

# Chicago Architect

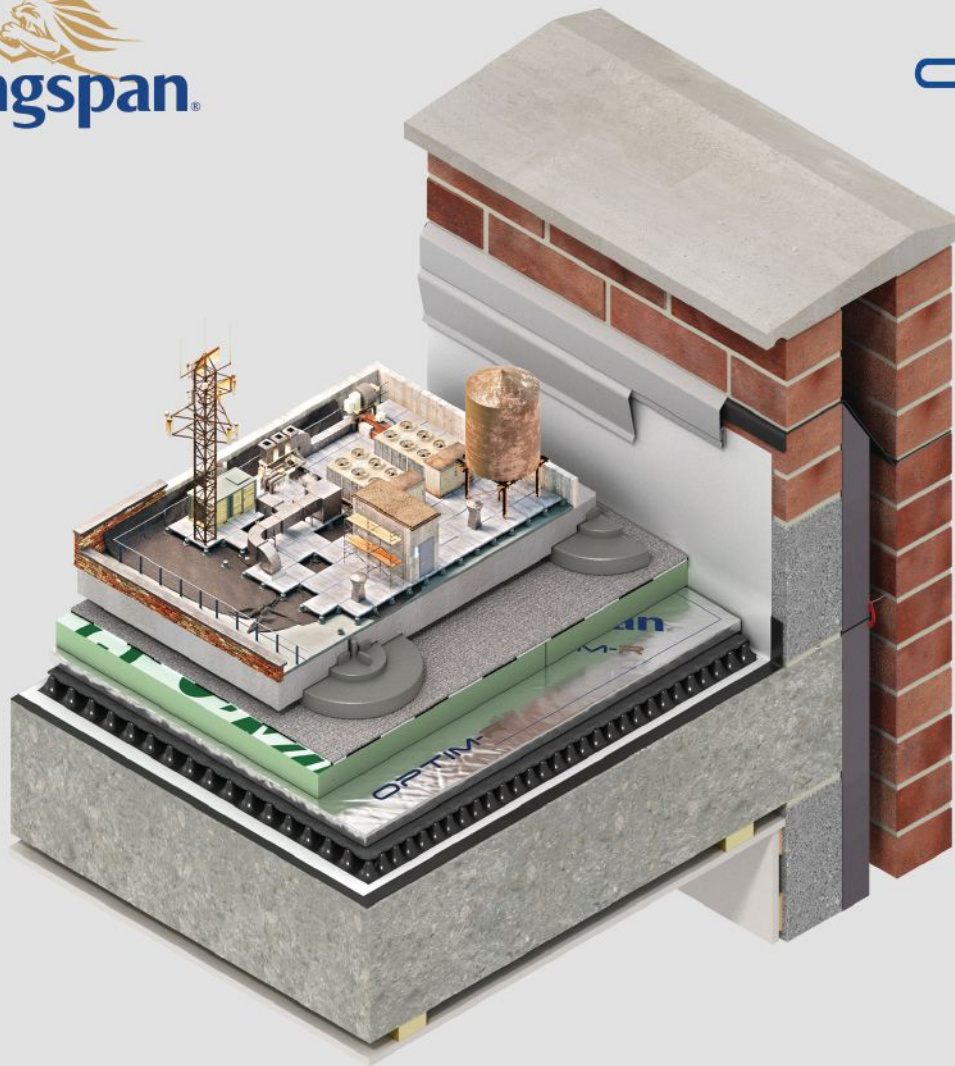
**Celebrating Moody Nolan,  
2024 AIA Chicago Firm Award Recipient // 26**

**+ Designing a More  
Equitable Chicago:  
Members and Community Leaders  
Weigh In on the State of Community  
Development in Chicago // 30**





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*Chicago Architect*, an outreach tool of AIA Chicago, is published four times a year as an authoritative resource for architects, the larger design community, and the public about architecture and related issues of interest to Chicago architects. The magazine communicates industry trends, the value of high-quality design, and the role of AIA Chicago and its members in the world of architecture.

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Dear Members and Friends,

There is a kind of mythology and fascination with being an architect. How many times have you been asked, “What do you do?”

Was your answer as broad and general as you could muster? Did you default to the exquisite minutiae of the task you most recently accomplished? Or did you land somewhere in between, hoping you would have infinite time for an accurate response?

Our commonality — regardless of scale, type, or flavor — is our eager willingness and ability to generate solutions through curiosity and design. Our desire to design a better world is on full display throughout this issue, which focuses on the state of community development in Chicago. Seeking to explore the evolving role of design in fostering more equitable neighborhoods, we invited a range of voices to contribute their ideas and solutions. In the following pages, you will find perspectives from recently appointed Department of Planning and Development Commissioner Ciere Boatright, Far South Community Development Corporation President Abraham Lacy, and four AIA Chicago members representing firms small, medium, and large. Their comments form the perfect backdrop for this issue, which also showcases the community-scaled work of our 2024 Firm Award winner, Moody Nolan.

For AIA Chicago, the honorable yet daunting task of representing our 4,000-plus members and multitudes of interests falls to members of the board, Knowledge Community and Affinity Group leaders, and staff. While we represent different sizes, scales, and forms of practice, we bring similar professional challenges and shared goals to the new 2024–2026 strategic plan currently under development. For us, working together is another opportunity for us to flex our varied problem-solving experiences to provide meaningful and useful benefits to all members. The joy of this effort is an expansion of our own perspectives to see what our shared profession can be and accomplish.

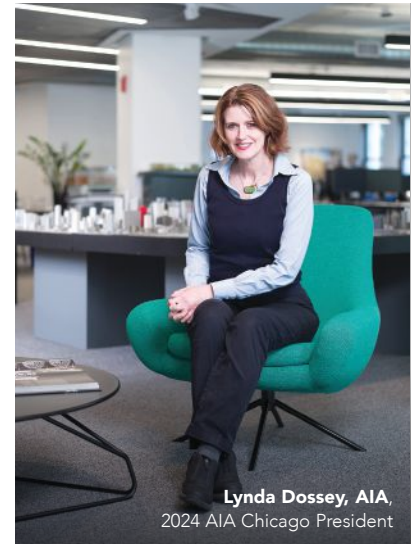
Last year, AIA Chicago offered 112 programs and events in a variety of scales and typologies to members at all career stages. My question to you isn’t “What do you do?” It’s “What will you do next?” Are you ...

- **Seeking learning units?** Sign up for one of AIA Chicago’s many educational programs.
- **Looking for others who share your values?** Join an Affinity Group (an identity- or mission-focused group).
- **Needing a mentor or looking to mentor?** Participate in AIA Chicago’s Bridge mentorship program, which connects AIA Fellows with rising professionals, offering an eight-month curriculum of curated programs.
- **Interested in shaping the future of the profession?** Support our Architects in Schools program, which brings architecture to middle school Chicago Public School students.
- **Interested in networking?** Attend a Third Thursday event or become a firm ambassador and meet new people or reconnect.
- **Thinking you’d like to grow your skillsets and share knowledge?** Join one of our many Knowledge Communities (practice-area or professional-based interest groups), organized to share information and organize learning opportunities and events.
- **Wanting to advocate for legislative or social change in the profession?** Join our Advocacy Committee, the Committee on the Environment (COTE), or one of our Affinity Groups.
- **Wanting to give back and reinvest?** Join us on the board of directors of AIA Chicago or the Foundation board of trustees or serve on one of the many committees and task forces that help us strategize the future goals and vision of our chapter.

There are so many ways for all of us to get involved. I hope you’ll consider lending your support to the future of our organization and the profession. Visit [AIACHicago.org/GetInvolved](https://AIACHicago.org/GetInvolved) or write to [membervoices@aiachicago.org](mailto:membervoices@aiachicago.org).

Thanks to all those who have already said yes.

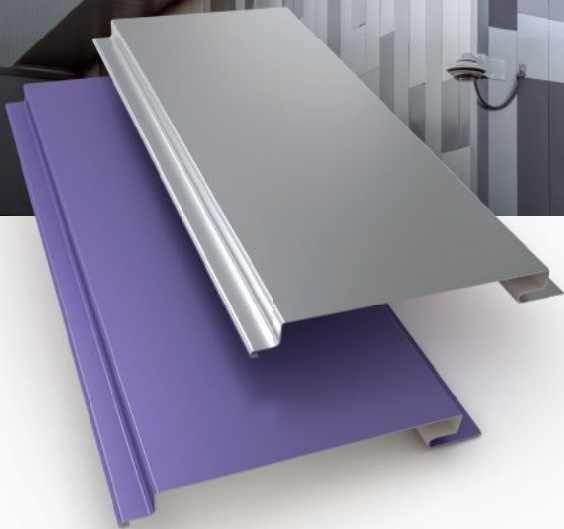
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► Save the date for Designight, which will be held at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance in Chicago’s Millennium Park on Thursday, September 5, 2024. Keep an eye out for tickets on sale soon!

# School Spirit

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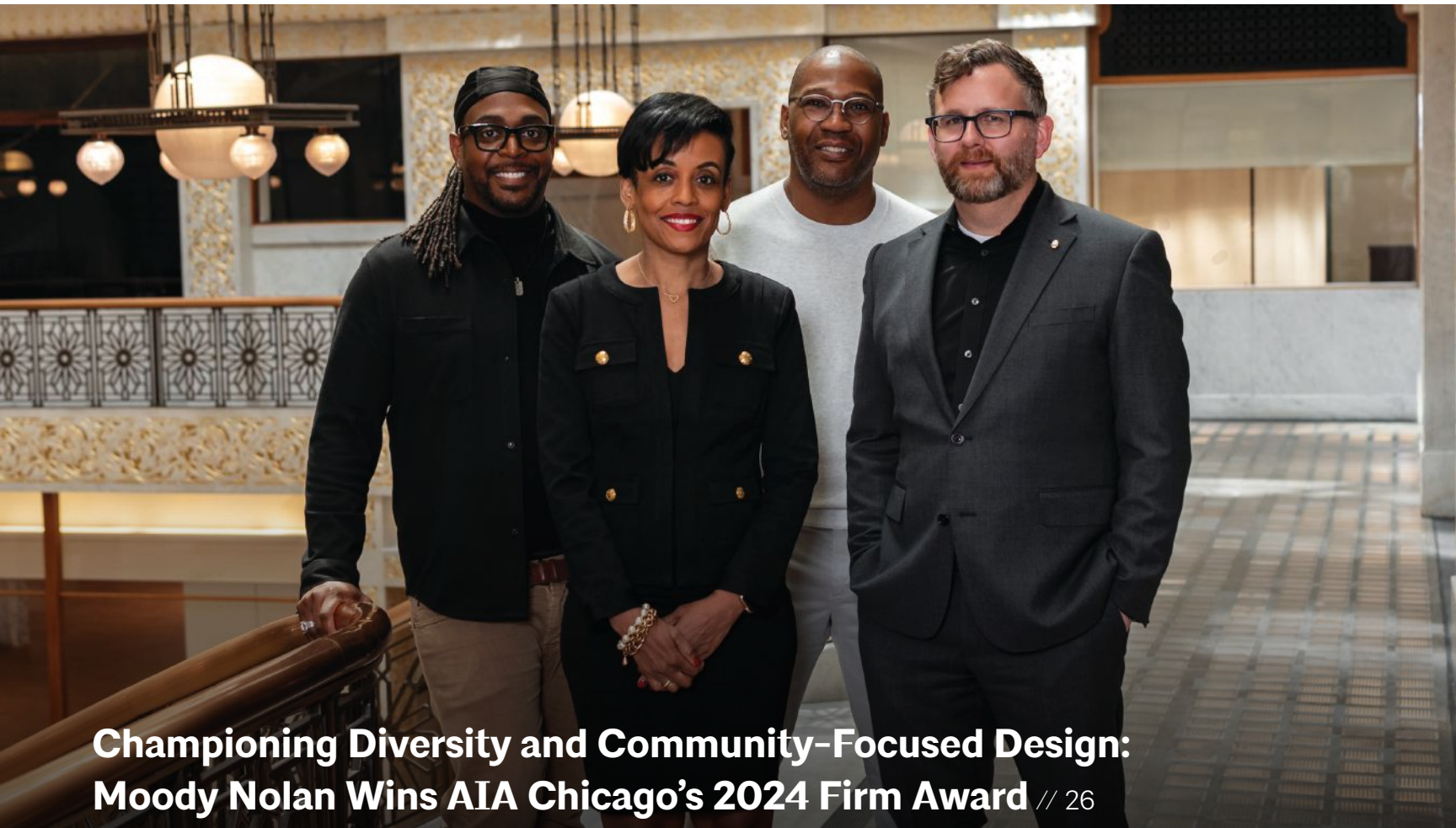


