



DESIGNING A BETTER CHICAGO ANNOUNCES 2021 GRANT RECIPIENTS ***SGA Youth Services and The Weaving Mill***

(Chicago, IL - September 2021) Designing a Better Chicago, a collaborative initiative organized and supported by NeoCon and theMART, the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE), and the Design Museum of Chicago, is thrilled to announce the winners of their 2021 [Design Impact Grant Program](#): The Weaving Mill and SGA Youth Services. This will mark the second year of the Design Impact Grant program, which was established to provide funds and to support individuals and organizations using design to directly address pressing issues within the Chicago community. Celebrating local, grassroots, and up-and-coming designers and companies who show promise and a huge drive to support civic progress, the Design Impact Program offers \$25,000 each year in project-specific grants.

The Weaving Mill is an artist-run industrial weaving operation located in Humboldt Park. Founded in 2015, their ethos remains steadfastly fixed on bringing the larger network of Chicago's textile studios together to significantly reduce fiber waste. Through this grant, The Weaving Mill, in collaboration with Westtown Education for Textiles (W.E.F.T.), a textile education program for adults with developmental disabilities that the Mill has run since 2015, plans to build a bicycle-powered fiber shredding machine that will take fabric scraps and turn them into a disaggregated fluff that can be repurposed and made into shoppable, usable products. The plans for this machine will be free and accessible, allowing textile plants across the city to participate and repurpose their waste in-house. Emily Winter, Director of The Weaving Mill, comments, "Through working with W.E.F.T. participants in the collecting, sorting and processing aspects of this recycling program, we can expand educational and professional opportunities available for those with developmental disabilities, while simultaneously building community partnership within the broader Chicago textile community through a shared long-term goal of reducing waste in the city."

The SGA Youth Services is a leader in Chicago in coordinating and developing opportunities for BIPOC students to receive professional mentorship, training, and direct access to the design industry. In partnership with Norman Teague Design Studios & Tilden Career Academy High School, SGA Youth Services aims to use this grant to found The Tilden After School Student Pilot to Permanent Design Incubator (P2P). "This program will be used as the catalyst for a permanent product design workforce development program at Tilden. P2P is a model that bridges technical academy students to university design programs," notes Cristina Ocon, Director of Grants and Operations at SGA Youth Services. "Receiving this grant will allow us to create a stable pipeline to guide students through high school into university and eventually into the greater design industry, with the aim of introducing more Black/Brown youth to design." The

11-week course will teach students to build scale models, construction sequencing and assembly strategies, the use of Adobe and Photoshop, finishing, measurement usage, and design principles, all with the aim to offer exposure and develop the tools they will need to enter the professional design world.

Stay tuned for more details on a NeoCon hosted virtual programming series featuring the 2021 grantees in late October. Additional information about the 2021 Grant Recipients and Designing a Better Chicago can be found at designingabetterchicago.org.

Media Contacts:

NeoCon: Novità Communications/ Alexandra Zwicky / Danielle McWilliams / Emma Reuland
Email: alexandra@novitapr.com / danielle@novitapr.com / emma@novitapr.com

Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE): Christine Carrino
Email: Christine.Carrino@cityofchicago.org

Design Museum of Chicago: Tanner Woodford
Email: tanner@designchicago.org

###

About NeoCon: NeoCon is the world's leading platform and most important event for the commercial interiors industry, held each year at theMART in Chicago. Since launching in 1969, NeoCon has served as the annual gathering place for the commercial design world's manufacturers, dealers, architects, designers, end-users, design organizations and media. The three-day event showcases game-changing products and services from both leading companies and emerging talent—providing unparalleled access to the latest and most innovative solutions. A robust educational program of keynote presentations and CEU sessions offers world-class expertise and insight about today's most relevant topics as well as the future of commercial design. www.neocon.com

NeoCon® is a registered trademark of Merchandise Mart Properties, Inc., a subsidiary of Vornado Realty Trust.

About theMART: theMART (formerly The Merchandise Mart), located in the center of the sought-after River North submarket, is interwoven into the fabric of Chicago as an innovator in business, technology, culture, art, media and more. As the largest privately-held commercial building in the United States, it is one of the world's leading commercial buildings, wholesale design centers and the preeminent international business location in Chicago. Encompassing 4.2 million gross square feet, theMART spans two city blocks, rises 25 stories, and is visited by an average of 30,000 people each business day and nearly 10 million people annually. Offering continuous innovation and creativity from leading manufacturers and design forward

showrooms, theMART serves as the home to Chicago's most creative and technologically innovative companies.

About the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events: The Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events is dedicated to enriching Chicago's artistic vitality and cultural vibrancy. This includes fostering the development of Chicago's non-profit arts sector, independent working artists and for-profit arts businesses; providing a framework to guide the City's future cultural and economic growth, via the 2012 Chicago Cultural Plan; marketing the City's cultural assets to a worldwide audience; and presenting high-quality, free and affordable cultural programs for residents and visitors.

About Design Museum of Chicago: A local, non-profit cultural institution with a gallery in the Loop, the Design Museum of Chicago strives to meet people where they are and make design accessible to everyone, facilitating conversations comprised of a variety of voices, backgrounds, and viewpoints. They believe that design is not just a single discipline or process, but rather a persistent element in our everyday experiences with the fundamental capacity to improve the human condition. Formerly the Chicago Design Museum, they create free and low-cost programming about a wide variety of topics, from architecture in Ireland to games in modern culture.