

# CHICAGO ARCHITECT

JANUARY // FEBRUARY // 2018

## FORM FOLLOWS PERFORMANCE

ANTHONY VIOLA, 2017 DUBIN FAMILY  
YOUNG ARCHITECT AWARD RECIPIENT // 38

ARCHITECTURE IS FUN NAMED  
2017 FIRM OF THE YEAR // 32



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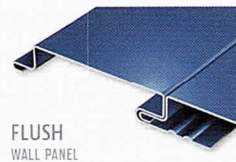
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## HAPPY 2018 FROM AIA CHICAGO!

I am honored to represent you as this year's board president, and I am excited to introduce our new Board of Directors. I would like to thank Matt Dumich, FAIA, our 2017 president, for his leadership and guidance through another extremely successful year for AIA Chicago and our members.

At the close of 2017, Chicago had erected a record number of construction cranes — 60 in total. In comparison, 12 cranes were erected in 2010. As that economic boom continues into 2018, we are experiencing a rare moment when we can leverage good design to affect all aspects of the city.

Despite the economic opportunities, we architects face challenges such as budget and environmental policies that adversely affect our projects and our profession. We also face extreme inequalities in resources provided to the residents and neighborhoods of this city. I am proud to be part of an organization whose members take action when confronted with challenges such as these. In addition to the more than 150 programs offered by AIA Chicago last year, our members are using their design skills to address critical issues in creative ways that often fall outside the typical boundaries of our profession:

- One member has rewritten code and zoning regulations to develop a replicable

micro building to encourage economic start-up enterprises.

- One member delved into politics to create a national outreach and advocacy program to address sustainability issues.
- One firm is taking the initiative to develop collaborative urban plans that rethink the use of large areas of vacant land.

These are just a snapshot of how you, AIA Chicago members, are contributing to the profession and the city. In the coming year, I'd love to hear more about your success stories and your challenges. Together we can celebrate the good work you are doing and work together to address the challenges you face.

In celebrating good work, this issue highlights neighborhood-based projects in Chicago that showcase collaboration — between clients, developers, funding sources and different firms. We also celebrate our 2017 Firm of the Year Award winner Architecture is Fun and recognize Anthony Viola, AIA, the 2017 Dubin Family Young Architect Award recipient.

Cheers to a prosperous 2018,

Catherine Baker, AIA



*Chicago Architect*, the primary outreach tool of AIA Chicago, is published six times a year as an authoritative resource for architects, the larger design community and the public about architecture and related issues of interest to Chicago architects. The magazine communicates industry trends, the value of high-quality design and the role of AIA Chicago and its members in the world of architecture.

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# TIED HOUSE CHICAGO



TIED HOUSE INTERIORS

IMAGE CREDIT: GENSLER

Built in 1903, Schuba’s Tavern at Belmont and Southport Avenues is an institution tied to Chicago’s beer culture. Literally, it was a Tied House — a pub that maintained a relationship with one brewery to provide beer. Schuba’s was a Schlitz Tied House, indicated by the relief carving of the Schlitz logo on the building’s west-facing facade.



Although Schuba's had undergone renovations to restore it to its pre-Prohibition-era glory, the restaurant next door needed a serious update. Gensler was brought on to design Tied House, the upcoming restaurant and bar located on Schuba's south side. Leading the team at Gensler is architect Lee Greenberg, AIA, whose interest in historic elements of the Schuba's building combined with his own longstanding relationship with the concert venue, helped inform the interesting typologies featured on and within the building.

Tied House initially presents itself via a combination of negative space and balanced weights. The front façade is characterized by a second-floor brick cube placed upon a lightweight glass wall that runs in an "L" shape across the building's width, forming a long courtyard in the front. According to Greenberg, the team used a repeated pattern of brick removals to make the façade appear lighter and were inspired by neighboring brickwork. The Tied House brick removals are a reversal of the brick pattern belting the Schuba's façade. "The façade reads as a brick screen when you're seeing the building from a distance, but when you stand close, you see the connection to Schuba's really easily," Greenberg said.

The brick screen is versatile; the entire structure is supported by steel cross beams that are precisely secured within an eighth of an inch from the removals, allowing an uninter-

rupted glow from the second-floor event space and bar to transform the second floor into a lightbox at night. During the daytime, the removals cast patterned shadows on the interior. "It'll be a dynamic space that changes throughout the day," Greenberg said.

The design team accounted for a changing grade, yielding a long, slow incline at the restaurant's entrance, yet it produces a visually interesting courtyard that is tucked away slightly beneath grade (a short step down) and is concealed by wood-covered beams supporting a long trellis with a moveable canopy. Oxidized copper detailing — which references the copper detailing used throughout Schuba's roof ornamentation — will line a fireplace and planter on

the street line, creating an intimate, all-season outdoor environment. Copper will also be prevalent throughout the restaurant's interiors.

Gensler's vision for Tied House was not grand or ornate; for a firm known for sleek, modern textures and large-scale institutional projects, Tied House appears as an outlier. For Greenberg, however, the project felt right at home. "I've been coming to Schuba's since I was old enough to take the CTA by myself," he said. "We knew from the beginning that we wanted to do something tactile, not slick or hyper-modern. It didn't fit the client or the neighborhood, so we approached the project thinking about how we could pay homage to the icon next door." CA

**"THE FAÇADE READS AS A BRICK SCREEN WHEN YOU'RE SEEING THE BUILDING FROM A DISTANCE. BUT WHEN YOU STAND CLOSE, YOU SEE THE CONNECTION TO SCHUBA'S REALLY EASILY."**

— LEE GREENBERG

IMAGE CREDIT: GENSLER



# HATCHING NEW IDEAS

## WIGHT & CO. DESIGNS NEW SMALL BUSINESS INCUBATOR IN EAST GARFIELD PARK

THE HATCHERY WILL INVIGORATE AN EAST GARFIELD PARK VACANT LOT AND REPURPOSE AN EXISTING BUILDING.



