



DESIGNING A BETTER CHICAGO ANNOUNCES 2023 GRANT RECIPIENTS

The Chicago Tool Library and The Center for Native Futures

(Chicago, IL - June 5 2023) Designing a Better Chicago is thrilled to announce the winners of the fourth annual Design Impact Grant Program: the Center for Native Futures and the Chicago Tool Library. Designing a Better Chicago, a collaborative initiative organized and supported by NeoCon® and THE MART, the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE), and the Design Museum of Chicago, awards \$25,000 in funds each year to support and honor individuals and organizations using design to directly address pressing social and civic issues within the Chicago community. This year the funds will be shared equally between the two grant recipients.

Cognizant of the disparity in support for Native artists within the Chicago Community, the Center for Native Futures will use the grant monies to support the Curatorial Advancement of Native Arts (CANA) initiative. This program aims to provide a residency and curatorial program for their FLEX gallery and produce multiple exhibitions throughout 2024. This project will provide lasting career skills for four selected curators and create a space of mentorship, guidance, and creativity, all with the goal of strengthening the visibility and presence of contemporary Indigenous curators and artists in the Chicago area.

Chicago is known for its energy and creative spirit, but many nonprofit organizations and educational institutions lack the resources to provide the support needed to take potential to the next level. The Chicago Tool Library (CTL), a nonprofit “library of things” located in West Garfield Park, provides over 4,500 households access to tools, appliances, and items used for home improvement, building, design, and creative endeavors. After a recent donation of over 5000 tools came to the library, the CTL recognized the need to expand its lending program to support a larger, expanding audience. Their new initiative, “Democratizing Design: Power Tools to the People” intends to elevate the library by growing its staff capacity, engaging with community stakeholders through events and visioning sessions, researching the day-to-day needs of the community, and expanding visibility and outreach to the greater Chicago community.

“Designing a Better Chicago showcases the remarkable efforts of organizations dedicated to enhancing Chicago through design,” comments Tanner Woodford, Founder + Executive Director of Design Museum of Chicago. This year’s grantees—Center For Native Futures and The Chicago Tool Library—demonstrate a visionary approach to design, pushing the limits of innovation to address challenges with imaginative solutions. We are thrilled to help support their invaluable work.”

This year’s grant winners will join 2022 grantee Quilen Blackwell, President of the Chicago Eco House, to discuss their work, the impact they are making on Chicago, and the lessons they have learned at this year’s NeoCon. The Featured Presentation will take place in the NeoCon Presentation Studio on Wednesday, June 14, at 11:30 a.m. CDT and be streamed live on the NeoCon Programming Hub. Details on this panel and other programming is available at neocon.com.

Additional information about the 2023 Grant Recipient and Designing a Better Chicago can be found at designingabetterchicago.org.

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About NeoCon: NeoCon is the world’s leading platform and most important event for the commercial interiors industry, held each year at THE MART 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 more than 400 leading and emerging companies—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.
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About THE MART: THE MART is the largest privately held commercial building in the United States: it encompasses 4.2 million gross square feet, spans two city blocks, rises 25 stories, and is visited by an average of 30,000 people each business day (or nearly 10 million people annually).

THE MART serves as the home to Chicago's most creative and technologically innovative companies, including Motorola Mobility, 1871, Yelp, PayPal, and MATTER, as well as Fortune 500 companies Conagra Brands, Allstate, Medline Industries, Beam Suntory, Avant and Grainger. It is also the largest and most important center for design in North America with more than 250 premier design showrooms offering the latest resources for both residential and commercial markets.

About the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE): 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; 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.