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Designing a More Equitable Chicago: Members and Community Leaders Weigh In on the State of Community Development in Chicago



▲ ON THE COVER

Woodlawn Friend Health Center by Moody Nolan

JASON KEEN

► OUR PREVIOUS ISSUE

is available to view digitally at [AIAChicago.org/ChicagoArchitect](http://AIAChicago.org/ChicagoArchitect)

**Tide Academy**

Menlo Park, CA  
LPA Design Studios

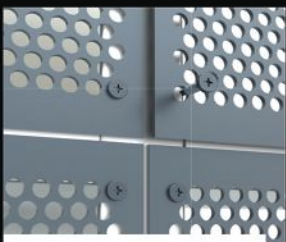


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**Zach Mortice** is a Chicago-based design journalist and critic who focuses on architecture and landscape architecture. His work is situated at the intersection of public policy and design. He writes for *Bloomberg CityLab*, *Places Journal*, and *The New York Review of Architecture*, among others.



ANGELA GARBOT PHOTOGRAPHY

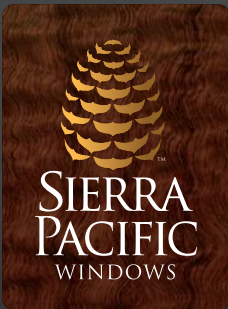
**Dillon Goodson, Affil. AIA Chicago**, is the managing editor of *Chicago Architect* and advises AIA Chicago's signature award programs. He has spent more than 15 years working to advance places that are more just and joyous, better resourced, and loved.



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# AIA Chicago’s Custom Residential Architects Network (CRAN) Welcomed More Than 200 Attendees



At top: A full house for the CRAN Symposium. At bottom left: CRAN Symposium Planning Committee and CRAN Knowledge Community co-chairs: (L to R) Mike Shively, AIA; Nate Lielasus, AIA; Tim Hawkins, AIA; Julie Hacker, FAIA, chair; Ron Mescall, Affil. AIA Chicago; Stuart Cohen, FAIA; Seth Romig, AIA; and Bob Zuber, AIA. At bottom right: Third Thursdays, kicked off by Lynda Dossey, AIA, and Joe Cliggot, AIA.

AIA Chicago’s Custom Residential Architects Network (CRAN) Symposium buzzed with activity as more than 200 attendees, from established practitioners to emerging architects, gathered at The MART for a day of learning and connection. The symposium included presentations from **Carla Bruni**; **Katherine Darnstadt, AIA**; **Kindon Mills**; **Mike Jackson, FAIA**; **Eric Singer, Affil. AIA Chicago**; and **Tim Hawkins, AIA**. Symposium attendees also exchanged ideas and insights at 18 vendor tabletop displays, showcasing the latest offerings. The evening concluded with a Third Thursday panel composed of residential designers making an impact: **Jeff Klymson, AIA**; **Grant Gibson, AIA**; **Joy Meek, AIA**; **Lawton Thies, AIA**; and **Sharon Xu, AIA**.

# AIA Emerging Executive of the Year:

Jen Masengarb, Assoc. AIA

It’s not a secret that Chicago’s architectural community is a special place, and it’s in no small part due to the decades-long impact of **Jen Masengarb, Assoc. AIA**. Named 2023 Council of Architectural Component Executives (CACE) Emerging Executive of the Year, Jen was recognized by her executive director peers from chapters across the country for her leadership. The award is given to an AIA executive who has led a chapter for less than three years. From transforming Designight into an event that is accessible to all to completing our chapter’s first strategic plan in more than 30 years, her impact is not going unnoticed.

None of this could have been possible without the additional guidance and support of the board of directors, board of trustees, Knowledge Community and Affinity Group leaders, numerous task force leaders and volunteers, chapter staff, and you, our members, who make up this vibrant community. **CA**



Eric Klinner, CAE, and Mary Young, AIA Illinois; **Kimberly Dowdell, AIA, NOMA**, 2024 AIA President; **Jen Masengarb, Assoc. AIA**, AIA Chicago; and Becky Gilbert, AIA Northeast Illinois.

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At top: Attendees compete at Guess-a-Sketch. At bottom left: (L to R) Host and emcee **Shawn Waddell, Assoc. AIA, EIT, NOMA**; honoree sketchers **Robin Randall, FAIA**; **Charles Hasbrouck, FAIA**; **Ann Thompson, FAIA**; **Ryan Chester, AIA**; **Rael Slutsky, FAIA**; **Dan Wheeler, FAIA**; **Maria Pelot Peraza, FAIA**; and Executive Director **Jen Masengarb, Assoc. AIA**. At bottom right: Reigning champions Perkins&Will.

## \$1,400 Raised for AIA Chicago Foundation’s Diversity Scholarship at Second Annual Guess-a-Sketch

AIA Chicago’s second annual Guess-a-Sketch was a blast as we raised funds for the AIA Chicago Foundation’s Diversity Scholarship! This evening of architectural Pictionary was a packed house as **Ryan Chester, AIA**; **Charles Hasbrouck, FAIA**; **Maria Pelot Peraza, FAIA**; **Robin Randall, FAIA**; **Rael Slutsky, FAIA**; **Ann Thompson, FAIA**; and **Dan Wheeler, FAIA**, sketched iconic buildings from around the world for competing teams to guess. Perkins&Will held their title, beating out competing teams from EXP, Jahn, Lamar Johnson Collaborative, Ratio, Ross Barney Architects, TYLin | Silman Structural Solutions, and Stantec. Thank you to all who joined us!



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## AIA Chicago Foundation Diversity Scholars Shared Impact and Advice

Earlier this spring, AIA Chicago Foundation Vice President **Danielle Tillman, AIA**, sat down with our 2023 Diversity Scholars, Jocelyn Hernandez and Jamia Smith, students at the School of Architecture at UIC. Both Chicago natives, Jocelyn and Jamia share the impact the Diversity Scholarship has had on their lives and what doors it has opened for them.

► The impact of this scholarship is tremendous, and these inspiring stories propel the Foundation forward. If you are called to donate to the AIA Chicago Foundation Diversity Scholarship or give at the corporate level, please visit [AIAChicago.org/Donate](https://AIAChicago.org/Donate).

**Danielle Tillman, AIA (DT):** Why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself and how you got into architecture?

**Jocelyn Hernandez (JH):** I am the eldest of six kids, a Mexican American daughter of immigrant parents from Mexico. I say that because it really is who I am as a person. When my parents first got here, they opened a little shoe repair shop in downtown Chicago and started rehabbing properties one by one.

I began my education career thinking I want to be a doctor, like every other immigrant daughter [who] has good grades, because your parents point you in one direction. But during COVID, I went home, and I worked with my dad rehabbing a property — a full rehab in Chicago — and we started doing floor plans and started from there. I saw that I enjoyed it, and so I switched my career from pre-med to pre-architecture.

**Jamia Smith (JS):** Similar story. My parents are basically the entire reason why I'm here. I grew up on the South Side, and I was one of four siblings.

When I was in about fifth grade, my mom brought home some software. I can't remember what the software was, but it's similar to SketchUp today, and I remember going through and designing our dream house. There were three stories; the first floor had all these grab bars. Of course, I didn't know anything about ADA then, but my grandma was in a wheelchair, so I [guess] I just knew what she needed on the first floor, and it went from there. And we're here now.

**DT:** What are some of your thoughts about the significance of receiving the AIA Chicago Foundation Diversity Scholarship?

**JS:** I think it's super significant. I think it's so necessary, especially when you're trying to go into a field with people [who] don't look like you. It may sometimes seem like it's not a big deal, but it's so necessary to see people being successful who look like you. It's my goal to continue to serve the future of Black women and architecture and just architects in general.

**JH:** It's very scary walking into a room where you are not seen. And sometimes your ideas don't match your peers' when you're from different backgrounds.

Being recognized for our continuing efforts, for being able to continue to represent women — especially Black and Brown women — in the room. It feels good to be safe.

**DT:** What do you think the scholarship has made possible for you?

**JS:** It has already given me more time because I'm trying to split time between my baby, school, and work — which is hectic to say the least. [Because of the scholarship], I was able to stop working, which meant more time for study and more time for my baby.

How will it impact me in the future? I already feel this desire to give back to the people who have supported me. And I already feel that I have made connections with AIA Chicago, and I would love to continue giving back, whether that be through the mentorship programs or however as I'm needed.

**“It's very scary walking into a room where you are not seen. And sometimes your ideas don't match your peers' when you're from different backgrounds. Being recognized for our continuing efforts, for being able to continue to represent women — especially Black and Brown women — in the room. It feels good to be safe.”**

— JOCELYN HERNANDEZ, 2023 DIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

**JH:** One, financially, it has helped so much. I don't have my mom or dad's financial support, which means: *Do I have to go get a job or to find the scholarship that is a good fit for me? That I'll be happy to represent but also honored to receive?* So, that has tremendously helped with continuing my education.

It has helped me feel more confident. When I am sitting in the studio, it's a reminder that I deserve to be here. I've been honored to be here. I've received this scholarship. *I should* be here. So, it's going to bring more confidence for me in the classroom and the work that I produce and my ideas. Having mentors, yes, but also like Jamia said, in giving back, being part of something that's bigger than myself and being able to continue moving forward, perhaps being a mentor in the future.

**DT:** Is there any advice you would give to students pursuing an architectural career?

**JH:** I would say, ask for help. When you're going into something new, which is something difficult, don't be afraid to say, “Hey, I need help.”

We could always have more drive. We could always stay up later doing work. We could always read more and do more of our homework and do it more accurately. But, at the end of the day, just ask for help. It's OK, it doesn't make any less of you or any more of you. It just makes you a better person.

**JS:** Yeah, asking for help is super important. I probably could have saved myself a lot of trouble when I started if I wasn't afraid to ask for help. It's just a hard process. You have to really love it, and it's easy to get lost in it. I think one of the things I had to do was learn how to create boundaries and manage my time, and unfortunately that's just something that comes with practice. If you truly love it, it will be worth it. It will be amazing.

