

New Exhibition Calls for a Bold Vision in the “Great Basin”

November 7, 2013 (Chicago, Ill.) – Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP (SOM), in partnership with the International Secretariat for Water (ISW) and the Chicago Architecture Foundation (CAF), presents *Great Cities, Great Lakes, Great Basin*. The new exhibition calls for a 100-year vision to guide planning and development in the binational watershed of the Great Lakes, St. Lawrence River, and Gulf of St. Lawrence – the Great Basin. *Great Cities, Great Lakes, Great Basin* is on display in CAF’s Atrium Gallery at 224 South Michigan Avenue until February 2014.

Great Cities, Great Lakes, Great Basin engages the public with the vastness and vulnerability of the earth’s largest surface freshwater resource, which spans from Duluth, Minnesota to the Atlantic Ocean. The exhibition depicts the Great Basin as one region defined by the watershed rather than political boundaries and illustrates a vision for the region as an international park that encompasses culturally-rich urban and rural areas. The exhibition also highlights initiatives around the region that Basin cities can learn from to enhance quality of life.

“We have a responsibility to be stewards of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basin,” SOM Urban Design and Planning Partner Philip Enquist, FAIA, said. “We must design our cities and region to eliminate waste, and rely on more innovative and sustainable development strategies. We can and must ensure fresh water for all future generations.”

The health of the watershed and the vitality of its cities are inextricably linked. *Great Cities, Great Lakes, Great Basin* highlights ideas that will improve the relationship between the natural and built assets of our region—and between people and their basin environment.

“Water is the key to shared prosperity and this goal demands that all Basiners – whether from cities, the countryside, or distant communities – work together towards managing it in an integrated and participatory way,” said Raymond Jost, Secretary General of the Montréal-based International Secretariat for Water. “We, men and women of all generations, must all learn to live responsibly and in harmony with our larger natural context. This exhibition is an invitation to take a step towards getting all the members of the Basin to rally around a shared vision.”

“The Chicago Architecture Foundation is honored to host this exhibition, which we hope will motivate people to define where they live by their basin, rather than their city,” said Lynn Osmond, president and CEO of CAF. “People will be moved by what they learn from this exhibition and see firsthand the profound impact we all have on our waterways.”

The exhibition builds upon the international design firm’s ongoing pro bono initiative, begun in 2009, to develop a 100-year vision for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River region. SOM’s 100-year vision plan, created in collaboration with the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, has garnered awards from the American Institute of Architects, Congress for the New Urbanism, and most recently from the American Society of Landscape Architects in November 2013.

Philip Enquist will provide a lunchtime talk at CAF on November 13, with additional lectures occurring throughout the exhibition and a one-day symposium planned for January 2014. The schedule of events is

available on CAF's website (<http://www.architecture.org/page.aspx?pid=476>). Exhibition artwork is available to other institutions upon request so that the exhibition may be presented in other cities across the region.

About SOM's City Design Practice

Founded in 1936, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP is one of the world's leading architecture, urban design, engineering, and interior architecture firms. SOM's global City Design Practice advances bold ideas for the future of cities, creating sustainable, livable and resilient places on five continents. The City Design Practice – the most highly awarded urban planning group – has completed some of the largest and most complex urban development projects in the world, such as the Beijing CBD East Expansion and Canary Wharf in London. Major projects in Chicago include the Chicago Central Area Plan, Millennium Park Master Plan, Lakeshore East Master Plan, and Chicago Riverwalk Framework Plan. Visit www.som.com and follow [@SOMCityDesign](https://twitter.com/SOMCityDesign) on Twitter.

About International Secretariat for Water

The International Secretariat for Water (ISW) is an international non-governmental organization created in 1990 in the context of the Decade for Water and Sanitation. Based in Montréal, The ISW facilitates the application of the four principles stipulated in the Montreal Charter on Drinking Water and Sanitation: access to water and sanitation is first and foremost a policy issue; all actions in this field must be conceived in support to the populations concerned; access to water must be integrated into an overall development approach; all water related programs must include the education and training of the populations.

About The Chicago Architecture Foundation

The Chicago Architecture Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to inspire people to discover why design matters. The CAF pursues this mission through architecture tours, exhibitions, panel discussions, and youth and adult education programs. For further information visit www.architecture.org, call 312.922.3432, become a Facebook fan (www.facebook.com/chiarchitecture) or follow [@chiarchitecture](https://twitter.com/chiarchitecture) on Twitter.

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