



**DESIGNING A BETTER CHICAGO ANNOUNCES 2024 GRANT RECIPIENTS**  
*alt\_ Redemptive Plastics, Aram Han Sifuentes, and Common Worlds Playscapes*

**(Chicago, IL - July 11, 2024)** Designing a Better Chicago—a collaborative initiative organized and supported by NeoCon, THE MART, the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE), and the Design Museum of Chicago—is pleased to announce its 2024 grant recipients. Each year grants are awarded to local organizations addressing civic issues in Chicago neighborhoods through art and design, aiming to inspire, educate, and create more vibrant, sustainable communities. This year, **alt\_Redemptive Plastics** and **Aram Han Sifuentes** are receiving the NeoCon Design Impact Grant, while **Common Worlds Playscapes** is being awarded the Richard H. Driehaus Built Environment Grant.

“Since 2020, we have awarded grants to 10 outstanding individuals and organizations, highlighting the extraordinary ways design can tackle urgent challenges and enhance the quality of life in Chicago,” remarks Tanner Woodford, Founder and Executive Director of Design Museum of Chicago. “This year's grantees truly embody the spirit of Designing a Better Chicago. Their tenacity and creativity drive meaningful change in our city.”

Redemptive Plastics aims to transform Chicago's Austin neighborhood through sustainable practices and communal engagement using design principles. Executed through alt\_Chicago, a hub for artists, entrepreneurs, and visionaries, the organization repurposes excessive plastic waste into functional art pieces like public benches and playground components. It also provides work opportunities for artisans and residents through technical training. This replicable system aims to inspire other neighborhoods across the city and country to adopt and utilize it.

Artist Aram Han Sifuentes received a Design Impact Grant to help fund her collaboration with the HANA Center, which supports Korean, Asian American, and multiethnic immigrant communities in Chicago. Sifuentes' ongoing initiative, “Citizenship for All: Storytelling through Nonggi Making,” engages multi-generational and multi-ethnic immigrants in Chicago through the creation of Nonggis—Korean cultural folk banners believed to have protective, healing, and spiritual power. By offering this platform Sifuentes and the HANA Center aim to foster a love of artmaking and design, highlighting the empowering benefits of creative practice in everyday life.

Common Worlds Playscapes is the recipient of the Richard H. Driehaus Built Environment Grant for their proposed collaboration with South Merrill Community Garden to create intergenerational play space for gathering, community, and arts in the South Shore of Chicago. Utilizing parts of a salvaged school bus already beloved by the community, the grant will help redesign and construct a play space in the bus, as well as support an expanded community

engagement initiative including events, activations, and more arts programming for both children and adults in the area.

This year's recipients joined 2023 grantee Monica Rickert-Bolter of Center for Natives Futures for a Featured Presentation on June 12 at the 55th edition of NeoCon. The panel delved into the mission and work of each recipient and the impact they are making on Chicago. The recording is now available to view at [neocon.com](https://neocon.com) through mid-September.

In addition to the three grant awards, 11 projects received special recognition for their outstanding work this year: Arts of Life (AofL), Chuquimarca, Design Trust Chicago, Eric Hotchkiss, Global Garden Refugee Training Farm, Project Osmosis, Narrow Bridge, Chicago South Side Birth Center, The Beat Bank, United Yards, and Yollocalli. Additional information on the 2024 Grant Recipients and Designing a Better Chicago can be found at [designingabetterchicago.org](https://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. [www.neocon.com](https://www.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, 1871, 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.

**Chicago 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.

**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.

#### **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.