



DESIGNING A BETTER CHICAGO ANNOUNCES 2025 GRANT RECIPIENTS

Three Visionary Projects Selected: Global Gardens Chicago, Eric Hotchkiss: Provisions, and Floating Museum

(Chicago, IL - July 9, 2025) [Designing a Better Chicago](#)—a citywide initiative organized and supported by [NeoCon](#), [THE MART](#), the [Richard H. Driehaus Foundation](#), and the [Design Museum of Chicago](#)—is proud to announce its 2025 grantees. Through annual grants, the program supports local organizations using art and design to address civic challenges across Chicago's neighborhoods—aiming to inspire, educate, and create more vibrant communities. The 2025 recipients are [Global Gardens Chicago](#), awarded the NeoCon Design Impact Grant, and [Eric Hotchkiss: Provisions](#) and [Floating Museum](#), both recognized with the Richard H. Driehaus Built Environment Grant.

Launched in 2020 in collaboration with Chicago's [Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events](#), Designing a Better Chicago celebrates the city's rich design legacy and the people and projects shaping its future. The initiative recognizes the role of design in serving the public good—enhancing shared spaces, fostering belonging, and advancing more vibrant and sustainable neighborhoods. All of the selected winners exemplify these values through bold, community-centered work that cultivates inclusivity and drives meaningful change.

“This year’s grantees reflect the city’s incredible range of creativity and civic spirit,” remarks Tanner Woodford, Founder and Executive Director of Design Museum of Chicago. “Each project addresses real community needs through design, from urban agriculture to cultural preservation to tool sharing. We’re proud to support this work and amplify the impact of design across Chicago’s communities.”

2025 Grant Recipients

NeoCon Design Impact Grant

Global Gardens Refugee Training Farm: Native Pollinator and Prairie Plant Project

This project introduces native prairie and pollinator plants to enhance biodiversity, attract beneficial insects, and increase crop yields for refugee farmers. Informed by ancestral agricultural knowledge and ecological stewardship, it strengthens local food systems while contributing to the restoration of Illinois’ diminishing prairie ecosystem.

Richard H. Driehaus Built Environment Grant

Eric Hotchkiss: Provisions

Located on a formerly vacant lot in Englewood, Provisions is a community-designed outdoor kitchen and gathering space. Developed through participatory design with local residents and

youth, the project addresses food apartheid and the loss of cultural space by creating an environment for cooking, storytelling, and mutual aid.

Floating Museum: Floating Monuments – Mecca Inflatable

Mecca Inflatable is a mobile architectural installation that transforms parks, vacant lots, and underutilized spaces into vibrant hubs for dialogue, performance, and co-creation. Designed to address spatial inequality and cultural disinvestment, the inflatable structure reimagines public space as a site of civic engagement and shared authorship.

The 2025 cohort joined 2024 recipient **Jordan Campbell of [Alt Space Chicago](#)** for a featured presentation at the 56th edition of NeoCon. The panel explored each project's mission, community impact, and lessons learned. A recording is available in the NeoCon Program Library at [neocon.com](#).

Additional special recognition was extended to nine projects that further reflect Chicago's civic-minded design leadership: [Akima Brackeen](#), [Chicago Architecture Center](#), [Dillon Pranger](#), [Dorian Sylvain Studios](#), [Duo Development](#), [Ecoship](#), [Matiz Press](#), [Reshorna Fitzpatrick](#).

For more information about the 2025 grantees and the Designing a Better Chicago initiative, visit [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 into today's most relevant topics as well as the future of commercial design. [neocon.com](#)

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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, PayPal, Avant, and MATTER, as well as Fortune 500 companies Conagra Brands, Allstate, Medline Industries, Beam Suntory, IPG, 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 Richard H. Driehaus Foundation: The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation is committed to enriching the lives of all Chicagoans by improving the built environment, cultivating a robust and diverse arts and culture ecosystem, and supporting investigative journalism that fosters transparency, accountability, and effective government. driehausfoundation.org

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. designchicago.org

About the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events: The City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) supports artists and cultural organizations, invests in the creative economy, and expands access and participation in the arts throughout Chicago's 77 neighborhoods. As a collaborative cultural presenter, arts funder, and advocate for creative workers, our programs and events serve Chicagoans and visitors of all ages and backgrounds, downtown and in diverse communities across our city – to strengthen and celebrate Chicago. DCASE produces some of the city's most iconic festivals, markets, events, and exhibitions at the Chicago Cultural Center, Millennium Park, and in communities across the city – serving a local and global audience of 25 million people. The Department offers cultural grants and resources, manages public art, supports TV and film production and other creative industries, and permits special events throughout Chicago. For further details, visit Chicago.gov/DCASE and [stay connected via newsletters and social media](#).

Media Kit:

Access the full press kit [here](#).

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