Starting up a small business centered around food can be complex, especially when an entrepreneur is working solo. Licenses and regulations can be complicated, and finding a commercial kitchen is often expensive and troublesome. But successes abound — mom-and-pop chocolatiers, small-batch snacks and artisanal baked goods have flooded the Chicago market. The Hatchery, a nonprofit organization located in Chicago’s West Town neighborhood, supplies 55 of these entrepreneurs with resources including shared kitchen space. This year, The Hatchery is opening a new home for these food leaders and will open in East Garfield Park in 2018.

SHARED KITCHEN SPACES CAN ALSO ACCOMMODATE SPECIAL EVENTS LIKE COOKING CLASSES.

IMAGE BY WIGHT & CO.



Wight & Co is leading the design/build process for the new facility, which will greatly expand the possibilities for participants seeking the similar shared kitchen space that the old Hatchery hub provided. The new 67,000-square-foot structure will be a combination of new construction and the incorporation of an older structure into the new building, effectively doubling the organization’s incubator capacity 55 to 100 individual start-ups.

Located near the intersection of Lake Street and Kedzie Avenue, this new site creates a massive space that includes shared kitchens, private kitchens, meeting spaces and a new home for Accion, a not-for-profit, small business lending company.

“Adaptability in design is critical for the Hatchery to accommodate flexible programming and future growth,” explained Matt Zolecki, project executive for Wight. For example, Wight approached the layout strategy for the 56 private kitchens by creating suites of eight kitchens. Each has partition walls and is based on a four-foot module surrounding a centralized utility wall. This allowed flexibility in the sizing of the kitchens while maintaining an appropriate ratio of utility wall (for major equipment) to kitchen area.

According to Zolecki, the private kitchens are at the heart of the building, but the design team sought to innovate beyond the intensive infrastructure and closed-off production spaces inherent in this type of function. “The Hatchery is more than a collection of production kitchens. It’s a place to receive coaching, make use of business services, collaborate with others

and build a community. Our challenge was to integrate all of these capabilities into the facility, and take advantage of the co-location of tenants.” Wight looked at creating a “village effect” where the Hatchery functions, offices and kitchens are almost buildings onto themselves, intersected with common areas and collaborative spaces that take advantage of clerestory glazing for natural light. “There is a flow from the main entrance to the loading dock that almost takes on a cross-docking methodology. Instead of materials, however, it’s the flow of ideas, products and people.”

The new Hatchery also includes adaptable, expandable meeting rooms to accommodate large crowds and events that utilize large, movable overhead doors. The front-of-house area

extends the clearstory interiors to an outdoor market space.

The innovative incubator project is the brainchild of Accion Chicago and the Industrial Council of Nearwest Chicago (ICNC), two nonprofit organizations that work to encourage investment and economic development in Chicago neighborhoods. IFF Chicago is serving as the development partner for the \$30 million venture. Sponsors, including Kellogg and Conagra, are providing additional funding. The city of Chicago played an integral role, with financial assistance through programs such as TIF, New Market Tax credits and land acquisition of the city-owned parcels.

The project’s design is also collaborative. According to Zolecki, “The team at Wight is using an integrated approach to

**“ADAPTABILITY IN DESIGN IS CRITICAL FOR THE HATCHERY TO ACCOMMODATE FLEXIBLE PROGRAMMING AND FUTURE GROWTH.”**

— MATT ZOLECKI

design, engineering and construction for the Hatchery. This is what we call our ‘Design & Delivery’ model, an integrated approach that allows us to explore design options quickly, side by side with engineers, estimators, construction experts and our clients. This collaborative environment brings a more informed evolution to the iterative design process, providing the best possible solution for our clients.” CA

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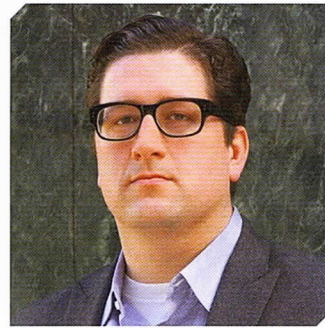
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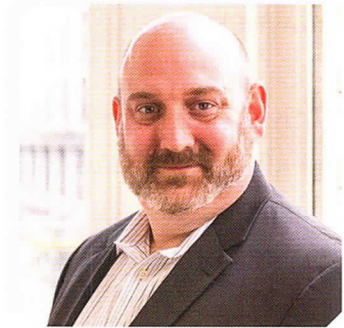
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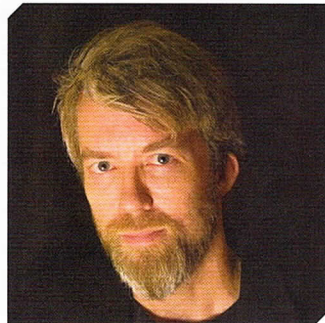
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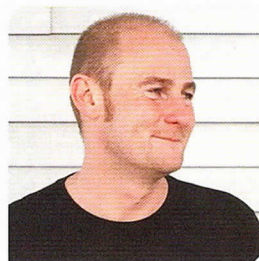
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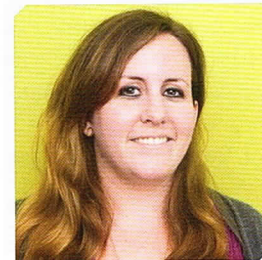
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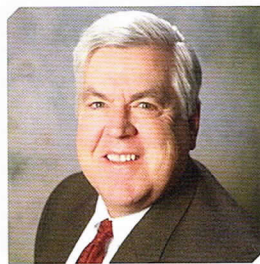
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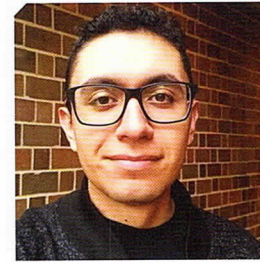
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## SMALL PROJECT AWARDS

