

A Coming Together: Two Outside! Landscape Architects Projects Receive Awards at the 2021 Halifax Urban Design Awards

Outside! Landscape Architects Inc., wins the Civic Design and Community Connections & Initiatives Awards for innovative, community-first urban design.

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On Wednesday, June 9th, the jury for the [2021 Halifax Urban Design Awards](#) named two [Outside! Landscape Architects Inc.](#), projects as award winners for their important role in enhancing the quality of public life in the Halifax Regional Municipality.

Selecting projects that improve their surrounding communities through functional, sustainable and aesthetic excellence, Outside! takes home the Award of Merit in Civic Design and the Award of Merit in Community Connections & Initiatives.



“

At its core, design is a vehicle for connection, inclusion, elevation and renewal. It's my privilege to wake up every day and join my team in working toward those goals.”

*Sue Sirrs, Founder of Outside!
Landscape Architects*

The global pandemic has highlighted the importance of design and our civic realm, creating public spaces that provide access to vibrant and inspiring public space. The isolation and hardship of the past months has called on the strengths of community-first urban design, namely its role in enhancing our collective quality of day to day experience. Pivoting to a virtual awards process, the Halifax Regional Municipality—with the support of the local design community—resumed the Urban Design Awards after a 2018 re-launch to promote and celebrate the innovative work by local designers.

With an uptick in entries, eight Awards of Excellence and four Awards of Merit were awarded by the jury. Jurors focused on celebrating projects that demonstrate important achievements

toward successful urban infill, with a hope that the local design community will adopt some of those achievements in subsequent projects, promoting and improving creative urban design across the local industry.

As an imaginative expansion of existing space, the [Keshen Goodman Outdoor Library](#) received a unanimous selection by the jury for the Award of Merit in the Civic Design projects category. In collaboration with Halifax Public Libraries, the Outside! Landscape Architects firm, led by Sue Sirrs and Jamie Clarke, understood the Keshen Goodman Library project as a way to translate unused outdoor space into a vibrant, multipurpose destination.

“This project is the result of forward-thinking leaders at the library who had the courage to do something very different with their space,” says Sue Sirrs, principal of Outside! “The library serves every demographic in the city—young, old, rich, poor, new Canadians and established residents.

We wanted to extend their boundaries and their offerings so that they could continue to do that important work.”

Keshen Goodman Outdoor Library features pencil-post hammocks, open café seating centered around a playful stone sculpture, a stage for readings and performances, and extended high-speed WiFi across the entire property. Creative and functional, these outdoor destinations became a cornerstone of community life through COVID-19.

“The project changed the way we as library professionals thought about what we were offering, how, and to whom,” said Åsa Kachan, chief librarian and CEO. “Our goal is to build lifelong relationships with the residents in our community, equipping them with easy, no-cost access to important public resources. Expanding our space has helped us not only generate more public interest, but also to interact with residents in a more relaxed, more playful capacity.”

Equally focused on fostering community connections, Outside! was recognized with a second



Daffodil Garden for Cancer Survivors



Keshen Goodman Outdoor Library

Award of Merit for Community Connections & Initiatives for their work in developing and executing the Daffodil Garden for Cancer Survivors. The first garden for cancer survivors in Atlantic Canada, it's a one-of-a-kind oasis on the Dartmouth waterfront, overlooking the Halifax harbor.

A well-rounded project with a clear and carefully executed plan, the project develops a visual language, and spatial cues naturally guide families through the space for an impactful and transformative experience. The center of the garden features a statue by Nova Scotia sculptor, Ivan Higgins, depicting three people at different stages of life, recognizing cancer as a force that affects people of all ages.

The Daffodil Garden for Cancer Survivors was the brainchild of Judie and Jim Edgar, both cancer survivors. They dreamed of a place of hope, celebration, and restoration for those who have and are grappling with cancer, as well as for their support teams who've battled alongside of them. Outside! worked with dedicated volunteers and staff at Halifax Regional Municipality to bring the garden to life.

The iconic cancer ribbon is represented through converging concrete paths. Custom designed bright yellow benches with their bases cut with daffodil motifs line the sides, animating the garden's theme all year long. The backs of the benches are adorned with inspirational phrases developed in collaboration with oncologists and cancer patients. In an amazing show of support, 8,000 daffodil bulbs were planted by volunteers.

"The daffodil represents the cause, but it's also a perennial flower, returning year after year," reflects Sirrs. "We wanted this space to celebrate healing and survivorship in its many forms."

In these projects and others, Sirrs and her team take a community-centric approach to public space. The pandemic has reminded us all of the importance of building and maintaining accessible and inspiring outdoor locations.

"At its core, design is a vehicle for connection, inclusion, elevation and renewal," says Sirrs. "It's my privilege to wake up every day and join my team in working toward those goals."

About Outside! Landscape Architects Inc.

Outside! is an international award-winning firm with a focus on designing beautiful and sustainable outdoor spaces. With a wide-ranging portfolio of commercial, residential, and institutional projects, principal Sue Sirrs and her team take a playful, inspired approach to engage traditional designs with a modern twist.

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