



The winning entries (from left to right): *Miami Waterworks* (second place) by Mikkel Thisted, *Pulse* (first place) by Helen Pierce and *Living Filter* (third place) by Bryan Astheimer and Sarah Weidner Astheimer. For more details, visit downtown.org.

DawnTown: Reimagining Downtown Miami

It started as a pet project — the mission of a single person trying to find ways to improve a city he loved. It became an international endeavor, a design competition called DawnTown'08 Waterworks with a two-fold objective: to tell the story of Downtown Miami and to generate inspired and plausible ideas about urban planning and architectural improvement for the area. This year, in its first incarnation, the competition focused on redesigning the pump station at the waterfront edge of Bicentennial Park off Biscayne Boulevard, an effort intended to shape a 21st-century vision for Downtown Miami.

"Part of the reason I like Miami is because it continually reinvents itself," explains Andrew Frey, the visionary behind DawnTown. "It's in the middle of a reinvention now. There is an exciting urban story happening." Frey, an associate in the land use group for the law firm Akerman Senterfitt, moved to Miami four years ago and quickly grew to recognize Downtown Miami as underappreciated. He cites the city's explosive population growth, the performing arts center, Miami Dade College, the Museum Park master plan, retail revitalization and potential new zoning codes as just a handful of the reasons it's time Downtown moved up on everyone's radar. "For the health of the region," Frey says, "it is important to have a strong downtown."

Inspired and determined, Frey enlisted a hard-hitting cast of jurors: Jean-François LeJeune, a professor of architecture at the University of Miami; Terence Riley, director of the Miami Art Museum; Alex Wall, a professor of urban design at the University of Karlsruhe in Germany; Loretta Cockrum,

CEO of Forum Group; Misha Mladenovic, vice president of Cabi Developers; Cathy Leff, director of The Wolfsonian-FIU; Raymond Jungles, a renowned Miami-based landscape architect; and Gillian Thomas, president of the Miami Science Museum. Collectively, they vetted more than 160 entries submitted from as far away as Uganda and the Republic of Georgia, as well as several from right here in Miami.

"It was the first truly international competition in Miami for decades," says LeJeune. "It is really critical to create a culture of competition in this city in order to develop new ideas, new visions."

Three winners were announced during Art Basel week in December. The top honor of \$8,000 went to architect Helen Pierce of San Antonio, Texas, for "Pulse," a tentacled structure reminiscent of a "bioluminescent sea creature," as Pierce described it. Architect Mikkel Thisted of Frederiksberg, Denmark, took second place, and third place went to the London-based husband-and-wife team of Bryan Astheimer, an environmental designer, and Sarah Weidner Astheimer, a landscape and urban designer.

While plans for actually building the new pump station are still under discussion, Frey is fully focused on next year's competition. "When you care about making your city as good and beautiful as possible," Frey explains, "the challenge is going out and finding the ideas and hopefully generating excitement." So what's next? A train station? Perhaps a new city hall? When it comes to reimagining Downtown Miami, thanks to Frey's initiative, excitement is bubbling over. —Megan Aquilina