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CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE CENTER AWARDED $1 MILLION GRANT BY THE RICHARD H. DRIEHAUS FOUNDATION TO EXPAND YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAMMING IN ARCHITECTURE AND THE TRADES

The Grant Will Enable the Nonprofit to Engage More Students From Diverse Backgrounds and Expand Career Pathways in Architecture, Design, Engineering, and Construction

CHICAGO (December 16, 2024) — The Chicago Architecture Center (CAC) announced a $1 million grant from The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation to support and grow its educational programming for K-12 students and facilitate new learning opportunities for young adults. The grant, distributed over the next four years, will aid the CAC in its work to diversify the architecture, construction, engineering, and design fields. The CAC's educational programming division will now be named The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Youth Learning Programs, in recognition of the foundation's support.

The grant will allow the CAC to pilot a two-week trades pre-apprenticeship program for young adults in the summer of 2025. Aligning with CAC's signature career-focused educational offerings like Teen Fellows, the new initiative will offer a combination of classroom learning and hands-on training in construction management. By exposing participants to these high-demand fields and connecting students to apprenticeship networks and job opportunities, CAC hopes to shift perceptions about the trades and help build a more diverse and skilled workforce.

"We are so grateful to The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation for sharing our vision and helping us nurture the next generation of diverse leaders in the built environment," said **Eleanor Gorski, President and CEO of the Chicago Architecture Center**. "With this generous funding, we can connect even more young people of all backgrounds to architectural design and trades education, helping them build the skills they need to enter construction, architecture, engineering, and other fields that utilize similar skills."

Using Driehaus Foundation funding, the CAC will also expand its educational offerings for youth in middle grades. The programming will build upon the success of its *Girls Build!* Program, which offers individuals in the 7th through 10th grades opportunities to engage with architectural professionals and hands-on activities to learn first-hand why design matters. This new programming will launch in the fall of 2025 and will be open to youth of all gender identities.

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Additionally, the CAC plans to partner with local architecture schools to recruit college and graduate students to serve as educators for the youth programs, providing a valuable opportunity for these students to share their knowledge with the next generation of architects and designers.

“The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation supports organizations that advocate for the betterment of our built environment, and as the leading organization devoted to Chicago’s architectural legacy, the Chicago Architecture Center perfectly embodies this goal,” said **Anne Lazar, Executive Director of the Driehaus Foundation**. “By investing in the next generation of architects, designers, and trades professionals, we can ensure that the industries building our cities reflect the diverse communities they serve.”

Thanks to the grant, the CAC will be able to increase its staffing and program development capacity. The nonprofit plans to add a new full-time staff member to their learning team to support the growing number of educational programs. The grant will also support internal research to determine the focus area for the new middle grades program, fund curriculum development, and contribute more broadly to CAC's overall educational programming.

The Driehaus Foundation grant marks an exciting milestone in the CAC’s commitment to fostering a more inclusive and equitable built environment by creating pathways for young people from all backgrounds to pursue careers in architecture, design, and trades. Data shows only 25% of practicing architects are women, and fewer than one in five new architects identify as a racial or ethnic minority. However, data from two of CAC’s core youth programs in 2024 (Teen Fellows and Girls Build!), 82% of program participants identified as people of color, and 81% identified as female or gender non-conforming. The CAC aims for this funding to not only increase representation within its own programs but also to inspire broader, lasting change across the industries it serves.

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About the Chicago Architecture Center

The Chicago Architecture Center (CAC) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1966, dedicated to inspiring people to discover why design matters. A national leader in architecture and design education, the CAC offers tours, programs, exhibitions, and more that are part of a dynamic journey of lifelong learning.

Opened to the public in 2018, its riverfront location is in the heart of the city, where Michigan Avenue meets the Chicago River, featuring nearly 10,000 square feet of exhibition space with views of a century of iconic skyscrapers.

Through partnerships with schools and youth-serving organizations, the CAC reaches approximately 5,000 K-12 students annually, while teacher workshops provide educators with

tools and resources they need to advance STEM curricula in their classrooms. Committed to serving under-represented communities in construction, engineering, and design professions, the CAC offers many of its education programs—and all its programs for teens—at no cost to participants. CAC programs for adults and members include talks with acclaimed authors and practicing architects, in-depth presentations on issues and trends in urbanism, and classes unlocking subjects related to the built environment.

Proceeds from programs, tours, and the CAC Design Store, as well as from grants, sponsorships, and donations, support its educational mission. Visit architecture.org to learn more and follow @chiarchitecture and #chiarchitecture on social media.