**DT:** Thank you for sharing the conversation, and again, we could not be more proud to have two very smart, accomplished, award-winning, and beautiful women to represent the AIA Chicago Foundation Diversity Scholarship. It's an honor to have you represent us and to be a source of support for you.

# Diversity Scholarship Recipients

The AIA Chicago Foundation is pleased to announce the 2024 recipients of the Diversity Scholarship. This scholarship is an opportunity to attract and retain diverse, talented young professionals in Chicago and recognizes the value of new and unique voices in the profession. Mentees are paired with a mentor from the AIA Chicago membership to receive ongoing guidance throughout their educational tenure.



**Ivan Gonzalez-Vazquez**

Graduate Student  
First-year student in 2024  
Illinois Institute of Technology

"I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the AIA Chicago Foundation trustees, collaborators, and

donors for this amazing opportunity. This scholarship will help me pursue my dreams and contribute to the dreams of other students who find themselves in my position in the future. Extending beyond the monetary award, the effort to amplify diverse student voices in the profession is uplifting on its own. Thank you."



**Alisha Gonzalez**

Undergraduate Student  
Fourth-year student in 2024  
Illinois Institute of Technology

"The AIA Chicago Foundation Diversity Scholarship embodies the idea that increasing representation is

crucial to building a fulfilling society for all. This opportunity will not only help me financially and academically, but it will also provide me with a platform to speak about the importance of diversity and inclusion in the educational and work environment." CA

We are grateful for the support of these large firms whose generous, multiyear donations to the AIA Chicago Foundation helped to establish the Diversity Scholarship program in 2019:

- Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architects
- Gensler
- Goettsch Partners
- HOK
- Perkins&Will
- SCB

## AIA ILLINOIS UPDATE

# Mid-Year Updates from Springfield

AIA Chicago members,

The Illinois General Assembly's 2024 regular session has concluded, and I am encouraged by the progress we made in advancing the goals of architects.

A key achievement this year was AIA Illinois' annual advocacy day, "Prairie Grassroots." Held in late March, the event brought together more than 50 AIA members from across the state for a day dedicated to advocacy and public engagement. Following a lunchtime discussion on key concerns, AIA members embarked on a series of office visits with their legislators. This allowed them to **directly engage** with legislators and advocate for the issues that matter most to architects and the built environment.

One of the key bills members advocated for was the elimination of the rolling clock for those taking The Architect Registration Examination® (ARE®). As the session wrapped up, the bill passed both chambers and is on Gov. Pritzker's desk with an anticipated signing this summer. This bill has progressed so quickly and smoothly due to a group of committed and active members. Thank you to those who were willing to share their thoughts and others who were able to share their time and connections to those in office in Springfield.

Another bill, which seemed to complicate school design and safety, was also brought to us by a member as a potential issue. We have since partnered with members and other organizations while meeting with the Senate sponsor to make this bill better for architects and those using our school buildings. We would not have had the same success with these two bills without the engagement from you, our members.

**Your voice matters!** Don't hesitate to reach out if you have any concerns about legislative or other advocacy issues. We're here to listen and help. CA



**Eric Klinner, CAE**

Executive Vice President, AIA Illinois



AIA members from across Illinois at the Illinois Capitol in Springfield. ANNA HARKEY

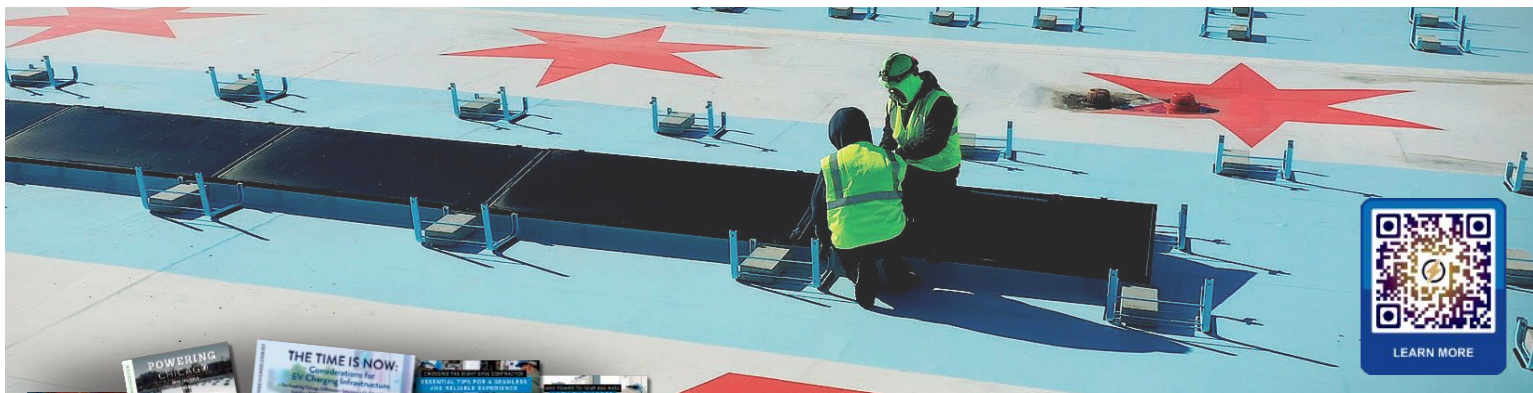
► For statewide advocacy issues, please email [advocacy@aiaill.org](mailto:advocacy@aiaill.org).

► For Chicago advocacy issues, please email [advocacy@aiachicago.org](mailto:advocacy@aiachicago.org).

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**Melissa Clark, AIA**, has been promoted to senior project manager for the sports, recreation, and entertainment practice at **HOK**.

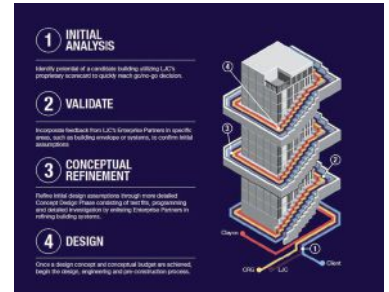


**Scott Seyer, AIA, LEED AP**, has joined **Jahn** as a managing director.

DARRIS LEE HARRIS



**Eckenhoff Saunders** recently completed Howard Brown Health Halstead, a new 91,000-square-foot, five-level structure that serves the health care needs of the LGBTQIA+ community in Chicago.



**Lamar Johnson Collaborative** debuted the Adaptive Reuse Scorecard to aid real estate developers in assessing the viability of conversion projects. For firms interested in a potential conversion project analysis, email [adaptivereuse@theljc.com](mailto:adaptivereuse@theljc.com) for more information.

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**Goettsch Partners** recently won the design competition for a new three-parcel, 111,500-square-meter project bordering the famed Honglou Plaza in Jinan, China.

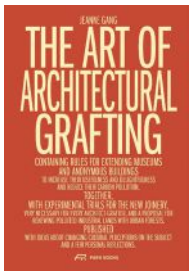
LAMAR JOHNSON COLLABORATIVE



The Chicago office of **Lamar Johnson Collaborative (LJC)**, in collaboration with interior design firm **KARA MANN Design (KMD)**, has announced the completion of Embry, a 58-unit, 16-story luxury condominium building at 21 North May Street in Chicago's West Loop.



**Bryana Evert, AIA**, has been promoted to associate at **Shafer Crowe Kueck Architecture + Design LLC**.



**Jeanne Gang, FAIA**, has released a new book titled *The Art of Architectural Grafting* (Park Books, distributed by the University of Chicago Press), which offers an overview of how the horticultural practice of grafting can inspire a fresh paradigm for sustainable design.



**SCB** recently completed the C10 United Club, a 23,000-square-foot addition to the historically significant Terminal 1 at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport. This addition is a first-of-its-kind of United Clubs and represents a shift in aesthetics and tone of design.



ERIC LAIGNEL

**O'Riley Office**, with McHugh Construction, recently completed the adaptive reuse transformation of the Ramova Theater. This \$30 million project transformed a long-shuttered single-screen cinema to an 1,800-person concert hall in Chicago's Bridgeport neighborhood. The project also built out space for an independent craft brewery and taproom, an 18-seat diner, and a second-floor 200-person event venue.



BEFORE



**Kahler Slater**, alongside Ennead Architects, celebrated the groundbreaking of the Milwaukee Public Museum, the largest cultural project in Wisconsin history. The design, reminiscent of the geological formations in Mill Bluff State Park, will be approximately 200,000 square feet with an additional 50,000 square feet of collections storage.



**Albert Mena, SE, PE, Affil. AIA Chicago**, has been promoted to principal and central sector manager at **TYLin | Silman Structural Solutions**.



**Aimee Eckmann, FAIA**, has been appointed firmwide practice leader for K-12 education at **Perkins&Will**.



**Julie Michiels, AIA**, and **Jacob Chartoff, AIA**, have joined **MAS Studio** as partners.



**Legat Architects** recently completed Heartland Community College's Agriculture Complex, a 29,500-square-foot building that is on track to become Illinois' first native net-zero community college building. The term "native" means that the building was designed to produce at net-zero energy levels immediately upon completion or within the initial 18-month reporting period mandated by the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation.



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TOM HARRIS ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHY



**Partners by Design (PBD)** recently completed Qualtrics, a 25,600-square-foot office space in Chicago.



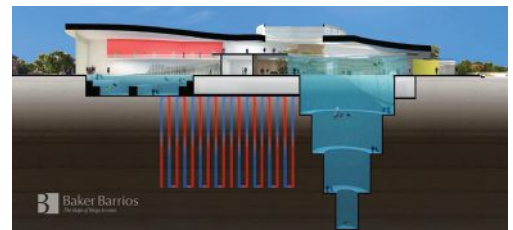
**Barker Barrios Architects** is pleased to announce two new leadership roles at the firm: **Chris Powers, AIA, NCARB, EDAC**, as associate principal and director (healthcare), and **Mark Kluemper, AIA, NCARB**, as associate principal and technical director (multifamily).

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**Epstein**, with McHugh Construction, recently completed Flyover, an immersive flight ride attraction at the west entrance of Chicago's historic Navy Pier.

COURTESY BARKER BARRIOS



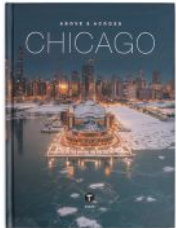
**Barker Barrios Architects** has released renderings of its design for what will be the country's deepest warm water therapy pool. Located in North Chicago, Illinois, the project will be part of an educational and research facility developed by Diveheart.



AJ BROWN IMAGING

**Legat Architects** recently completed the College of Lake County's new six-story Lakeshore Campus Student Center, which increases programming and strengthens the college's image in Waukegan, Illinois.

IMAGE TROPE



**Lichao Liu, Assoc. AIA**, architectural designer at **SmithGroup**, FAA-licensed drone pilot, and photographer, has been featured in Trope Publishing Company's latest book, *Above and Across Chicago*, which features aerial photography of Chicago.



**SmithGroup** has launched an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) team to expand the firm's capabilities to provide a full suite of technology solutions to their clients.



**Richard Barrett, AIA**, has been appointed to associate principal, and **Elizabeth Schneider, AIA**, has been appointed to senior associate at **Goettsch Partners**.



