is the Executive Director at Gerstein Crisis Centre, a 24-hour Mental Health and Substance Use Crisis Centre in Toronto. She has over 30 years of experience in the community mental health field with many years in direct service as well as leadership. Susan actively engages in the development of innovative services, partnerships and systems that improve access to the supports people need and that recognize the impact of the social determinants of health on people's overall well-being. She is committed to creating services and systems that consider the whole person, treat all people with respect and dignity and create opportunities for people living with mental health and substance use issues to maximize their well-being.



**Jacob Kummer** | Architect & Justice Specialist, Montgomery Sisam | CAAJ Vice Chair

Jacob is a Toronto-based architect specializing in the design of justice facilities and public buildings. Passionate about creating inclusive, supportive environments, he is dedicated to designing spaces that empower occupants while enhancing access to essential services. Jacob has played a leading role on several high-profile justice sector projects across Canada and is currently working on the design of shelters and supportive housing aimed at addressing the diverse needs of vulnerable populations. He holds a degree from IE School of Architecture and Design and is a Chartered Member of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). Jacob currently serves as Vice Chair of the Canadian Academy of Architecture for Justice (CAAJ).



**Michael Moxam** | Vice President & Practice Lead for Design Culture, Stantec

Michael is committed to excellence in all aspects of the design process. His experience in the design and development of complex project types is characterized by a commitment to design excellence, an emphasis on a collaborative, integrated design process, and a desire to redefine established typologies. His approach focuses on research and analysis of factors such as community context, history, site, landscape, topography, and environmental context. Michael's goal is the creation of environments that inspire and enhance community connectivity and city building. Michael actively shares his expertise and practice experience with the next generation of architects as a guest lecturer and studio critic at the Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape & Design at the University of Toronto, Carleton University, and the University of Manitoba.

**Awards**

First prize is \$3,000 CAD, second and third prizes are \$1,000 CAD each. Prize awards will be issued to winners via electronic bank transfer for those outside of Canada, and by cheque for those within Canada.

Winning entries will be featured on the CAAJ website and individuals/team members will be provided with electronic certificates.

**Publication**

The Canadian Academy of Architecture for Justice reserves the right to publish entries on the CAAJ website, or to distribute to other architecture or justice-related publication media (websites, magazines or exhibitions). Credit for authorship will remain with the individual (or named individuals in the case of a team submission). By submitting material individual competitors and teams acknowledge this right.