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## **Nashua Broad Street Parkway design contest moves forward**

*By ALBERT McKEON Staff Writer*

NASHUA – With the Broad Street Parkway expected to open up access to the Millyard area, the city has solicited designs for a new and improved Millyard Technology Park neighborhood.

The Nashua International Design Competition jury Tuesday night will review 15 accepted submissions with the expectation that the field will be narrowed to a smaller group, with the sole winner eventually receiving a \$5,000 grand prize. The meeting will be held in the City Hall auditorium at 6 p.m.

City officials see the Broad Street Parkway as not just a two-lane roadway, but as a project that will expand access to the Millyard neighborhood and potentially revitalize the downtown.

The city could ultimately use all or some of the winning design in reshaping the Millyard upon completion of the Broad Street Parkway, or the ideas of several entries could contribute to the future landscape.

On the competition's Facebook page, someone behind the contest wrote that even if 1 percent of the submissions are incorporated into the actual design of the parkway, or if Millyard property owners implement a few or several of the ideas, the competition "is considered a success."

James Vayo, assistant project manager of Renaissance Downtowns, is one of nine jurors charged with picking a winning submission.

He said the jury received 21 designs, rejecting five for not following competition rules and tossing out another that was a duplicate work.

Jurors each ranked the remaining 15 designs on a points system and will explain their favorites at Tuesday's meeting. The jury will then forward four to eight designs to the next round, Vayo said.

“There were some really good submissions out there,” he said.

None of them, though, is a “magic bullet” in reaching an ultimate look for the Millyard, so they may each contribute to better ideas, Vayo said.

The city hopes the parkway – a two-lane thoroughfare that will cross the Nashua River and connect Broad Street with the downtown – will be open to traffic by the end of 2014. Once traffic starts moving on the parkway, the city expects business in the somewhat dormant Millyard to awaken.

In August, a nine-person jury opened the competition to anyone interested in designing how the Millyard and Tree Streets neighborhood should look with the parkway as a connector.

It was a blind competition, meaning jurors don’t know who submitted designs. That allowed for a more natural, unbiased judging of work, said Tim Nickerson, chairman of the competition.

The competition wasn’t limited to professional architects and designers; anyone who had an interest in reshaping the area was encouraged to forward ideas, he said.

The accepted designs offer a wide variety of visions. They can be seen at Nashua International Design Competition’s Facebook page. Discussion on the designs varied on the Facebook page.

For instance, one person remarked that the designs appeared to come from the “Dream Factory” and that the competition served only as experience for young designers. Someone else criticized the competition for potentially using only a small portion of the ideas in the designs.

Another person defended the process, saying “idea competitions are about capturing the imagination for a place to change, over time.” The competition should “be commended for establishing the necessary advocacy to promote good urban design,” this person wrote.

This stage of the competition occurs as the Broad Street Parkway moves slowly into its major construction phase. A Burlington, Mass., firm has just started preparing a final design of the parkway, with some construction possibly starting later this year, but the bulk of the work beginning probably next year.

Albert McKeon can be reached at 594-6528 or [amckeon@nashuatelegraph.com](mailto:amckeon@nashuatelegraph.com). Also check out McKeon (@Telegraph\_AMcK) on Twitter.