**SCB** has promoted **Renee Sprogis-Marohn, AIA**, to chief operating officer, **Jonathan Orlove, AIA**, to principal and managing director of the Chicago office, and **Paul Schlapobersky, AIA, LEED AP**, to principal and director of planning and urban design.



**SCB** (formerly Solomon Cordwell Buenz) announces a new brand identity for the 90-plus-year-old design firm. The reimagined brand identity pays homage to the firm's legacy and aligns it with the SCB of today. With its new brand, the firm officially adopted the name "SCB," unveiled a newly designed mark, and celebrated the firm's commitment to design and the impact their work has on cities, campuses, workplaces, and communities across the country.



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**Chey Taylor, AIA, LEED AP**, has been promoted to senior associate, and **Marion Lawson, AIA, LEED AP BD+C**, and **Angel Valtierra, AIA, LEED Green Associate**, have been promoted to associates at **SMNG A Ltd.**



**Randy Guillot, FAIA, LEED AP**, has been named global healthcare leader at **Gensler.**



**Corgan**, a global architecture and design firm, has moved to AMA Plaza in downtown Chicago. The office, led by **Bob Emery, AIA**, has more than 25 staff members with plans to hire additional colleagues this year.



**NextHaus Alliance**, a design-build team led by **Nate Kipnis, FAIA**, of **Kipnis Architecture and Planning**, has completed Evanston's first Passive House, which is 92 percent more energy efficient than the average home.



**Nurture**  
HPZS, a long-running studio renowned for historic preservation and sustainable design, is now **Nurture Architects**. Nurture is driven to create positive environmental impacts that consciously preserve and sustain our shared human history and culture.



**SCB** has broken ground on Flagler Arts and Technology (FAT) Village in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. This project aims to reinvigorate a historic arts district with the addition of modern residences, active ground-floor retail, and flexible working spaces.



**Krueck Sexton Partners** is pleased to announce that **Yunfan Song, AIA, LEED Green Associate**, **Xiang Qiang, AIA, LEED AP BD+C**, and **Ryan Ornberg, AIA**, have recently become licensed architects.

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**Atul Karkhanis Architects, Ltd.** recently completed the Asian Human Services Family Health Center, a 20,000-square-foot medical center and dental clinic in Chicago.



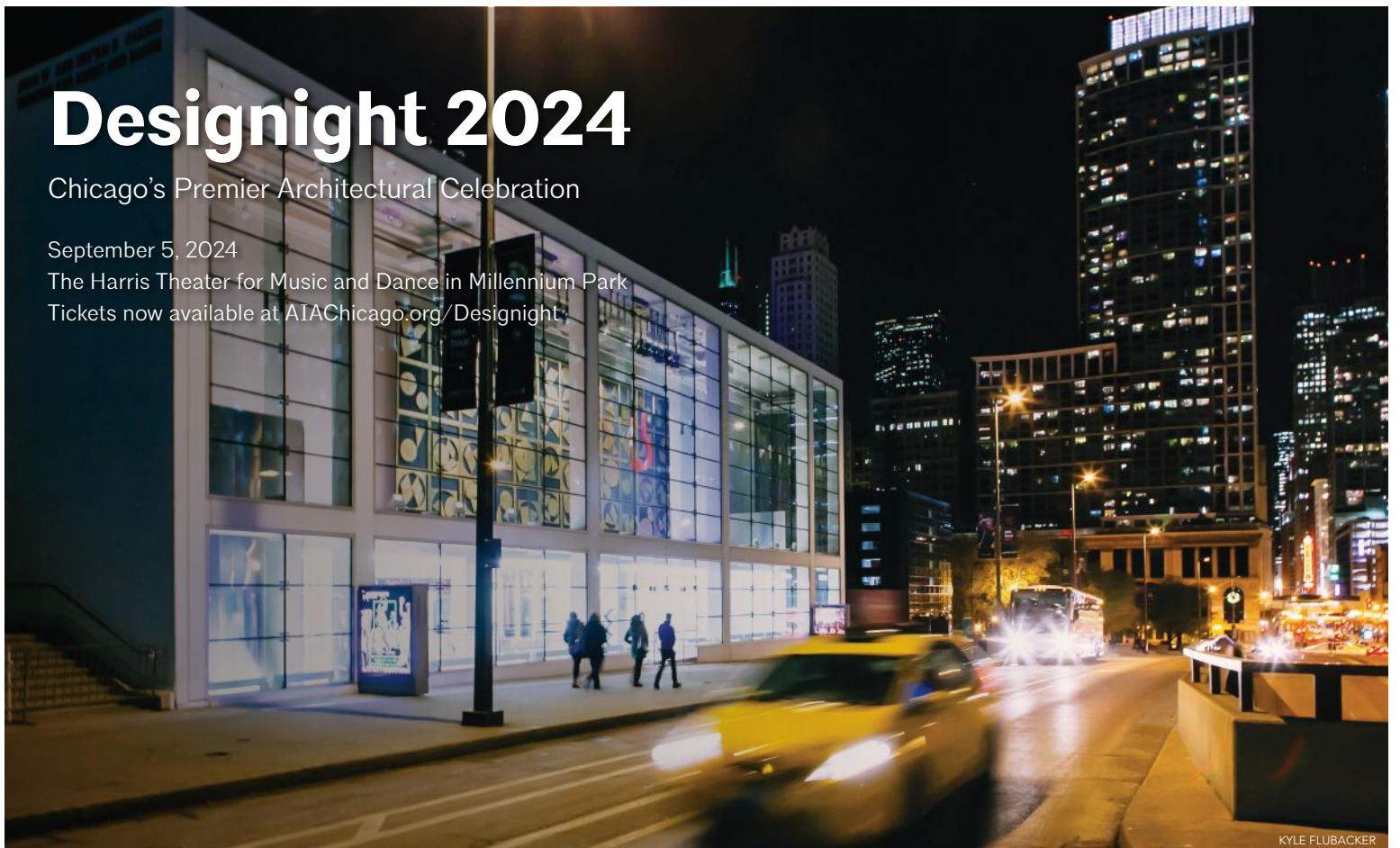
Founded in 2014 by **Monica Chadha, AIA** (upper left), **Civic Projects Architecture** is celebrating their 10th anniversary. Civic Projects prides itself on its diverse and community-driven body of work, from large-scale nonprofit community spaces to locally owned grocery stores in food deserts.

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KYLE FLUBACKER

# Championing Diversity and Community-Focused Design

## Moody Nolan Wins AIA Chicago's 2024 Firm Award

by Zach Mortice

Moody Nolan's Chicago office is renowned for projects with multiple purposes, where supplementary uses are community focused. This means a community college with day care facilities, a health clinic with a café and health education classrooms, and an athletic center with public events and workforce training resources.

Programmatic diversity isn't the only kind of diversity they're known for, however. "We come to design from a foundational belief that broader perspectives produce better work," said **Renauld Deandre Mitchell, FAIA, NOMA**, partner and managing director of Moody Nolan's Chicago office, the recipient of AIA Chicago's 2024 Firm Award. The firm also won AIA National's Architecture Firm Award in 2021.

As one branch of the largest African American-owned architecture firm in the nation, "it's not just that their ownership is diverse, it's that their team is diverse," said Lori Healey, senior vice president at the Obama Foundation and implementation lead for the Obama Presidential Center, one of Moody Nolan's most prominent projects. "They go out of their way to identify, train, mentor, and promote staff in a design world that is not as diverse as we'd all like it to be."

"As designers, we draw a lot from our personal experiences, and I think working at a diverse firm really helps bring different viewpoints together to create a better end product," said DiJon Dunmore, Moody Nolan project architect.

With an even gender split across 21 staff, Moody Nolan's Chicago office is 38 percent Black and 11 percent Latinx, reflecting the diversity of the communities it serves. Led by Mitchell, an Englewood native who founded this branch office in 2010, the firm's portfolio of public and institutional work serves all sectors of the city, opening up new conversations with communities that rarely get access to quality design. By securing AIA Chicago's highest honors for a firm, Moody Nolan has cemented its legacy as a group of architects that creates ennobling, humane spaces for those who need them most.

Healey is leading the construction of an athletic and event center on the Obama Presidential Center campus in Woodlawn,





Members of Moody Nolan's Chicago office pose for a picture in the lobby of the Rookery Building, which houses the firm's office space. In alphabetical order: **Douglas Boldt, AIA**; Anjelica Chase; Rachel Cooper, **NOMA**; Drew Deering, **FAIA**; Spencer Ferguson; Allison Gloude; Rodrigo Garcia Gutierrez, **RA**; Tasha Harris; Janet Hines, **NCIDQ**; Jeffrey Jenó, **AIA**; Christina Mazurek; Corey McClenahan, **RA**; Renauld Deandre Mitchell, **FAIA, NOMA**; Marcus Myerholtz, **AIA**; Richard Plotnick, **RA**; Nicole Powers; Stephen Sharlach; Suzanne Shrout; Roderic Walton, **FAIA, NOMA**. Not pictured: DiJon Dunmore and Jessica Parmenter, **AIA**. EVENING CUE LLC

a project that is prototypical of Moody Nolan's programmatic versatility. Unmistakably, it's a sports facility, with an NBA regulation-sized basketball court emblazoned with an iconic "O." But it will also offer wellness programming, workforce training, and other large-scale community forums. With many roles to fill, Mitchell calls it a "Swiss army knife."

Not everyone is going to be interested in the museum exhibits happening at Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects regal masonry tower, but Moody Nolan's building is likely to have a very wide community draw. "A lot of people are going to experience the presidential library for the first time through our building," said Mitchell. "It's going to be the primary gathering space for the entire campus."

"The athletic center," said Healey, "is the Presidential Center's gift to the community."

Located on a densely planted landscape wrapped in walking trails, the athletic center, which is slated to be complete next year, will make a sleek steel and glass material contrast to the granite museum tower. Its opaque elements are peeled back at its front façade to reveal expansive jewel box glass walls looking in on the basketball court. Vertical louvers and repeated triangular geometric motifs occurring at different scales break up the mass of the building, and wood interiors in the double-height mezzanine warm the space.

At a very different scale, The Black House at Northwestern University demonstrates the firm's ability to translate explicit cultural narratives into sensitive interiors. Serving as a social, cultural, and educational support center for Black students, The Black House emerged from a history of Civil Rights struggle after a group of Black students occupied the university bursar's office in 1968 with a wide list of demands that included the establishment of a Black student union. By 1973, this demand was translated into a hastily converted three-story Victorian house. Moody Nolan's renovation job here was to maintain the warm intimacy of its residential-scale custom woodworking and intricate corner turret while also affirming its institutional heft and importance.

This was the "one place on campus where [Black students] could be their authentic selves," said Mitchell.

The question the firm had to answer was, "How do we restore this place in such a way that it becomes relevant for future generations but also recognizable to the past?"

"That's a really heavy burden to shoulder," said Mitchell. "The architecture was the easy part."

Beyond preserving the house's intricate woodworking and stained-glass windows, Moody Nolan

added critical accessibility elements and opened up the floor plan and the house's staircase to create a grand procession through its signature feature. A custom floating gallery wall vertically spans the staircase with photos of Black student life at Northwestern, adding tactile depth and texture with collage-like density. Art and murals are everywhere you turn, including the text of the May 4, 1968, agreement between Black student occupiers and administrators, spelled out in hues that depict the protestors themselves. It's a dense visual narrative that remains welcoming and never hectoring due to the preservation of its wood-grained interiors and soft furnishings.