The eighth annual Small Project Awards — an awards program honoring architectural projects under 10,000 square feet designed by firms with fewer than 10 or fewer full-time equivalent employees — will open February 5 and will close March 6, 2018. Please note the change in categories and size restrictions.

To learn more or begin your submission, visit [aiachicago.org](http://aiachicago.org). Questions can be directed to Allison Garwood Freedland at [afreedland@aiachicago.org](mailto:afreedland@aiachicago.org).

## ANNUAL MEETING & HOLIDAY PARTY

The 2017 Annual Meeting & Holiday Party took place in December in the Cultural Center's historic Preston Bradley Hall. This year, AIA Chicago honored Anthony Viola, AIA, with the 2017 Dubin Family Young Architect Award. Distinguished Service Awards went to one organization and one individual: ACE Mentor Program — providing mentorship to high school students working toward careers in architecture, construction and engineering. The 2017 Firm of the Year Award honored Architecture is Fun, Inc. Read more about their work on page 32.

Steven F. Weiss, FAIA, received the second Distinguished Service Award, recognizing his 30 years of service in the AIA documents committee. Chicago's membership is fortunate to have Weiss' expertise available as contract documents continue to change and adapt.

The event also recognized the 100 newly licensed AIA members in Illinois, as well as the winners of the Chicago Awards in Architecture (student prizes). To learn more about the student winners, visit [aiachicago.org](http://aiachicago.org).



PHOTO BY DARRIS LEE HARRIS

## REMEMBERING ED UHLIR, FAIA (1944–2017)

BY JULIA BACHRACH

Sometime in the early 1990s, we were working on design guidelines for Grant Park. Ed was driving, zipping around while pointing things out. Suddenly, we were in railyards beneath the park. I didn't really know how we got down there. He pulled over and said "See, this should all be decked over with parkland." At the time, I had no idea what he was talking about.

Edward K. Uhlir, FAIA, grew up in Chicago. After graduating from Lane Technical High School and studying dentistry at Northwestern University, he transferred to the University of Illinois at Chicago where he received his architecture degree in 1969. Ed began his career as an in-house architect at the Chicago Park District a few years later, at a low point in the district's history.

But Ed was a visionary. He was calm, self-possessed — a master at getting things done under the radar. And he had big ideas for Chicago's parks.

Ed was president of AIA Chicago in 1986-87. When renowned architect Walter Netsch, FAIA, became Park District Board president in 1986, he tapped Ed

to help reform the district. After Ed unearthed a large cache of archival materials hidden beneath Soldier Field, he hired many talented young architects, landscape architects, planners, an archivist, a sculpture conservator and me, a historian and preservationist. Under Ed's leadership, we began restoring historic parks, designing sympathetic new buildings, and working with community organizations on some of the first comprehensive plans for Chicago's parks since the parks were created.

Ed left the Park District in 1998 to serve as project manager for his brainchild, Millennium Park. Although Millennium Park is his most obvious legacy, his contributions to Chicago are innumerable.

Ed Uhlir died of cancer at the age of 73 on November 23, 2017. His wife Bonnie and daughters, Lydia and Laura, are planning a memorial service for January 12, 2018, at 4 p.m., at the Chicago Cultural Center.

//////  
*Julia Bachrach, an author, consulting historian and preservationist, served as the Chicago Park District's preservation planning supervisor from 1988 to 2017.*



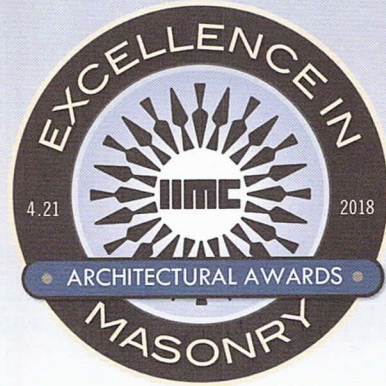
## DESIGNIGHT 2017

Designight 2017 celebrated its 62nd year of Design Excellence Awards on October 13. More than 1,000 architects and affiliated professionals attended the largest cocktail party in the industry, sponsored by Pella Crafted Luxury. The awards program recognized 29 projects with Distinguished Building, Interior Architecture, Divine Detail awards. This year, the 10-Year Award was given to Crown Fountain, conceived by artist Jaume Plensa and executed by Krueck + Sexton Architects.

Carol Ross Barney, FAIA, received the 2017 Lifetime Achievement Award to a cheering crowd. Her acceptance speech emphasized the important role that architects play in creating an equitable society.

## ARE YOU READY TO TAKE THE A.R.E.?

AIA Chicago has, in previous years, offered multiple series of A.R.E. test prep courses to get emerging talent licensed. Sign up to receive updates and vote on your preferred course schedule at [www.aiachicago.org/education/are-classes](http://www.aiachicago.org/education/are-classes). CA



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Senior Associate **Jonathan Crump, AIA, LEED AP**, has been promoted to design director at the Dewberry architecture practice. The company also promoted **Kalman Nagy, AIA**, and **Jonathan Tallman, AIA, GGP, GPCP**, to associates.



