

CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE FOUNDATION

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“50 Designers, 50 Ideas, 50 Wards” exhibition celebrates transformative ideas for building a better Chicago as imagined by local artists, designers and architects

Chicago Architecture Foundation and UrbanLab assemble local designers to develop an exhibition of concepts that improve and rebuild the city, ward-by-ward

Chicago, Ill.— The Chicago Architecture Foundation’s (CAF) new exhibition, *50 Designers, 50 Ideas, 50 Wards*, opening May 26, is a visual conversation on the role design can play in solving community challenges at both the local and citywide levels. Around the world, architects and designers are implementing ideas that address critical urban issues on everything from transit to affordable housing, environmental stewardship to job creation. These designers’ bold ideas reflect new thinking around resource management, funding and political partnership as it applies to bringing projects to life. With this in mind, CAF’s goal was to create a vehicle that facilitated this type of conversation in Chicago.

In partnership with UrbanLab, CAF invited 50 local architects and designers to propose projects that would address the needs of specific communities and improve the quality of life for the residents of all 50 wards across the city. The broad spectrum of proposals coalesced around four major themes: Activate, Reclaim, Gather, Dwell. Visitors to the exhibition will find 50 panels suspended from a circular framework, grouped by theme, displaying striking visuals of the design idea, along with descriptive text. Each project is specific to the designer’s assigned ward. Some of the designs are already in progress, while others have the potential to be executed within the next five years.

“It’s our role to communicate why design matters to a broad audience. In celebrating our 50th anniversary, we wanted to develop a special opportunity to connect with the public,” said Lynn Osmond, President and CEO of Chicago Architecture Foundation. “Understanding the challenges facing Chicago and many large urban centers today—economic development, quality housing and affordability, aging infrastructure and the delivery of city services—we saw the curation of a broad-ranging exhibition of ideas as a great way to generate discussion. There is a role for architects and designers to look at these important challenges and help us all see ways to make our city a better, more livable place.”

Along with CAF, the exhibition was curated by Martin Felsen and Sarah Dunn, co-founders of the Chicago-based office UrbanLab, and Reed Kroloff, CAF’s Senior Advisor for Programs and Industry Collaboration, a design educator and noted architecture commentator.

Examples of project-types for each theme include:

- Activate: Designs to kick-start economic activity
- Reclaim: Improvement projects around infrastructure, polluted or abandoned lands

- Gather: Physical spaces and programs to support community development
- Dwell: Designs that strengthen the city's quality of housing

"Our goal is to inventory a new breed of architectural and infrastructural interventions that will foster social, creative and entrepreneurial interactions among Chicagoans," said Martin Felsen, co-founder of UrbanLab. "We've received a diversity of projects, ideas and design-based solutions that can be implemented in Chicago's unique communities to foster civic engagement and establish a sense of place throughout our city's 50 wards."

"This is an apt time for CAF to develop an exhibition of this nature; one that acknowledges not only the challenges facing Chicago, but opportunities as well," said Reed Kroloff, CAF's Senior Advisor for Programs and Industry Collaboration. "We see how cities around the world with similar issues are employing innovative solutions to modern problems affecting their built environment. Bringing in local architects who have a deep understanding of Chicago, has yielded particularly creative and practical design ideas to benefit the city's many distinct communities."

The *50 Designers, 50 Ideas, 50 Wards* exhibition launches as part of CAF's 50th anniversary and will be on display May 26 through December 2016 in the Atrium Gallery at CAF headquarters. Tailored programming will also be developed that brings industry experts and thinkers to CAF for evening lectures, tours, teen, family, educator and adult studio events throughout the year. For more information, visit architecture.org/50-50-50.

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Chicago Architecture Foundation

The Chicago Architecture Foundation (CAF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to inspiring people to discover why design matters. As an education organization, CAF offers tours, programs, exhibitions, field trips, curricula and online tools that are part of a dynamic learning journey for all ages. Proceeds from CAF's shop and tours—as well as grants, sponsorships and donations—support this educational mission. For more information, please visit architecture.org or call 312.922.3432. For further information visit www.architecture.org or call 312.922.3432.

UrbanLab

UrbanLab was cofounded by Martin Felsen and Sarah Dunn as a collaborative office practicing architecture and urban design. The firm's projects span scales, from large, urban proposals to small residential projects, to architecture installations. UrbanLab brings creativity and collaboration to each design project, inventing innovative, environmentally responsible design solutions and creating spaces that establish healthy connections between people and their environments. Built work to date includes mixed-use commercial/residential buildings, houses, housing, restaurants, art/educational installations, and large resilient infrastructural projects + recreational landscapes.

Reed Kroloff Senior Advisor of Programs and Industry Collaboration

Reed Kroloff is the immediate past Director of the Cranbrook Academy of Art and Museum in Michigan, and an independent architectural consultant and commentator. Kroloff was Dean of the Tulane University School of Architecture in Louisiana from fall, 2004 through spring, 2007. He arrived at Tulane just before Hurricane Katrina and helped lead the School to recovery and prominence in the post-storm

environment, including raising a record \$3 million in gifts and research grants, retaining 97% of the School's students and 100% of its' faculty after the storm, and playing a significant role in citywide planning and rebuilding efforts. The recipient of the American Academy in Rome's 2003 Rome Prize Fellowship, Kroloff previously served as the Editor-in-Chief of *Architecture* magazine. Under his direction, *Architecture* received more awards for editorial and design excellence than any magazine of its type, and quickly became the leading design publication in the nation.