Malcolm X College on the city's West Side similarly grounds its student experience in a powerful cultural artifact but expands this legacy to welcome not only college students but the wider community. In its generous and light-filled lobby and atrium sits Malcolm X's sleek black 1963 Oldsmobile atop an enclosed café and reception desk below a circular skylight. Terraced stair seating gives it an audience. Throughout, Moody Nolan's careful choreography of public space and hospitality-level finishes and materials give this community college an air of prestige and skill that such critical ground-floor higher education institutions — where the architecture is often dour, dim, and constrained — always deserve yet rarely receive. Advancing the initial program and design concept developed by CannonDesign, Moody Nolan served as the project's architect of record and interior and experiential designer. They worked in collaboration with associate architect Tilton, Kelly+Bell and laboratory planning consultant HERA Laboratory Planners.

"People come here just to see our history wing that depicts Malcolm X as well as the history of Malcolm X College," said David Sanders, college president.

Students find many reasons to stay as long as they can. Sanders has been told by students staying at the school long into the evening that, "We don't want to go home. This is our home. We feel safe here," he said. Fifteen percent of Malcolm X College attendees are housing insecure, some 3,800 students.

The school specializes in health care training (radiography, nursing, phlebotomy, respiratory therapy, dental hygiene, and more), but it announces its public presence with a suite of community programming. Supportive spaces for students on the first two floors include the cafeteria, student union, library, and academic support centers. There is also a day care center and public dental clinic.

The building becomes increasingly more specialized as the building rises, with lower floors containing general classrooms and middle floors hosting profession-specific, state-of-the-art simulation labs equipped with high-tech mannequins that bleed and overdose. There are stimulated ambulance bays and home living rooms for paramedics in training. An operating theater puts instructors behind a two-way mirror so they can review students' performances.

A pair of adaptive reuse health care projects illustrate Moody Nolan's ability to generate authentic dialogues with communities that have often been let down by the public health sector. These relationships have resulted in clever installations of life-saving infrastructure that can serve people beyond their most critical needs.

Woodlawn Friend Health Center is an ambulatory health care clinic that occupies a former beauty products store. These types of basic, ambulatory clinics "[give] us the greatest opportunity to impact the trajectory of outcomes in disinvested communities," said Mitchell.

With street frontage on two sides, community functions are clustered near the entrance serving the adjacent Green Line 'L' station, including a café, pharmacy, lounge and play space, classroom, and other social service outreach spaces. An extra-wide, 11- to 12-foot axial corridor runs through the entire building, allowing natural light to penetrate. "You can actually linger there," said **Roderic Walton, FAIA, NOMA**, principal at Moody Nolan who specializes in health care architecture. "These are the features that think about health holistically, so it's not just about going to see your doctor. It's about financial literacy, it's about education, it's about healthier lifestyles."

The original brick building has been updated with new glazing and metal cladding, as well as red accents on its drive-up canopy, repeated in flooring patterns and interior walls. This reinforces common visual motifs that Moody Nolan's Chicago office deploys: lots of colorful panelized façades and articulated masonry.

At the University of Chicago Trauma Center, Walton and his colleagues had even less of a free hand to design.


This emergency department was only created after a massive public outcry. Before 2018, the South Side, where gun violence is far too common, didn't have a single adult trauma center for 27 years. The need was clear, but where to put the trauma center in a landlocked university was complicated. The best option was the conversion of an adjacent parking garage. "Don't try that at home," quipped Mitchell.

Beyond stitching the new trauma center directly into the rest of the hospital complex to transfer patients, staff, and supplies, Walton had to sort through a variety of technical complications to get the conversion to work. This included enhanced fire protection, as the ground-level trauma center would be surrounded by parked and potentially combustible cars. Additionally, special HVAC systems were used above the ceiling to prevent condensation from forming because of the temperature contrast between the unconditioned parking garage and the trauma center below.

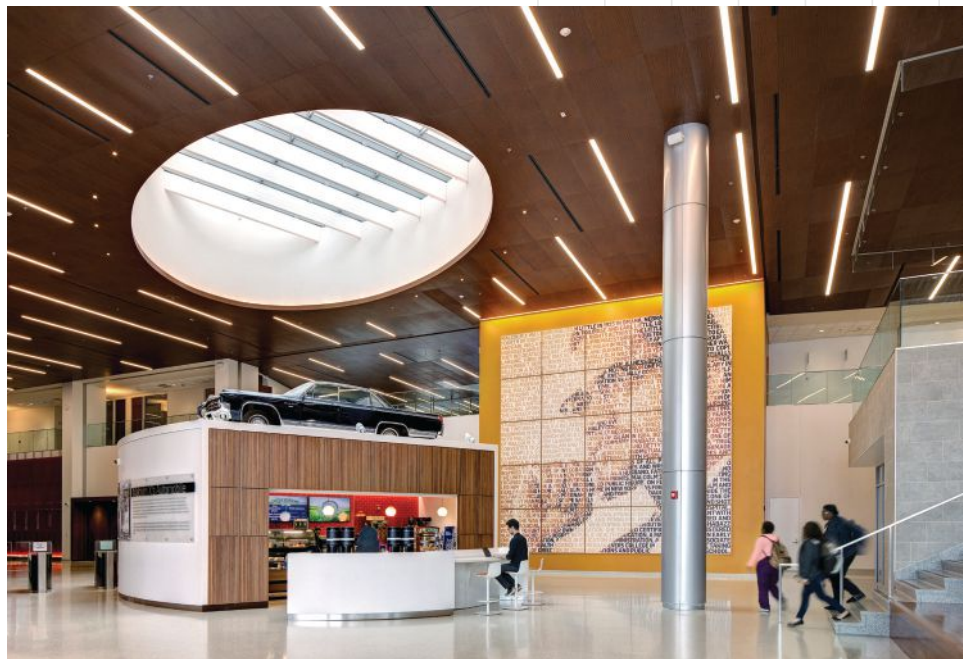
Throughout the planning phase, Moody Nolan worked closely with community members to refine their design, assigning fictional identities and roles to play as potential patients moved through the space (one example: mom with a kid who had a broken arm). Before construction started, Walton and his team set up temporary 4-foot walls to simulate the finished space and led diagnostic tests of the circulation patterns for community members, doctors, and staff. And here, working with an already-built structure helped them. “We had the first floorplate of this parking garage that was accessible to us, so we were able to set up small partitions and actually map out the walls,” he said.

That’s emblematic of how Moody Nolan operates with clients. “I want to blur the line between where their organization ends and ours begins,” Mitchell said.

Blurring this line means gaining an intimate understanding of what health care often looks like in disinvested communities and working to transcend it in ways that are technically proficient and culturally relevant. The quality, appearance, and function of the places people go when they need help is a powerful index of the racism, classism, and disregard for the communities that Moody Nolan often works for.

But in their origins and executions, both Friend Health and the University of Chicago trauma center are singular, one-of-a-kind projects. “And what that tells me,” Walton said, “is that it’s got the fingerprint of the community all over it.” 

*//////////*  
 The AIA Chicago Firm Award was established in 1991 to recognize outstanding achievements and excellence in the body of work produced by a firm over a period of time, the distinctive characteristics of a firm and its operations, and the ongoing contributions of the firm to the advancement of the architectural profession. The jury is made up of five local architects, each representing a firm that previously received the award.



**At top:** An athletic and event center on the Obama Presidential Center campus in Woodlawn will include an NBA regulation-sized basketball court emblazoned with an iconic “O.” MOODY NOLAN **At middle:** Malcolm X’s sleek black 1963 Oldsmobile sits atop an enclosed café and reception desk below a circular skylight at in the lobby and atrium of Malcolm X College on Chicago’s West Side. JASON KEEN **At bottom:** Woodlawn Friend Health Center is an ambulatory health care clinic that occupies a former beauty products store. JASON KEEN

MANAGING EDITOR'S NOTE

# Designing a More Equitable Chicago

by Dillon Goodson, Affil. AIA Chicago

Four years ago, our country faced a turning point. From balconies overlooking desolate city streets, a chorus of pots and pans rang out nightly in appreciation for front-line workers battling a deadly pandemic. Down below, an eerie silence filled the void between shuttered storefront windows. As days turned into weeks, we were left wondering when — and even if — our cities would bounce back.

Then, from a street corner in Minneapolis, our world shifted yet again. The murder of George Floyd shocked a reeling nation, challenging us to reflect on how racism permeates every corner of our lives. The protests that followed — and the calls for justice — galvanized millions to demand systemic change. Slowly but surely, communities began to pick themselves back up, this time pledging to get it right.

For Chicago architects, the healing process was deeply personal. Writing in our Fall 2022 issue, Annie Howard documented the work of AIA Chicago's EDI Committee and its creation of an anti-racism pledge for firms: *"As in other disciplines, the underrepresentation of marginalized communities has prevented the field from reaching its full potential and kept it from serving those populations effectively. While the sustained work to change architecture will stretch on well into the future, members of AIA Chicago understood the need for self-reflection and change."*

In practice, the events of 2020 forced architects to take stock of the situation closer to home. Disinvestment in Chicago's neighborhoods was not new. In a 2015 article, the Brookings Institute named Chicago "the most segregated major metropolitan area in the U.S." It was published just days following the release of dash-cam video that showed the fatal police shooting of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald, another profound moment of reckoning in Chicago's history.

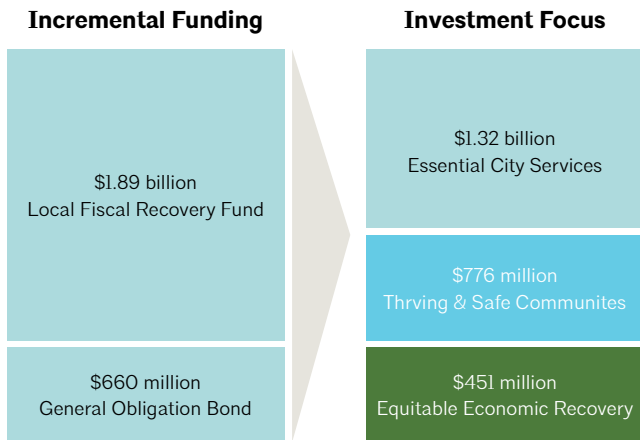
Among the authors' troubling findings: Black households in the city of Chicago were actually worse off financially in 2012 than in 1990. "Will things be any better in 2020?" they wondered out loud.

In many ways, the Chicago Recovery Plan is the city's response to this question, set into motion in the aftermath of that pivotal year. Built around "once-in-a-generation" federal funding allocated through the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF) under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, it aims to "create an equity-based investment strategy to catalyze a sustainable economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic." The city of Chicago was allocated nearly \$1.9 billion in SLFRF funds from the federal government. Amplifying the impact of these core investments, the city issued a \$660 million general obligation bond to finance additional initiatives.