**Solomon Cordwell Buenz (SCB)** is designing a new, LEED Gold-targeted academic and student dormitory complex at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The development of the 135,700-square-foot facility comes amid a five-year plan to boost enrollment across the three University of Illinois campuses by 15 percent. The project is the result of a private-public partnership between the university and American Campus Communities.



**SCB** revealed renderings for a new development along the Chicago River on the site of the *Chicago Tribune* printing facility. If built, the site would be an "innovation district" that accompanies the recent tech sector developments in the West Loop and Goose Island.



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**SmithGroupJJR** added three leaders to its Chicago office: **Bethany Johnson, AIA, LEED BD+C, NCARB**, as Science & Technology Studio leader; **Timothy Gregg, AIA, ACHA**, principal in Chicago's Healthcare Studio; and **Nikki Dvorak Jeffers** in business development.

**Tony Gosetti, AIA, LEED AP BD+C**, is now a senior associate at CallisonRTKL Chicago.



**Tod Desmarais, FAIA**, has joined the Lamar Johnson Collaborative.



**Dan Wheeler, FAIA**, will be receiving the 2017 Nathan Ricker Clifford Award, an award that celebrates outstanding architecture educators in Illinois.





**Griskelis Young Harrell** redesigned the two lower levels of 401 N. Michigan, expanding amenity offerings and accommodating new building systems infrastructure.



**Stuart Cohen and Julie Hacker Architects** won a 2017 Preservation Award from the city of Evanston for their Victorian Redux project. The project also won a 2017 Small Projects Residential Award.



**Ross Barney, AIA, and Huili Feng, AIA,** have launched Tumu Studio, a new architecture and design firm. The name "Tumu" means "build" in Chinese and is composed from the base words "earth" (tu) and "wood" (mu). Both founders came from Ross Barney Architects.



**Valerio Dewalt Train's** Vue53 project in Hyde Park has obtained LEED Silver status.



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Legat Architects promoted **Jeff Sandberg, AIA, LEED AP**, to studio director of its Quad Cities studio in Moline, Illinois.



PHOTO COURTESY OF AJ BROWN IMAGING

**Legat Architects** designed Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science's Huntley Simulation Center. The center, located on the third and fourth floors of a medical office building, offers settings such as an ambulance, an operating room, a labor/delivery room, an ICU and more.



The **Epstein**-designed and engineered Riverview Bridge, a 1,000-foot-long pedestrian bridge that will run below Addison Street and then over the Chicago River to California Park, broke ground in fall 2017. When complete, the project will create a nearly contiguous 2-mile-long recreational trail called the 312 RiverRun.

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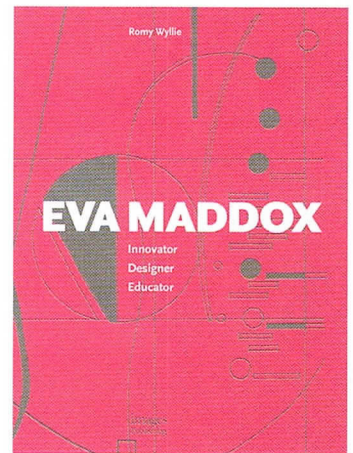


JGMA's Richard J. Daley College Engineering + Advanced Manufacturing Center broke ground last month. New connective architectural gestures and a new façade visually and architecturally connect the campus.



**Steve Wilson, AIA, AICP**, is now a project manager in the Planning and Urban Design practice at Gensler.

AIA Illinois recognized several Chicago members and Chicago-based firms in their 2017 Honor Awards. Recipients included: **Landon Bone Baker Architects** (Burnham Award for Planning for Woodlawn Park and the Crombie Taylor Award for Preservation for Dorchester Art + Housing Collaborative); **Sheehan Nagle Hartray Architecture** (MVDR for Innovation for DeKalb Public Library); **Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP** (Sullivan Award for the Chicago Public Library, Chinatown Branch); **Seychelle Reed** (Student Award, student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago); **Lamar Johnson, FAIA** (Buckminster Fuller Award for Social Good); **Pecha Kucha Chicago** (Presidents Award); **Jim Law, AIA** (Charles Nothnagel Award for Public Service); and **Walter Street III, AIA** (Alan Madison Award for Diversity).



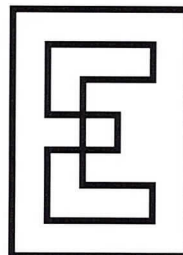
A new monograph documents the life and work of **Eva Maddox, FIIDA**. *Eva Maddox: Innovator, Designer Educator* (ACC Publishing Group) is written by Romy Wyllie and traces Maddox's career from its early days to her independent practice to her partnership with the global architecture firm Perkins+Will.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL LIPMAN



GREC Architects' latest residential project, EMME, has opened in the West Loop. The building provides landscaped green spaces at the building entry and its 5,000-square-foot roof will be dedicated to urban farming.



Eastlake Studio is celebrating its 30th anniversary and has relocated its offices from the Tribune Tower to the former Tavern Club space at 333 North Michigan Avenue.



Joyce I. Ramos, RA, LEED AP BD+C, joined AltusWorks, Inc. as a preservation architect.



Michael L. Breclaw, AIA, LEED AP, became an equity partner of FitzGerald and was named the firm's newest principal.

