

NeoCon®

NeoCon 2026 Programming Registration Is Now Open

Comprehensive Conference Program Explores AI, Cultural Insight, the Evolving Human Experience of Design, the Impact of Lighting, and Much More

(Chicago, IL – April 1, 2026) NeoCon is pleased to announce that registration for its highly anticipated programming is now open at NeoCon.com. Building on this year's theme "Where Design Connects," the 57th edition—taking place June 8-10 in Chicago with a Preview Day on June 7—will bring together a provocative series of educational experiences examining how ideas, disciplines, and technologies intersect to shape the built environment.

The 2026 program places particular emphasis on how emerging tools, such as AI, and evolving cultural shifts are influencing design practice in real time—alongside broader conversations around collaboration, authorship, and the human experience of space. Spanning three keynotes, seven featured presentations, seven workshops, seven on-site CEUs, 60+ virtual CEUs, twelve NeoCon Talks, fourteen Illuminate Spotlight Sessions, four Inside Design experiences, and a dedicated student-focused day, the robust lineup pairs big-picture thinking with practical application across every facet of commercial design.

"Our programming is about challenging assumptions and presenting ideas that are both thought-provoking and directly applicable," says Nubia Henderson, Director of Programming. "We're cutting through complexity to focus on what matters in practice, bringing together perspectives that reflect how design connects across disciplines, industries, and lived experiences."

Keynotes: Visionaries at the Intersection of Purpose & Innovation

Headlining NeoCon 2026 are three distinct voices—**Jessica O. Matthews, Nick Foster, RDI, and David "Shingy" Shing**—who will open each day with perspectives on purpose-driven innovation, future-focused thinking, and navigating rapid cultural and technological change. Drawing from leadership roles across infrastructure, advanced technology, and global brand strategy, each brings a sharply defined point of view on how ideas evolve into impact. Together, the keynote series establishes a throughline for the show, encouraging attendees to rethink how ideas take shape, how systems evolve, and how design responds to an increasingly complex world. neocon.com/programming/keynotes-and-special-programming#keynotes

Featured Presentations: Tech Giants & Design Luminaries Explore Macro Trends

Seven featured presentations will convene an elite group of cross-disciplinary experts, including tech giants Cisco, Microsoft, and NVIDIA, alongside civic and design powerhouses like The Barack Obama Foundation, Mattel's Future Lab, HOK, and HKS. Presented in collaboration with business media partners such as *Fast Company* and *Crain's Chicago Business*, these thought-provoking sessions explore how emerging forces—from entrepreneurial business models to realities of AI-enabled offices—are reshaping both process and outcome. Panels will examine generational workplace shifts, the complexity of project delivery, the importance of

lighting in design, and the critical role of stakeholder collaboration, offering research-backed frameworks and case studies for navigating the intersection of technology and the built environment.

neocon.com/programming/keynotes-and-special-programming#featuredpresentations

Workshops: Hands-On Mastery in Emerging Tech & Creativity

Seven interactive workshops invite participants to move beyond observation and into active exploration. Designed to foster creativity and expand technical skill sets, these sessions cover a diverse range of approaches—from game-based frameworks that examine the relationship between organizational culture and workplace design, to hands-on explorations of emerging technologies, storytelling, and material experimentation. Attendees can engage in sketching exercises that sharpen observational skills, collaborative art-making processes that bridge craft and design, and practical sessions focused on integrating AI tools into professional workflows. Sessions led by leaders from firms such as Gensler, CannonDesign, and 13&9 Design further ground the workshops in real-world expertise—offering tangible techniques that extend into everyday practice. neocon.com/programming/tours-workshops

CEUs: On-Site & Virtual Insights-Driven Education

NeoCon's CEU program continues to provide a robust foundation for professional development, with seven on-site sessions complemented by more than 60 virtual offerings. Presented by leading associations, firms, manufacturers, and academic institutions, the sessions cover a wide spectrum of topics—from sustainable lighting strategies and material innovation to workplace microdiversity, multigenerational design, and the integration of AI into human-centered environments. Together, the on-site and virtual formats offer flexibility and accessibility, allowing attendees to engage with forward-looking content both during and beyond the show. neocon.com/programming/ceu-seminars

