

# Boxcar Architects

Contributed by AIA Newark & Suburban

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## SUMMARY

In 2008, AIA Newark and Suburban (AIANS) held a design competition titled Live the Box. Designers were given an open competition program – design an innovative, visionary and compelling multi-family mixed-use project – using the standard shipping container. The Newark waterfront is awash in shipping containers and as a creative way to push the limits of these steel boxes, AIANS held a competition open to designers internationally. In total, 143 submissions were received which resulted in three winning entries and three honorable mentions. The project was cited in national newspapers such as the *New York Times*, the *Seattle Times*, and the *Trenton Times*, to name a few.

## COMPETITION PREMISE

The competition was designed to bring to public attention two current issues in Newark, New Jersey. First, the demolition and removal of the historically significant Westinghouse building next to the Broad Street Train Station in Downtown Newark and, second, the thousands of unwanted shipping containers that clog Newark's port and the surrounding landscape. AIANS challenged innovative thinkers and designers to re-invent the shipping container, or "box," with their most inspired and creative utilizations of shipping containers as the primary construct of an urban, multi-family, mixed-use project.

The selected site is adjacent to a major train station and walking distance to the downtown cultural center of Newark. The site is also within three blocks of Rutgers University and the New Jersey Institute of Technology. The Westinghouse building was not part of the proposed design as it was being demolished at the time the competition launched. City officials and local artists were directly involved with the program and its events. The competition was run in collaboration with the Westinghouse Art Exhibit featured at the New Jersey Institute of Technology School of Architecture gallery. The winning entries were displayed at the Newark Museum at project completion.

QuickTime™ and a TIFF (LZW) decompressor are needed to see this picture.

*The Web site logo.*

## AIANS AS DESIGN INCUBATOR

The main goal for the program was to bring together public officials, artists, students, the public, and architecture professionals to promote and enhance awareness of the profession among the public. The site of the competition is currently under consideration for improvement by the City of Newark. Officials involved with the redevelopment program in Newark were invited to be critics.

AIANS members helped design the logo, develop color schemes for the Web site, photograph the site surrounds, and coordinate events. Along with AIANS and the Young Architects Forum, three major sponsors supported this effort: Skanska, AIA New Jersey Institute of Technology, and the National Portable Storage Association.

Live the Box received 240 individual or group registrations, representing 21 countries; 143 of those registered submitted. The Live the Box competition was a local and international success. Competitors from around the world not only participated as contestants but attended the exhibit of the Westinghouse Project which engaged local artists and community public officials. Because of the success of the program and interest in the City of Newark, AIANS has been urged by both national and international designers to hold a second design competition.

## RESOURCES

### More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 22.08.15 Celebrating Architecture, Educating the Public
- 22.08.11 Revitalizing St. Louis: The Washington Avenue Windows Project
- 22.08.03 Design Competitions as a Catalyst for Community Action

**Feedback**

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**Key Terms**

- Leadership
- Associations
- Design associations
- Architectural associations
- The American Institute of Architects
- AIA components
- Design competitions