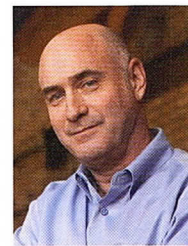
Charles Robert Cunov, AIA, is now principal at the Lamar Johnson Collaborative.



**Gensler** is renovating the Columbia College Theater Arts Building in the South Loop. Renovations include a new production shop, extensive backstage improvements and two new performance spaces, including a courtyard-style theater.



**Stephen Rankin Associates** designed a 50,000-square-foot corporate office addition for Echo Inc. in Lake Zurich, Illinois. The new two-story addition will house Echo's training center and offices for executives, IT, marketing and more. Premier Design + Build was the general contractor, with interiors and finishes by consultant ROI.



**Nathan Kipnis, FAIA**, of Kipnis Architecture + Planning, has been named co-chairman of the AIA's national 2030 Commitment Working Group. He and co-chair Heather Holdridge of Lake | Flato in San Antonio, Texas, will lead the group in its mission to ensure new buildings and major renovations are carbon-neutral by 2030. For more information on how to pledge your firm to the 2030 commitment, visit [aia.org](http://aia.org).

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JAHN's 50 West St. in Manhattan for Time Equities will be completed in early spring 2018. This 64-story, 780-foot-tall condominium tower is located in Lower Manhattan, just two blocks south of the World Trade Center complex.



Helen J. Kessler, FAIA, received a BIGWIG sustainability award — an honor from Blacks in Green (BIG) celebrating Women in Green (WIG).

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Rendering by Northworks

# Lathrop Homes **Breaks Ground**

With big changes on the horizon, architects ensure equity and community are preserved alongside the historic buildings.

RENDERING OF THE GREAT LAWN, WHICH WILL BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND CREATE A NEW RIVER WALK, AS WELL AS A LAUNCH POINT FOR BOATS.

PHOTO COURTESY OF RELATED MIDWEST





On the stretch of Diversey just east of the river, Lathrop Homes has been slowly emptying out in preparation for the site's redevelopment with Related Midwest, who has assembled a team of Chicago architects and developers to preserve and restore the site into a vibrant community of mixed-income individuals and families. Executive architect Harley Ellis Devereaux (HED), design architect JGMA, exterior preservationists McGuire Iglesias & Associates (MIA) and landscape architects MVVA lead the design alongside developers Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation and Heartland Housing (in combination with Related, the trio of developers is named Lathrop Community Partners). Phase I (all buildings north of Diversey Avenue) of the Lathrop redevelopment project broke ground in October of 2017, kicking off a technically complicated yet heartfelt endeavor.

Lathrop Homes is a product of the 1938 Works Progress Administration, which during the Great Depression, hired architects to design much-needed housing. Lathrop has been an example of a successful public housing project: a series of low-rise brick and concrete structures designed in multiple geometric permutations (townhomes, U-build-

PHASE I SITE PLAN



IMAGE BY JGMA

ings and walk-ups) all surrounding the Great Lawn — a hilly green space designed originally by renowned landscape architect Jens Jensen.

As executive architect, HED is tasked with creating innovative solutions to some of the challenges associated with maintaining the historic integrity of the development while installing new heating and cooling systems, incorporating sustainability and addressing accessibil-

ity. Small challenges abound: stated HED project architect Mark Jones, AIA, "We couldn't do systems where we'd have rooftop units; it affects the historic views. We had to incorporate a system that has condensing units in the basement, using windows to circulate air." The team solved this issue by hiding the ventilation louver behind a false window frame. According to Jones, the National Park Service, who reviews design de-

isions, maintained strict regulations on how many of these false windows could face major streets.

Mark Iglesias, AIA, of MIA, is the project leader on exterior preservation. One of the biggest challenges, he explained, was reconciling the historic preservation goals with current energy code requirements. "It was very difficult to design an aluminum window that replicated the appearance of the original steel windows, while

# ARCHITECTURE IS FUN NAMED 2017 FIRM OF THE YEAR

THE PYRAMID BENCH BY ARCHITECTURE IS FUN AT THE DUPAGE ART MUSEUM CREATES OPPORTUNITIES FOR MATHEMATICAL AND SPATIAL DISCOVERIES FOR VISITORS OF ALL AGES.



PHOTO BY DOUG SNOWER PHOTOGRAPHY

## *Bringing **Fun** Into Everyday Life Through Architecture*

Buzzwords describing intangible, ethereal qualities of contemporary architecture and design often don't do justice to the social and psychological effects these structures can have on users. Those words also don't often include "fun."

Architect Peter Exley, FAIA, RIBA, and educative designer Sharon Exley, MAAE, have spent their careers building fun into a mission. Their firm Architecture is Fun has established throughout its 20-year history that fun is a process as well as a quality. As the 2017 Firm of the Year, Architecture is Fun (AiF) is recognized for what it does best: creating spaces that tell stories, engage users of all ages, and demonstrate the power of collaboration.

Peter and Sharon founded their firm in 1994. Until that point, both had been pursuing conventional design career pathways, the duo said they “noted a lack of advocacy for interactive, play-based and entertainment-centric architecture.”

Twenty years later, the firm is a thriving research-driven practice that produces trademarked “educative and branded environments” for each of its clients. The firm is driven by the expertise of both partners: Peter, as an architect, and Sharon, as an arts educator, trained initially in architecture. Both bring different skills to the table, but together they have envisioned an architectural future that designs both unique spaces and processes.