The plan is bold in its ambition, seeking opportunities to drive "transformational change" across Chicago's communities. Of the more than \$2.5 billion in available funding, roughly half was allocated according to two investment pillars. The first, *thriving and safe communities*, targets investments in the "well-being of people and communities to allow them to thrive and collectively improve community safety." The second, *equitable economic recovery*, funds projects that "create an equitable economic recovery for Chicago's neighborhoods and the communities hardest hit by the pandemic." These investment strategies resulted from several stages of community engagement as part of the 2022 budget process. They are in addition to the city's typical funding priorities that make up its annual budget, which was priced at \$16.6 billion in 2024.

Chicago's Department of Planning and Development (DPD) is just one of the city departments responsible for overseeing the allocation of Chicago Recovery Plan funds. According to the DPD's website, it is managing \$338 million in recovery funds across three focus areas: community development, small business and workforce support, and community climate investments. Each of these priorities potentially translates into hundreds of opportunities to right the wrongs of a historically misguided community development strategy. A strategy that, in generations past — and all too present — disproportionately benefited more affluent communities at the expense of communities elsewhere, especially those on the city's South and West sides. Because Chicago architects are tasked with creating the places and spaces that dot and define the city's neighborhoods, they also share the burden of making a positive impact with every dollar that is spent. After all, equitable community development is fundamentally a design challenge.

In the following pages of this issue, we turn the floor over to some of the prominent voices shaping novel approaches to community development across Chicago. This includes four architects who represent a range of firm sizes leading the very work that the Chicago Recovery Plan was meant to spark; Abraham Lacy, recipient of AIA Chicago's 2023 Distinguished Service Award and a community champion ushering in a game-changing development strategy on the Far South Side; and DPD Commissioner Ciere Boatright, a real estate executive handpicked by the mayor for her experience sitting on the



Source: City of Chicago

\$1.23 billion incremental investment



POP! Heights, the first new park on South Halsted in more than 50 years, includes six activity zones and a lively walking and roller-skating ribbon that connects everyone to engaging and health-focused experiences. Designed by Lamar Johnson Collaborative, it received funding through the City of Chicago's Public Outdoor Plaza (POP!) program. ANTOINE TISSIER

other side of the table. The perspectives they contribute are simultaneously skeptical and optimistic, unafraid to critique a community development strategy that has fallen short yet unwilling to give up hope in the face of an unprecedented level of investment.

In his essay, Lacy writes of Chicago as a tale of two cities. "To witness this firsthand," he wrote, "I encourage architects to drive from one edge of the city to another." His point: only then can one truly appreciate the impact of a legacy of inequitable investments.

But Lacy's invitation is about more than opening our eyes. It's a challenge to do right by Chicago — and all its citizens.

How will you answer his call?



To read more about the Chicago Recovery Plan and view more information about the projects awarded funding, visit [AIACHicago.org/ChicagoRecoveryPlan](https://AIACHicago.org/ChicagoRecoveryPlan).

► **We want to hear from you.** How has your approach to design changed over the past four years?

Write to us at [editor@aiachicago.org](mailto:editor@aiachicago.org). No more than 400 words, please. Your response could be featured on AIA Chicago's blog or in a future issue of *Chicago Architect*.

## MEMBER VOICE ESSAYS

**Katherine Darnstadt, AIA, NOMA, LEED AP**

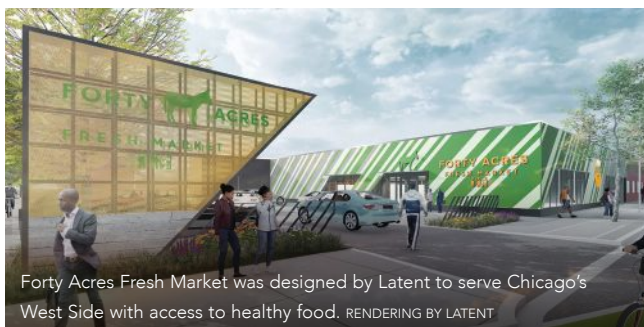
## To expedite progress in Chicago's neighborhoods, the city must support architects and cut red tape.

A curse in community development is having a memory long enough to remember what could have been. We see the possible future in our projects: a Black-owned pop-up brewery that couldn't resolve the administrative paperwork to move next door, a bespoke fashion entrepreneur whose grant award couldn't cover basic building improvements, and a neighborhood nonprofit that became so frustrated with the grant process that they gave the money back. Multiply that across the whispered stories from unpaid design teams and exhausted development directors sporting business-casual attire at pseudo groundbreakings, and you will find the calculus for inefficient and ineffective bureaucratic processes.

Our placemaking work started under Mayor Rahm Emanuel's administration and continued through the administration of Mayor Lori Lightfoot. Our first naïve departmental request for proposal (RFP) response back in 2014 ultimately created Boombox — a predecessor to the city's Public Outdoor Plaza (POP!) program, then called Activate! Chicago. It was developed in response to a 2014 Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) RFP to generate revenue from digital billboards on city-owned public plazas. In lieu of giving away the public realm to advertising, our team assembled a response that imagined spaces for both culture and commerce, bridging the gap between "startup and storefront" that many small businesses and artists of color face when trying to establish their brand, gallery, or practice in commercial real estate. With an initial \$50,000 of city funding and \$50,000 of firm funding, we launched Boombox and ran the Activate! Chicago program for almost five years, supporting almost 200 BIPOC-owned businesses and artists, writing new policy, and advising multiple cities on their own pop-up programs.

None of the skills learned through the Activate! Chicago, Boombox, Chicago Alfresco, and POP! projects are part of an architect's traditional scope of work and phases. Yet, through the incredible tenacity of our staff, volunteers, and community partners, we pulled off a program that sustained itself on the \$500 monthly rent from each vendor. Meanwhile, current POP! projects receive up to \$500,000 in funding, while Chicago Alfresco projects receive up to \$250,000.

Since our contract ended in 2019, the Boomboxes we created have been sitting dormant in a departmental vacuum. Weekly, we receive calls from enthusiastic business owners who want their own pop-up space.



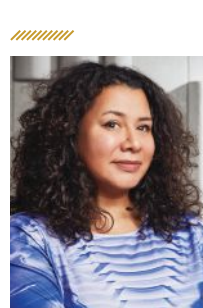
Forty Acres Fresh Market was designed by Latent to serve Chicago's West Side with access to healthy food. RENDERING BY LATENT

I still have an outstanding invoice with CDOT. We have been politely persistent with our recommendations to improve city systems for equitable redevelopment. These recommendations — largely unanswered — address a system that is marginalizing the marginalized even further. They include:

1. Launching a 60- to 90-day "startup camp" for organizations and businesses receiving a city grant for the first time who may not have capital project or renovation experience. This would create a cohort of grantees who would be able to build their internal capacity, network, and skill share, and potentially expedite the front end of the grant and project development process.
2. Creating a city-contracted technical assistance pool separate from the grantee's selected team to assist with owner's representation, project management, or the aforementioned startup camp.
3. Raising the funding threshold for "small" grants from \$250,000 to \$500,000 to allow for increased costs of construction, right-sized scope, and expedited approvals.
4. Reducing paperwork requirements for small grantees and construction firms to expedite administrative and reimbursement processes.
5. Facilitating access to loan partners that provide construction loans based on the full grant amount at reduced interest rates, not partial amounts based on the grantee's credit history or experience.
6. Confirming development teams have the capital required to fund pre-development, design, and engineering fees separately and not withhold consultant payment contingent on financial close for large-scale projects.

Writing this essay is a particularly uncomfortable catharsis but offers an opportunity to energize Mayor Brandon Johnson's eager administration, which speaks in liberatory prose about process improvements and candidly about the impacts of generational access gaps on community wealth, health, and development.

Receiving a city grant should not make the development process more onerous than a typical privately funded project of the same scope. Instead, it should open pathways to additional resources, community partnerships, and streamlined regulatory approvals, ensuring that projects can proceed efficiently while maximizing community benefits.



YEVA DASHEVSKY

**Katherine Darnstadt, AIA, NOMA, LEED AP**, founded Latent in 2010 to leverage civic innovation and social impact to design more equitable spaces and systems. She and her firm have prototyped new urban design systems to advance urban agriculture, support small businesses, create spaces for youth makers, and advance building innovation.



**At left:** The South Shore Chamber of Commerce HQ project aims to renovate an existing facility in the South Shore community to house several small businesses and offices for the Chamber. **At right:** The R.A.G.E. HQ Place project aims to create a new mixed-use commercial and office facility in Englewood, compiling a sustainable approach of adaptive reuse with a design structure that reflects the growing diversity of the community. ROBERT GRIFFIN OF QORF STUDIOS

## Deon Lucas, AIA

# Architects should play a more direct role in community development.

Architects are society’s conductors, orchestrating environments where diverse cultures can thrive. Viewing our profession merely as a service undermines the core reason many of us chose to become designers. A significant disappointment in our field is observing how many talented architects overlook the communities that need them most, possibly because they feel out of place. Yet, these are precisely the communities where we are most needed. There are countless organizations and individuals with innovative ideas for their neighborhoods, and they need our expertise to turn these visions into reality.

At Beehyve, collaboration is in our DNA. Working with firms like Gensler, JGMA, MKB Architects, FitzGerald Associates Architects, LBBA, and Piekarz Associates allows us to draw on their vast knowledge and expertise not only to develop talent but also to spread this wealth of experience to the communities we serve. I firmly believe that all projects should involve collaboration, as it guarantees the highest quality of work for the communities we help. We’re not here to compete; we’re here to uplift and show that collaboration fosters opportunities for creating vibrant, thriving spaces.

As a social enterprise, Beehyve is deeply committed to the tangible impacts of our work on communities. Our collaborative efforts help expedite these impacts and awaken opportunities that have been latent for decades. We are not seizing projects from other architects; rather, we explore and create value with influential organizations like Teamwork Englewood, Resident Association of Greater Englewood (R.A.G.E.), Imagine Englewood if (IEi), Blue Tin Production, Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN), South

Shore Chamber of Commerce, Lawndale Christian Development Corporation, Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives (CNI), and Far South Community Development Corporation. We encourage many clients to pursue projects because we are there to support them every step of the way. We operate at a higher risk level than most firms would consider, but the outcomes — trust, faith, and a renewed respect for the role of architects in communities — speak for themselves.

We’ve intentionally placed our practice within the community, making ourselves easily accessible to residents and organizations alike. Our impact is growing, and although I wish more people would seek our help and enable us to bring their community visions to life, I am optimistic.

Our neighborhoods have suffered enough, and it’s time for all architects to engage actively and bring about the change that’s long overdue.



TONIKA JOHNSON

**Deon Lucas, AIA**, is the director of design for Beehyve, an architecture and engineering design collaborative. In addition to shaping creative design strategies and overseeing development projects, he serves as co-founder of E.G. Woode, an incubator for minority business owners.

## MEMBER VOICE ESSAYS

Lesley Roth, AIA, AICP

## To become a more equitable city, Chicago needs to strengthen its connective tissue.

In Chicago's urban landscape, smaller-scale projects have a profound influence, offering replicable models for the city's future. From placemaking initiatives to centers for community, mixed-use developments, and the integration of missing middle housing, these efforts contribute to the rich fabric of neighborhoods by fostering connectivity, inclusivity, and resilience. To become a more equitable city, Chicago can benefit from the integration of the city's neighborhoods and downtown through responsive right-fit projects that resonate with its diverse residents and are reflective of their aspirations.

