CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE FOUNDATION

"Chicago: City of Big Data" Exhibition Explores the Digital Age of Urban Design

The May 8 launch of Chicago Architecture Foundation's exhibition connects people to the data they generate and its influence on the built environment

Chicago, Ill.— The Chicago Architecture Foundation's new exhibition, *Chicago: City of Big Data*, opening May 8, reveals the potential that urban data has to affect Chicago's built environment, and by extension, cities worldwide. Features of the exhibition will show where urban data comes from by examining digital infrastructure in the built environment, and how it is used by architects, planners and citizens in the design process. Interactive displays and year-long public programming will let visitors learn hands-on how big data is a city's lifeblood.

The data we create by interacting with technology generates vast amounts of digital information known as "big data." It is all-encompassing, from information relayed by environmental sensors, to messages we share via social media. Once analyzed, architects and engineers can apply this information to the planning and building of our cities. The influence of urban data on advances in modern architecture and urban planning is becoming more apparent every day, making data one of the most valuable materials of 21st century design.

In order to fully illustrate the relationships between data and urban design, the exhibition individualizes the experience by engaging visitors on how data is a part of themselves **(You)**, their immediate community **(Your Block)** and their greater urban environment **(Your City)**.

- **You**: Visitors will discover their personal data trail--including online purchases, social media engagement, web browsing preferences and geographic locations--and explore how it impacts their everyday actions and experiences.
- **Your Block**: Special displays will reveal examples of data-collecting infrastructure in Chicago and cities across the world--from environmental sensors that record air quality data, to cameras that monitor city operations and public safety.
- **Your City**: Designers, planners and citizens are learning to use urban data to address key issues, which is how data ultimately fits into a city's design process. Visitors will interact with special case-studies that demonstrate how data is being used to design for sustainability, equity, health and efficiency.

Valuable partnerships and collaborations with organizations like Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM) and IBM, will bring the exhibition to life. Skidmore, Owings and Merrill is partnering with the CAF curatorial

team to develop a digital interactive using CAF's *Chicago Model* to reveal real-time data that visualizes the Loop's digital footprint. IBM has partnered with CAF through its [City Forward](#) initiative, a free web-based platform developed and powered by the company as a civic resource sponsored by IBM Corporate Citizenship & Corporate Affairs, to develop Chicago's first interactive dashboard. The content generated on two dashboards, designed and built by experts in [IBM Interactive Experience](#)'s Chicago lab, in the exhibition will also be available online via the *City of Big Data* website, making up-to-the-minute information open to engagement from audiences both onsite and remotely. Features of the model interactive and dashboard will include:

- The *Chicago Model*: located in CAF's atrium, the *Chicago Model* is the only accurate and up-to-date depiction of Chicago's downtown. For *City of Big Data*, the *Chicago Model* will be enhanced with new touch-screens, a colorful light installation, and an interactive digital model of the city. Digital tablets will use data as a lens for exploring iconic Chicago spaces and structures, including the Merchandise Mart and the city's lakefront. A light projection system will transform the model into a 3D canvas for data visualizations. A digital model of the city--designed in partnership with SOM--will give visitors a new perspective on the *Chicago Model*, allowing them to interact with a year's worth of Twitter, 311, and Divvy data layered over the city.
- City Forward digital dashboard by IBM: Two 60-inch screens will be located in storefront windows on both Michigan Avenue and Jackson Boulevard displaying the city's vital statistics to passersby. Utilizing the IBM City Forward platform, the dashboard will provide real-time updates that include housing comparisons by neighborhood with other cities; important urban statistics such as employment rates; hourly weather updates; bus and train arrival times; new construction permits; heat maps; and a Twitter feed. Additionally, the dashboard will present historic images of significant buildings and neighborhoods, giving visitors a special perspective on how Chicago's design has changed over the years. Visitors will be able to interact with these screens by tweeting comments, questions and requests for additional information.

"Data provides a critical lens for exploring and understanding the design issues that matter deeply to citizens, like community health, safety and sustainability," explains CAF's Curator of Exhibitions and Visitor Engagement Ingrid Haftel. "Our goal in launching this exhibition is to open up a dialogue on the connection between big data and our lives and show not only how our surroundings are impacted by this information, but also how relevant each individual is to the design of their environment."

"IBM shares CAF's passion for great cities like Chicago and for helping to create interactive experiences such as the *Chicago: City of Big Data* exhibition," says Jen Crozier, vice president of IBM's global citizenship initiatives. "We hope that visitors will come away from the exhibition empowered to use data to help shape policy and plans within their communities."

The *Chicago: City of Big Data* exhibition will extend through 2015 and include tailored programming that brings industry experts and thinkers to CAF for evening lectures, and teen, family and adult studio events throughout the year. For more information, visit http://bigdata.architecture.org/.

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The Chicago Architecture Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to inspiring people to discover why design matters. CAF pursues this mission through architecture tours, exhibitions, panel discussions and youth and adult education programs. A permanent exhibition, *Chicago Model City,*

includes a highly detailed scale model of Chicago. The Chicago Architecture Foundation is located at 224 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60604. For further information visit www.architecture.org or call 312.922.3432; become a Facebook fan at www.facebook.com/chiarchitecture or follow on Twitter at www.twitter.com/chiarchitecture.