### A Playful Process

The firm has completed dozens of projects that demonstrate design rigor while also helping a wide variety of clients — museums, direct service nonprofits and foundations, among others — identify assets and needs. Their body of work has been recognized by numerous awards — something that impressed the 2017 Firm of the Year jury. “In the past 10 years, their two-person firm has won a larger number of awards that suggests a larger firm size,” one juror said. “They’re an inspiration for small firms everywhere.”

A firm of two that is able to accomplish hundreds of projects — many



ST. AUGUSTINE LIGHTHOUSE AND MARITIME MUSEUM. ARCHITECTURE IS FUN MADE THE JOURNEY TO THE TOP OF THE LIGHTHOUSE ENGAGING, EDUCATIVE, AND FUN.

PHOTO BY MATT WARGO PHOTOGRAPHY

of which include custom furnishings and wild detailing — did not happen inconsequentially. Their structure and mission has allowed them to design their own design process. Sharon said, “For us, the process is participation. We employ design thinking, but there are methodologies that come from education and pedagogical sources, which become mini-processes that add up to the experiences we have with clients.”

The duo begins this process by meeting with clients to evaluate their goals and desired outcomes.

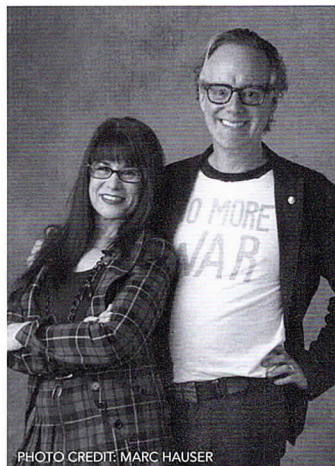


PHOTO CREDIT: MARC HAUSER

“FOR US, THE PROCESS IS PARTICIPATION. WE EMPLOY DESIGN THINKING, BUT THERE ARE METHODOLOGIES THAT COME FROM EDUCATION AND PEDAGOGICAL SOURCES, WHICH BECOME MINI-PROCESSES THAT ADD UP TO THE EXPERIENCES WE HAVE WITH CLIENTS.”

— SHARON EXLEY



PHOTO BY DOUG SNOWER PHOTOGRAPHY



“Usually our clients know exactly what they want to achieve,” Sharon said. “They just have no idea what it looks like. That’s what we figure out.” What clients desire ranges from some clients seeking concrete learning goals (such as those goals set by children’s museums) to others simply wanting to engage users in new or different ways. The firm’s research process is by far more people-focused, inviting all stakeholders including funders, end-users, administrative staff and more, to participate in conversations that yield multiple layers of discovery. “The education, design and research processes all inform each other,” Sharon said.

According to the duo, their ability to accomplish so much stems from both their scalability and connectivity. One of the firm’s mottos is “While the firm’s work stems from the voice of two partners, it thinks in the ‘power of ten’ — the power of play.” Because their research process is participatory in nature, it allows the design process to become scalable. “Through all of our activities, we are amazingly connected,” Peter explained. “Once we get to the essence of the client — whether it’s a lighthouse museum, a Ronald McDonald house, a shopping mall or major museum — rather than being generalists, we’ve been connected to all these collaborators. We bring the specialists,” he joked.

### Telling Stories

The result of this highly collaborative process is what Tom Jacobs, AIA, called “deeply humanistic and courageous” projects. These results vary sometimes. According to the Exleys, all of their clients seek to tell stories and, at times, their process reveals that architecture doesn’t need to happen. “When we were approached by the Field Museum, our research and recommendations resulted in realizing what they could do with their existing resources. They could tell their stories by shifting paradigms about day-to-day operations.”

Architecture is Fun most recently worked with the St. Augustine Lighthouse & Maritime Museum in

St. Augustine, Florida. The town is one of America’s oldest settlements, and according to AiF, the museum was struggling to entice visitors to stay longer. “Visitors would spend most of their time at the gift shop, climb the 219 stairs to the top of the lighthouse, then leave.”

After working closely with the museum staff and curators, as well as visitors and locals, the team discovered that the stories the museum desired to tell could be best told during the long climb up to the top of the lighthouse. “What you saw were people climbing to a landing, resting, catching their breath. It became an opportunity to visually tell the stories of the light-

"THE CAVE" AT THE YOUNG AT ART MUSEUM BY ARCHITECTURE IS FUN CREATES AN INTERACTIVE DIGITAL/ANALOGUE SPACE WHERE VISITORS CAN INTERACT WITH AND CREATE IMAGES.

PHOTO BY EMMA EXLEY



house keepers who climbed those steps every day for generations,” Sharon said.

The resulting design is a series of stories told in quick graphic panels, story-sticks planted in the landscape and through curated collections of artifacts. Using silhouettes as visual clues adds impact to each story. Each silhouette is a guide and resting point, and the museum has enjoyed an immediate extension in visitors’ stays at the museum.

### Conversation Catalysts

Inviting all stakeholders to the table when designing a project can yield new discoveries and conversation throughout the design process, but Architecture is Fun emphasizes that many of its projects also lead to new conversations between users — verbal or otherwise.

Take, for example, the Pyramid Bench, a pyramid-shaped table system that hosts a grid of pyramid-shaped reliefs. The reliefs act as holders for pyramid-shaped blocks which, when piled upon the table, can be formed into a multitude of geometric shapes. It was designed for the DuPage Children’s Museum (Architecture is Fun led the entire 42,000-square-foot renovation) and won a 2016 AIA Chicago Small Projects Award.

“The project utilizes scale to engage kids and adults,” Sharon said. “It was designed so that kids can climb onto it, and the caregivers can be right there with them.”