At the heart of Chicago's identity lies its neighborhoods, each possessing a unique character and spirit. Placemaking initiatives play a pivotal role in shaping this expression. These projects are catalysts for social and economic empowerment. By fostering vibrant public spaces and nurturing local businesses, they foster a sense of belonging and pride among residents, which is particularly important in marginalized communities that have not historically been the beneficiaries of equitable resource distribution. The value of public infrastructure improvements and private investment lies not only in financial returns but in the creation of a legacy of positive impact.

Despite the higher levels of funding committed to community development in recent years, the implementation process faces hurdles. As an architect and urban designer, I've observed several factors that could be used to improve project realization. Regulatory coordination, collaboration, and prioritization of innovation could influence timely project implementation. Reduced barriers to accessing capital, particularly for Black and Brown developers and small business owners, could have broad and wide effects on creating sustainable community development approaches. To create a more resilient foundation for neighborhood development, acknowledgement and action to repair historic harms are critical to our city's long-term success.

There are bright spots of change and projects that are contributing to Chicago's equitable transformation. Morgan Park Commons, a proposed 12-acre mixed-use development on Chicago's South Side, exemplifies the revitalization potential of missing middle- and mixed-income housing, breathing new life into historic, primarily Black neighborhoods while promoting socioeconomic diversity. POP! Courts began a movement to increase activated public space in neighborhoods and demonstrate the power of community-driven placemaking. The reimagining of underutilized spaces has created vibrant hubs of activity throughout the city. The Aspire Center and BandWith Chicago — two projects led by nonprofit organizations — underscore the importance of investing in human capital, providing pathways to employment, and creative expression for Chicago's youth. 750 North Avers will be the largest PHIUS-certified affordable housing project in Illinois, demonstrating how creative financing, city partnerships, and innovation can be realized to create healthy and sustainable environments.



**At top:** 750 North Avers will be the largest PHIUS-certified affordable housing project in Illinois, demonstrating how creative financing, city partnerships, and innovation can be realized to create healthy and sustainable environments. **RENDERING BY LAMAR JOHNSON COLLABORATIVE** **At bottom:** POP! Courts transformed an empty lot into a bright and welcoming public open space in Chicago's Austin neighborhood. **SHELBY KROEGER**

As we navigate the complexities of urban development, it's essential to recognize that the strength of a city lies not only in its iconic skyline but in the resilience of its neighborhoods. By fostering inclusive growth, Chicago can create equitable opportunities that provide communities with shared prosperity. As architects, policymakers, and residents, see this as a call to action — a realization of a common vision and collective journey toward a more equitable and vibrant Chicago.



**Lesley Roth, AIA, AICP**, is a principal at Lamar Johnson Collaborative. With 20 years of experience in architecture and urban planning, her work focuses on public engagement, project management, and facilitating complex, multidisciplinary projects.

**Richard Wilson, Assoc. AIA, AICP**

## Facilitating opportunity in Chicago's disinvested communities requires a genuine commitment to the cause.

I answered the phone one day, and it was a gentleman calling, in his words, "on behalf of Chicago's South Side." His name was Clevan Tucker Jr. of Roseland Heights. He had read about Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture's work on iconic buildings and public spaces around the world and felt that his community deserved nothing less. He invited me to his home and on a tour of the Far South region of Chicago. I was moved by his stewardship of the community and the fact that he made the call.

Too often pummeled with negative headlines, I did not know what to expect of the South Side. I saw beautiful residential neighborhoods with mature tree-lined streets, historic commercial corridors, landmark parks, schools and public spaces, and the highest concentration of intersecting rail, road, water, and fiber optic infrastructure in the region. Yet, these assets are undervalued.

This led me to believe that the Chicago design community could be powerful advocates if we harnessed our problem-solving, storytelling, and technical abilities to deliver on long-standing community needs. So, this time, I picked up the phone to ask Chicago architects to help.

To date, I have witnessed more than 200 design professionals step forward to contribute their time and talents on a pro bono basis to make a difference on Chicago's South Side.

In Pullman, we developed an action plan that has garnered \$100 million of new investment in the Far South Side since 2015, anchored by the National Park Service and renovation of the Pullman Clock Tower Building and Factory Grounds.

In Roseland, we developed an action plan for the Roseland Community Medical District to deliver \$1 billion in investment,

create thousands of jobs, and repopulate Chicago neighborhoods with pathways for area residents to build intergenerational wealth.

In Riverdale, we developed an action plan for a neighborhood in dire need. Dubbed "the toxic doughnut" in the 1970s, this area suffered decades of industrial pollution, economic deprivation, and physical isolation. Today, investment is underway to improve air quality; provide energy and water-efficient housing; build streets, transit, and bikeways with river and forest preserve trails; establish the African American Heritage Water Trail; and designate a National Park Service Network to Freedom Underground Railroad site.

Now, it is essential that we rally behind the \$4 billion Red Line extension, the largest single transit project in Chicago history. It will benefit 300,000 Chicagoans currently within its service area while nurturing the environment to better our city.

This work is not only good for society — it's good for business, too. It creates stronger, safer, and healthier communities that are fertile ground for building, transportation, and construction projects.

Please, answer the call.



**Richard Wilson, Assoc. AIA, AICP**, leads the City Design Practice of Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture. He has more than 30 years of experience working with public and private sector clients to master plan, design, construct, and operate large-scale urban districts, waterfront, and corridor revitalization initiatives in cities and regions worldwide.



**At left:** Richard Wilson, Assoc. AIA, AICP, and Riverdale community organizer Deloris Lucas, center, work with Forest Preserves of Cook County staff during a pro bono community design workshop to improve neighborhood access and programming along the Little Calumet River. **At right:** By providing design tools for communities that typically cannot access them, like this model prepared for the Roseland community on Chicago's Far South Side, Chicago architects can enable people to shape their future using the power of design.

## COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

# From Roseland to Ravenswood, Chicago's Commitment to Design Excellence Must Be Unwavering

by Abraham Lacy, President, Far South Community Development Corporation

Chicago earned its reputation as “a tale of two cities” not only because of the differences in investment between neighborhoods, but through the design of our different neighborhoods based on inequitable distribution of investments. To witness this firsthand, I encourage architects to drive from one edge of the city to another.

Our low-to-moderate income (LMI) communities should not be designed based on our incomes but with culture and a sense of community. LMI communities understand the funding disparities that prevent the large investments seen in River North, Lincoln Yards, and Fulton Market. However, with a series of small moves in designing public parks, streetscape intersections, and public transit stations — and by upgrading building façades and welcoming smaller mixed-used developments — LMI neighborhoods will transition from a “poverty feeling” to a community of choice with the advantage of being a fraction of the price as compared to more affluent communities. Chicago will be more equitable if people cannot tell the difference between Roseland and Ravenswood.

Local community development has seen a slight uptick in attention since 2019. Mayor Lori Lightfoot's Invest South/West Initiative was an ambitious plan to usher in needed investment in housing, public infrastructure, parks, and recreation, earmarking \$750 million in public investment from the city. However, as the pandemic and inflation derailed this initiative, potential projects were abandoned and the neighborhoods did not reap the intended benefits.

This has been a common theme for Chicago's South and West side neighborhoods: Initiatives are frequently announced yet rarely executed. For years, community organizations, including Far South Community Development Corporation (Far South CDC), have led or assisted in the development of numerous neighborhood master plans, corridor plans, and equitable transit-oriented development (ETOD) plans. But less than 5 percent of these plans are ever funded. And if these plans receive any funding, they are severely underfunded, which will not change the trajectory of our communities.

Far South CDC is embarking on a bold “Bringing Communities Back Initiative” (BCBI) to repurpose a minimum of 1 million square feet of blighted community areas into thriving community anchors. These spaces will spur economic growth and repopulate communities in Chicago's Far South Side that have experienced decades of chronic disinvestment. Design plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life for residents in these communities. In the not-too-distant past, designing and developing affordable housing received negative

implications, as seen with the Robert Taylor Homes and Cabrini Green. Through BCBI, we will deliver high-quality development with comfortable amenities for LMI residents that would normally be found in affluent communities.

For instance, Morgan Park Commons is a 12-acre redevelopment site at the northwest corner of 115th and Halsted streets. The proposed development seeks to develop 254 units of rental housing with 16,000 square feet of retail/office space, a 13,000-square-foot performing arts and culinary education space, and 2.3 acres of public outdoor space with pedestrian pathways connecting to the historic Major Taylor Trail and area public transit. The design of the project will dismiss the previous suburban-style shopping plaza, from enormous setbacks and a sea of parking to flushing the mixed-use developments to the property line along Halsted and 115th streets with outdoor landscaping features to encourage walkability. The buildings' layouts are designed with the tenant experience as the focus as it pertains to amenities, family dynamics, and safety. BCBI projects set the standard — in both design and amenities — to encourage additional investments from developers, business owners, and public agencies.

Money should not dictate excellent design standards or creativity. If anything, fewer resources should invoke more creativity. After all, architects are trained to solve complex challenges using visual creativity. With the right level of investment — and architects' shared commitment to design excellence — the South Side could be Chicago's next Fulton Market District.



*Abraham Lacy has served as president of the Far South Community Development Corporation since 2011, leading the organization to secure more than \$18 million in program funds that have supported more than 1,000 small and minority-owned businesses, provided housing programs for more than 10,000 residents, and created more than 300 new homeowners. He has also been instrumental in planning and development projects, including the 95-acre Roseland Community Medical District Master Plan, the 22,000-square-foot POP! Heights Park, and the planned 12.06-acre Morgan Park Commons mixed-use development project. Lacy was also a 2023 recipient of AIA Chicago's Distinguished Service Award.*



**At top:** Morgan Park Commons, a mixed-use development on Chicago's Far South Side, is transforming a lot that has sat vacant for more than a decade. **RENDERING BY LAMAR JOHNSON COLLABORATIVE** **At bottom:** Located in Morgan Park, The Rise is a five-story market rate and Department of Housing project with retail functions at the ground floor. **LATENT**

## Q&amp;A

# Good Design for All

In Conversation with Department of Planning and Development Commissioner Ciere Boatright

**Jen Masengarb, Assoc. AIA**, executive director, recently sat down for a conversation with Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD) Commissioner Ciere Boatright to discuss her vision for DPD and the role that design plays in fostering inclusive, equitable growth across the city. Appointed in November 2023 by Mayor Brandon Johnson, Boatright is an experienced real estate and economic development executive. In her role, she is responsible for leading DPD's economic development, planning, and zoning functions.

*This interview was edited for length and clarity. An expanded version is available at [AIACHicago.org/GoodDesignforAll](https://AIACHicago.org/GoodDesignforAll).*

**Jen Masengarb (JM):** You've had a career in Chicago. You're from Chicago. This is home. How does Chicago look different from the 10th floor of City Hall than it did before?

**Commissioner Ciere Boatright (CB):** It looks just as beautiful, with more opportunities. Opportunities that, as a developer, as a lifelong Chicagoan, even I wasn't privy to.

One thing that's somewhat unique for me in this position is where I come from. I'm a planner and a practitioner, right? Sitting in this seat, having an understanding of what the market really is, understanding firsthand how things get done and what some of the frustrations are, and what some of the barriers have been historically.