NeoCon Talks: Personal Perspectives from Leading & Emerging Voices

Returning for its fourth year, NeoCon Talks will feature twelve thought-provoking 20-minute conversations on the 7th Floor Exhibit Hall, presented in partnership with *Design Milk*. The series creates space for established and emerging voices to share ideas rooted in lived experience, practice, and experimentation. Experts from the likes of Perkins&Will, HOK, NELSON Worldwide, the Sustainable Design Collective, and SmithGroup will explore frameworks for circular design, the restorative science of biophilic fractals, and the personal journey of invisible disability. Together, these sessions emphasize accessibility, neurodiversity, resilience, and cultural storytelling—offering a more intimate lens on the challenges and opportunities shaping design today. neocon.com/programming/neocon-talks

Illuminate Spotlight Sessions: A Focus on the Power of Light

As part of *Illuminate at NeoCon*—a new show-within-a-show dedicated to architectural, technical, and decorative lighting—the Spotlight Sessions introduce fourteen 20 to 40-minute conversations centered on lighting innovation. Held at the special “Spotlight” stage on the 7th floor, the series features perspectives from leading firms and brands, including Fluxwerx, SCI Lighting Solutions, HLB Lighting Design, Lighting Design Alliance, bios, Cooledge Lighting,

Lytei, Lumenwerx, Stantec, and Digital Ambiance. Spanning topics from circadian health and human performance to adaptive digital environments and the evolving role of lighting in project delivery, these sessions will explore how light influences perception, performance, and atmosphere—underscoring its essential role in shaping how spaces are understood and experienced. neocon.com/programming/spotlight-sessions

Inside Design: Immersive Chicago Experiences

Returning after its debut in 2025, Inside Design invites attendees to engage with Chicago's creative community through four curated off-site experiences developed in partnership with the Design Museum of Chicago. From behind-the-scenes access to major civic projects like the Obama Presidential Center's Home Court to immersive explorations of artist-driven spaces, performance environments, and material experimentation rooted in the natural landscape, these experiences offer a closer look at how design operates across disciplines and contexts—extending the conversation beyond the show floor and into the city itself. neocon.com/programming/inside-design

Student Programming Supporting the Next Generation of Designers

NeoCon continues its commitment to emerging talent with a range of student-focused opportunities, including a dedicated Student Studio Day in collaboration with Gensler and TOKONEXT. Designed as an immersive, hands-on experience, the program connects students directly with practitioners and showrooms while guiding them through exercises that translate inspiration into career pathways—reinforcing NeoCon's role as a place where young voices can connect with the broader design community. Additional sessions, including portfolio reviews led by industry professionals, provide practical feedback and insight—equipping students with the tools and confidence to enter the field. neocon.com/programming/student-programs

To view the full programming lineup and register, visit NeoCon.com. For showroom, exhibitor, and general NeoCon news, images, and real-time information, follow NeoCon on: [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/NeoCon_Shows) (@NeoCon_Shows), [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/NeoCon-Shows) (@NeoCon-Shows), and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/NeoConShows) (@NeoConShows).

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: When does programming registration open and how do I register?

A: Programming registration for NeoCon 2026 is now open as of April 1. Attendees can browse the full conference lineup and register for sessions by visiting NeoCon.com.

Q: What types of programming are offered at NeoCon 2026?

A: The 2026 program includes a wide range of educational formats designed to suit different learning styles and schedules. Offerings include keynote and featured presentations, on-site and virtual CEUs, hands-on workshops, NeoCon Talks, Illuminate Spotlight Sessions, Inside Design experiences, and dedicated student programming.

Q: What are the key themes shaping this year’s programming?

A: Aligned with the theme “Where Design Connects,” this year’s programming explores how design intersects with technology, culture, and human experience. Major areas of focus include the real-world application of emerging tools such as AI, evolving workplace dynamics, sustainability, material innovation, lighting, and the increasing importance of cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Q: Are there opportunities for hands-on and off-site experiences?

A: Yes. In addition to traditional presentations, NeoCon 2026 offers interactive workshops that provide hands-on learning across topics like AI integration, sketching, and material exploration. Attendees can also participate in Inside Design, a series of curated off-site experiences throughout Chicago, offering behind-the-scenes access to notable projects, creative spaces, and cultural institutions.

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. 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, 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.

Media Kit:

Access the official show press kit [here](#).

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