“But the bench also allows children to discover something really profound right alongside the caregiver,” Peter added. “The project teaches complex geometries, and we’re creating conversations between people

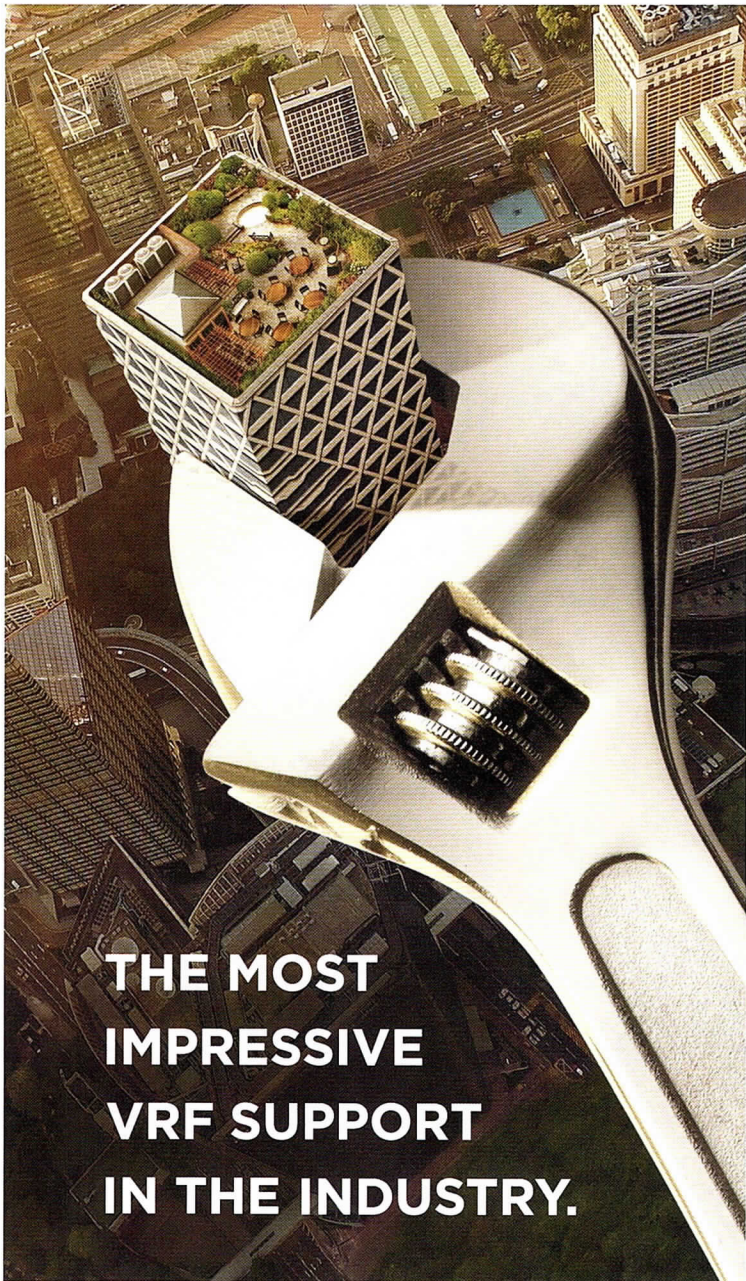
and objects, parents and children, parents and other adults, and so on. They make the discovery together.”

Those benches are endlessly entertaining for multiple generations. The firm plans on fabricating similar models to be fitted with USB ports and spaces to hold drinks so they can be installed within public spaces. “It is all about engaging people in a conversation about a complex idea and presenting it in a way that is relevant. The act of putting USB chargers in that or at a particular table forces the interaction and relevance,” Peter said.

It’s the sense of discovery and connectivity that drives Architecture is Fun — and behind those intangible forces is the power of play. “Play is a fundamental human right,” Peter said. “It’s imbued in everything we do.”

For the next 20 years, Sharon and Peter are excited to pursue projects of all kinds, but their particular passion lies in smaller projects that can have larger community impacts. “I love those extra 20 minutes we’ve built into the Lighthouse — it’s 20 more minutes for visitors to build their own stories and 20 more minutes for that institution to achieve its mission.” Their work with the Latin School, which included 2,200 square feet of smart, playful science and technology project-based exhibits, has yielded a 29 percent increase in female student enrollment in AP science courses. The results are impressive but always rooted in their fundamental beliefs.

“We bring fun into everyday life through architecture,” Peter said. “That’s the mantra.” CA



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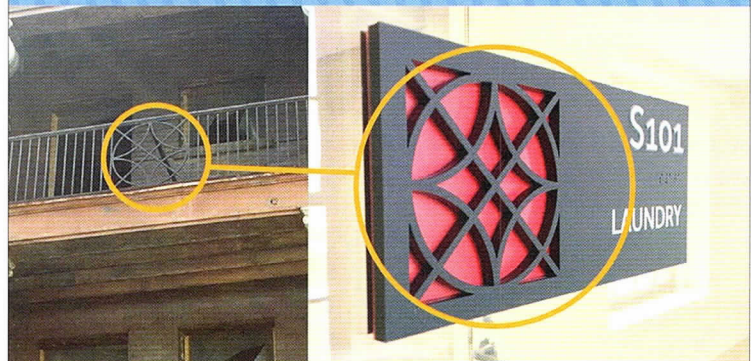


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# FORM FOLLOWS PERFORMANCE FOR THE 2017 DUBIN FAMILY YOUNG ARCHITECT

Anthony Viola, AIA, is the recipient of the 2017 Dubin Family Young Architect Award from the AIA Chicago Foundation. Established to recognize excellence in ability and contributions by Chicago area architects between the ages of 25 and 39, the Dubin Family Young Architect Award is made possible thanks to the generosity of the late M. David Dubin, FAIA, his family and friends. AIA Chicago's Zurich Esposito met with Anthony at the offices of Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture, where Anthony is a senior designer, to learn more about the performance-focused career of this young leader whose work is impacting projects and cities around the globe.