[Chicago] is beautiful. It's promising. It's got such a bright future and opportunities galore for development, for collaboration, and to support businesses. There's just so many different opportunities that I had an idea of but never knew how we could really, really accomplish. I had visions and recognized that there were different tools that are available to ensure that we can really do development and equitable development at scale, but now in this seat and now with some really key tools as part of our toolbox — like the economic development bond and Cut the Tape executive order that the mayor announced — it's even more momentum to really address key challenges that our city has experienced for decades and decades in a very strategic way. I'm excited.

- ▶ The City of Chicago's Cut the Tape initiative sets immediate and near-term actions the city will take to make tangible improvements in administrative processes to build more housing and support commercial development.

**JM:** From your perspective, what is the role of architecture and architects in advancing equity in Chicago's neighborhoods?

**CB:** When you think about development in Chicago, we have beautiful architecture. We're known for that. And all of our neighbors and neighborhoods deserve quality design and quality, thoughtful, sustainable architecture. And so, what role do architects play? They're partners to us — just like developers are partners and community groups are partners to us. And they will ensure that [by] working together, we have beautifully designed buildings where people are proud to live, work, and



**Jen Masengarb, Assoc. AIA**, sits down for an interview with DPD Commissioner Ciere Boatright. EVENING CUE LLC

visit in a very thoughtful way. It's not just beautiful buildings downtown, but it's beautiful buildings in every neighborhood in our city. But it requires coordination. It requires collaboration and a commitment to quality design and understanding how to get there.

**JM:** When you talk about that commitment to quality design, what advice would you have for architects for working with the city and thinking about creating quality projects that last?

**CB:** The city is committed to quality design. I think you have developers that also want quality [and] that they want beautiful buildings. Now, are there challenges with costs? Absolutely. But I think there's an opportunity for tighter collaboration between developers, between architects, and obviously with the city.

I've mentioned Cut the Tape, which is the mayor's executive order. One thing that should be a breath of fresh air for architects [who] may have flipped through some of the recommendations is we want to make sure that we're streamlining some of the processes that architects and developers are used to going through so that we can move development along faster, moving it along in a very thoughtful way. So, it's not just ramming the process through to get shovels in the ground, but doing it faster in a really thoughtful and strategic way.



**At left:** Bronzeville Winery received \$250,000 in support from the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund. It was designed by Future Firm, a woman- and minority-owned architecture practice. COURTESY OF FUTURE FIRM & BRONZEVILLE WINERY. DANIEL KELLEGHAN. **At right:** DPD Commissioner Ciere Boatright with Deputy Mayor Kenya Merritt and Department of Housing Commissioner Lissette Castañeda at an event marking the unveiling of the City of Chicago's Cut the Tape report. PROVIDED BY THE CITY OF CHICAGO

An example of one of the Cut the Tape recommendations is to streamline the design process from three reviews to one. That helps architects. That helps the development team. So, if you, as an architect, are coming, you don't have to come and revise things three different times. Instead, you're doing it once. And you're getting all the feedback from the different parties at one time so that you can go and make adjustments, and so that we can ensure that we're moving the development process along faster, and we're also ensuring beautiful buildings at the end of the project.

**JM:** We have dozens of small architecture firms — including minority-owned and women-owned businesses (MBE/WBE) — emerging in the city. How are you thinking about allowing for that influx of new ideas in city-funded projects from those newer small firms?

**CB:** We encourage it. And we'll continue to encourage it.

We've got some examples where, when we issue RFPs, we want to see diverse partnerships, right? And it doesn't just start on the construction side. We want to see diverse partnerships in the professional service side, right through our architects. There's a talented pool of architects, and we want to make sure that we're tapping the local talent — tapping the MBEs and WBEs. We want innovative ideas and, like I said, diverse teams.

It's also important to recognize that the professional service firms should reflect the communities in a thoughtful way. And so, we've got examples from RFPs that were issued highlighting the importance of diverse teams, right? There's an opportunity to bring large, experienced architectural firms together with less-experienced, but equally qualified, architecture firms to come together and come up with some amazing designs that can then be developed into transformative buildings and developments in our neighborhoods.

**JM:** One point of feedback and frustration that we've heard from small firms is that the process for a large firm and a small firm is the same, and that's challenging for them.

**CB:** That's a fair statement. I think that our team has continued to make a concerted effort to remove barriers for entry. And so, I think there are different ways that we engage architectural firms. So, you hear RFPs and

oftentimes you think about big mega projects. But we also have smaller projects that are equally catalytic. They're smaller in scale but equally catalytic in terms of impact.


And so, one thing that's come out of our economic development bond — and it's worth the read — is our Missing Middle [initiative]. And so, the Missing Middle [initiative] is our way of really addressing housing and really thinking about affordable home ownership opportunities throughout our city, specifically in those neighborhoods that have an overwhelming number of vacant city-owned lots. When I say an overwhelming number, we have like 10,000 vacant lots in the city's inventory. This is a unique way for us to put vacant lots back in productive use — really repopulate neighborhoods, thereby supporting our commercial corridors.

**JM:** What do you wish the architectural community knew or understood better about the work of the Department of Planning and Development (DPD)?

**CB:** We're doing some amazing work and some cool work that requires creativity and ingenuity and partnerships and collaboration. And I want the architectural community to know and to understand that DPD is a partner. We want buildings that are designed thoughtfully. We want beautiful renderings that we can actually develop. We want to be partners to developers and architects. It's a true partnership. We want to figure out how we can be easier to work with.

What's not working, we want to hear [about]. We all want to continue to go along and get along. We want to make sure that our processes are efficient and that we're committed to get to yes. And so, we want to hear what's not working well. We want to keep the lines of communication open from that perspective so that it's easier to work with us, easier to move projects along. That projects go from concepts to real, actual developments that make the impact that our neighborhoods all deserve and need, no matter where they are located in Chicago, right? We want beautifully designed projects.

**JM:** Good design for all.

**CB:** Absolutely, without a doubt. 

“I’m a major proponent for maintaining one’s mental health, and I seek to find balance between work and life. After work, I’m usually hitting the gym, completing an art piece, or simply taking time to debrief and be present with loved ones.”



EVENING CUE LLC

# BEHIND THE SCREENS

“Behind the Screens” is a new series developed by AIA Chicago’s Editorial Advisory Committee to highlight the members of the chapter. Throughout the year, this series will showcase Fellows, Architects, Associates, and Affiliate members. If you’d like to nominate someone, please write to [editor@aiachicago.org](mailto:editor@aiachicago.org).

**NAME**

Krystofer Pinnock

**AFFILIATIONS/  
CREDENTIALS**Assoc. AIA, NOMA,  
LEED AP BD+C**TITLE**

Designer II

**COMPANY**

Perkins&amp;Will

**DEGREE(S)**B.S. Architectural  
Preservation and  
M.Arch from  
Temple University**AIA CHICAGO  
INVOLVEMENT**Bridge mentorship  
program**What advice would you give to a younger version of yourself?**

I'd tell younger Krystofer to remain confident in who you are as a person, what your gifts are, and what you have the potential to become. Cast aside any fears and realize that worrying won't add any more time to your day. In full transparency, these are things I still tell myself from time to time, but I draw from past accomplishments to help push me along in my life journey. So many of us (me included) have had to contend with imposter syndrome or other forms of trepidation only to realize that we possess unique skills, perspectives, and offerings that validate us in ways that no one else can. Through my involvement in I-NOMA (Illinois Chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects) and the ACE (Architecture, Construction, Engineering) Mentor Program, I've been gifted with the opportunity to speak to and mentor a wide variety of students, and I always share with them the importance of being themselves and exuding confidence in all that they do.

**What does a typical day look like for you?**

I wake up, thank God for another day, and depending on how cold it is outside, I roll back into bed for a few more minutes. A day could include tackling client meetings, working on drawing sets, or completing submittal reviews (all sustained by a LaCroix break or two). I have the esteemed pleasure of working with a great team at Perkins&Will — where I work primarily on K-12 projects, including Evanston and Proviso Township high schools. I find great reward in the opportunity to revitalize, enhance, and bring to life the structures that house our future generations of learners and thinkers.

Work aside, I'm a major proponent for maintaining one's mental health, and I seek to find balance between work and life. After work, I'm usually hitting the gym, completing an art piece, or simply taking time to debrief and be present with loved ones. Studying for the ARE exams has also become a major part of my days as well, and though at times cumbersome, it has been an enriching experience overall. I've found joy in being able to refine and add to my knowledge base, all while bringing the realization of licensure closer and closer.

**What are you currently working toward that excites you?**

I'd say that the aspirations and goals that I've set out to accomplish for myself keep me excited. As I mentioned previously, I'm working [toward] becoming licensed and ultimately becoming an architect [who] can create a positive impact in society. I am also deeply passionate about art, and I'm currently finding great fulfillment in several pieces that I'm working on. Art has provided me with an exhilarating outlet that I can freely express myself without having to align with any set of rules or parameters. I've been blessed with the opportunity to be a part of art shows from New York to Tokyo, and I ultimately want to grow as both an artist and architect. The thought of one day having my art adorn a building that I've also worked on keeps me moving forward with

great ambition. One of my goals is to one day have my own art gallery and architecture studio, finding synthesis with the two.

**What does equity mean to you?**

Equity to me details an even playing field and an opportunity to access and tap into the resources needed for success regardless of one's status. It's essentially a seat at the table for all, understanding that some can readily pull up a chair, while some may need a booster seat, or some don't need a chair at all. Much of what I strive to do in my everyday life is to empower the next generation and others who look like me, whether directly or indirectly. Involvement in organizations such as I-NOMA or my office's JEDI team has really helped me make an impact throughout this field both professionally and on a wider scale. In addition to my role as parliamentarian of the I-NOMA chapter, I serve as co-lead for our Project Pipeline Committee, a summer camp tasked with introducing middle school students in Chicago to the design profession to promote diversity in the architecture field.

**What is one actionable way that young designers can positively impact climate change in their firms?**

I'd say education for starters. Many of the barriers surrounding climate change stem from varying degrees of ignorance on the matter. I'd say we, as young designers, can positively impact climate change by actively learning about its associated detriments and ways to reverse them. That said, I also think being a young designer should be viewed positively. It allows for a degree of open-mindedness and unique perspectives commonly attributed to a younger demographic. By coupling this imaginative and youthful perspective with newly gained knowledge [and] different ideas and practices can be provided to our offices for consideration.

**What change would you like to see in Chicago's built environment?**

To be honest, the driving force behind me moving to Chicago was *actually* its built environment, in conjunction with its natural environment of course. My first visit was in 2018 for spring break (I know, crazy) and was instantly captivated by the way the city seemed to harmoniously link built and natural elements in areas such as the Lakefront Trail. As a northeastern native, I didn't even know that Chicago had a beach to be honest. After being here five years, albeit disrupted by the pandemic, I've gotten a good grasp on the city's layout and would have to say that the biggest thing I'd like to see change is the disparity between the development of certain areas and others.

**What's been the most rewarding aspect of your membership in this organization?**

Being a part of AIA Chicago Bridge mentorship program! This program gave me the opportunity to meet with extremely insightful and inspiring individuals. I've been able to glean invaluable information and feedback that I will continue to use throughout my life and career. **CA**

► Read the full interview online at [AIACHicago.org/BTSKrystoferPinnock](https://AIACHicago.org/BTSKrystoferPinnock)



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