PHOTO CREDIT: DARRIS LEE HARRIS



**Zurich Esposito:** What led you to study architecture?

**Anthony Viola:** My experience growing up contributed to my interest in design thinking. As kids in Kenosha, a Midwestern industrial town, we were forced to make and invent things from whatever materials and methods were available. I do that today, but in a different way. And because of my interest in that process, I was attracted to the scrutiny and discourse of design thinking and decided on pursuing architecture during my second year at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, where I earned my undergraduate degree. (Viola later earned a Master of Architecture degree from University of Virginia, Charlottesville.)

**ZE:** You're known in the professional architecture community for your ability to advance architectural technologies and integrate new strategies in the projects you design. What excites you about the design process?

**AV:** I love using technology to evaluate different possible outcomes of a project during the design process. A technology overlay allows you to consider factors and information — like energy modeling, structural forces or wind movement — that can't be conveyed in a sketch alone. The performance of a building is, after all, the sum of a group of many things: aesthetics, structural forces, daylight, energy usage, carbon footprint, etc. Using technology allows an interdisciplin-

ary approach, simultaneously working with and manipulating different inputs during design to yield a more successful outcome.

**ZE:** What do you consider to be among the biggest challenges facing designers in the architecture profession?

**AV:** The biggest challenge we face is our energy usage and embodied carbon. If our collective building stock represents 40 percent of the world's fossil fuel use, there's something we need to do as a profession to change that. That's the biggest problem I'd like to solve professionally and as a personal goal.

**ZE:** You served as a co-chair of AIA Chicago's Design Knowledge Community for six years, developing many programs on behalf of the group. Then, in 2014, you developed the Chicago Computation Group. What is that group all about?

**AV:** The Chicago Computation Group was born out of the AIA Chicago Design KC group. One of the more powerful characteristics of the programs I helped to organize for the Design KC was an emphasis on multidisciplinary teams presenting solutions as a collective, rather than a sole designer. Think of architects working with progressive engineers and great clients

producing and presenting projects that transcend the work of just the sole architect. The Chicago Computation Group takes that model to the next level, maximizing the use of technology and recognizing a bigger field outside the AEC industry — whether that's aerospace, artificial intelligence, or machine learning — that can help us as architects to curate a building that performs in a way that reduces its embodied carbon and energy usage. The computation group engages and benefits from the participation of a larger community of practitioners, whether they're in the AEC industry or not.

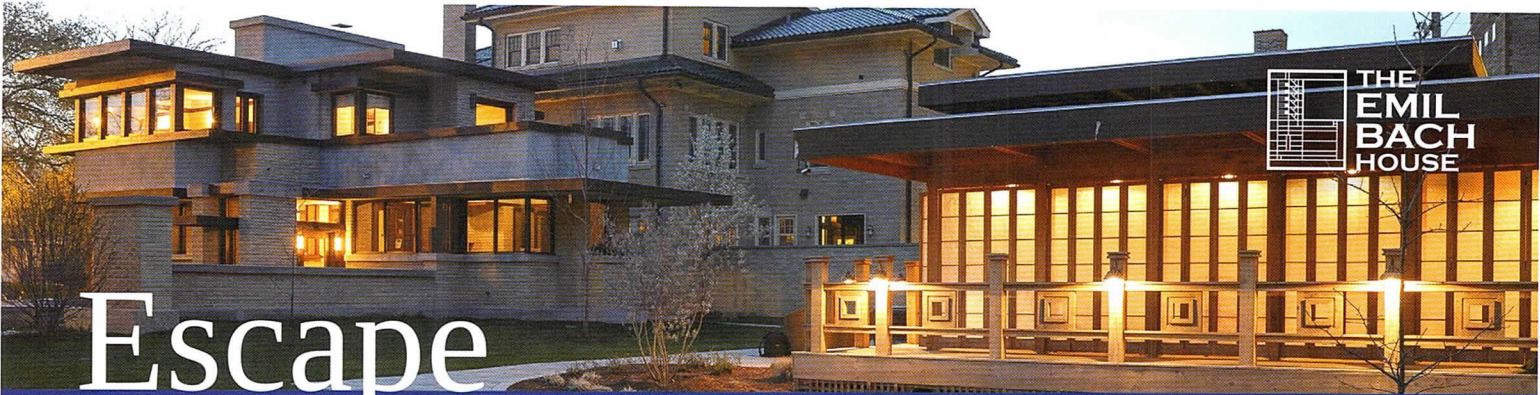
**ZE:** From your perspective, what will be different about the buildings architects create 30 years from now?

**AV:** The transformation of the buildings we design is dependent on our ability to change our design process. If, as architects, we're able to better take into account energy usage and embodied carbon, the outcome of those buildings — what those buildings can be through performance — will be the transformation to look for and work toward. **CA**

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For more information about the Dubin Family Young Architect Award, visit [aiachicago.org](http://aiachicago.org).





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*People are drawn to Leopardo by our distinctiveness — both who we are and what we do.*

*People see joining our team as their dream job: a place to achieve their personal and professional goals. Industry partners prefer to work with us because we truly value collaboration and team work.*

*Clients seek us out as their trusted partner, saying we deliver fewer problems, greater value and better decision making.*

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