



**Chicago Architecture Center and Chicago Architectural Club Announce
Winners of Thompson Center Design Ideas Competition and early November Public Forum**

Three winning designs, representing distinct alternative visions for a reimagined Thompson Center, on display with finalists' proposals at CAC pop-up exhibit; early November forum will address Thompson Center's future

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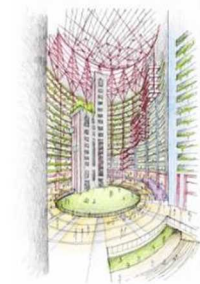
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[Thompson Center Design Competition Digital Media Kit](#)

[Thompson Center Design Competition Pop-up Exhibit webpage](#)

CHICAGO – The [Chicago Architecture Center](#) (CAC) and the [Chicago Architectural Club](#) have announced the jury's selection of three winning designs for the Thompson Center Design Ideas Competition that represent three distinct, creative visions for the State of Illinois Thompson Center designed by Helmut Jahn, built in 1984 and put up for sale in May 2021. The three equal winning design proposals were created by Eastman Lee Architects, Solomon Cordwell Buenz and Perkins&Will. The winning designs, and the four finalist designs awarded honorable mention, are now available for viewing through October at a pop-up exhibit at the Chicago Architecture Center's East Wacker Drive galleries. A forum on the future of the Thompson Center is planned for early November at the CAC.

The three equal winning design proposals are:



"Offset: The Vertical Loop" proposes a new thermal enclosure behind the original curtain wall set atop a ground-level public park. Each floor is zoned, from public uses at the ground level to commercial above, along with private residences and vegetable gardens at the roof. Hanging plants in the atrium connect this new vertical neighborhood. Submitted by Christopher Eastman and Tom Lee of Eastman Lee Architects.

"We are humbled to be among the winners of the 2021 Chicago Prize," said Christopher Eastman and Tom Lee. "By participating in the competition, our hope was to shed light on how to approach building preservation in a way that could reduce the cost to repair the building, and to help support the chorus of efforts to preserve the Thompson Center for future generations."



"One Chicago School" is a new prototype public school focused on public policy and civic engagement for students in Chicago to learn, question, and ignite change. Submitted by Jay Longo, James Michaels, Kaitlin Frankforter, Michael Quach, Abaan Zia, Mackenzie Anderson, Nicolas Waidele, Roberta Brucato, Zachary Michaliska of Solomon Cordwell Buenz, Chicago.

"We are excited and honored to celebrate the legacy of the Thompson Center with a proposal that reimagines the building as an urban center for public education," said Kaitlin Frankforter. "Our team's response is driven by the notions of building preservation, rethinking the role of large mixed-use buildings, and maintaining an inclusive public space for all of Chicago."



"Public Pool" reimagines the Thompson Center's iconic atrium as a public waterpark with active ground-level programs and a hotel above. Inspired by the playful attitude of Helmut Jahn's post-modern interior, the proposal imagines a place that could be accessible to all Chicagoans and creates a unique destination in the heart of the Loop. Submitted by David Rader, Jerry Johnson, Ryan Monteagle, and Matt Zelensek of Perkins&Will, Chicago.

"The Thompson Center is a significant public space in Chicago's urban realm, and participating in this ideas competition was a tremendous opportunity to make the case for the Center's reuse and preservation while re-imagining what public space can be," said David

Rader, designer at Perkins&Will. "In the context of global climate change, we as designers should seek every opportunity to reuse and repurpose existing structures instead of tearing them down."

"Chicago is known around the world for grand civic spaces including Millennium Park and the Chicago Riverwalk," said Lynn Osmond, President of the Chicago Architecture Center. "The CAC is proud to offer the public an opportunity to be part of the conversation about the future of Helmut Jahn's masterpiece of Post Modern architecture."

"These three design proposals represent distinct, exciting alternative futures for Helmut Jahn's iconic, Post Modern masterpiece," said competition juror Bonnie McDonald, President & CEO of Landmarks Illinois. "The Chicago Prize competition proves how, with creativity, the Thompson Center has lasting value – be it through a mixed-use, civic and/or recreational destination as the winning designs imagine. The failure to protect and adapt this one-of-a-kind space would be short-sighted and rob Chicago of one of its greatest architectural achievements."

"The jury's selected winners for the 2021 Chicago Prize Competition provide three clear and attainable futures for the Thompson Center," said Elva Rubio, Chicago Architectural Club co-president. "The early November public forum, featuring the architects of the three winning designs, will be a rare opportunity for the public to participate in a debate on the future for the Thompson Center as the State of Illinois reviews the proposals for the purchase of and possible demolishing of the building without protections."

The competition was created to give the Thompson Center new life through restorative architecture while preserving its architecture and public character. The competition was open to anyone with a vision for the building including students, architects, designers, planners, and artists. The jury reviewed dozens of proposals from 59 registrants from five countries representing work by professional designers and established firms as well as young architects and students. The seven finalist designs were announced on August 24.

The jurors include international experts in the design of museums and civic spaces, restorative architecture and landscape architecture, historic preservation, civic culture, and the work of Helmut Jahn, architect of the Thompson Center. The jury includes Carol Ross Barney, Founder and Design Principal, Ross Barney Architects, FAIA, HASLA; Michelle T. Boone, President, The Poetry Foundation; Philip Castillo, Executive Vice President, JAHN, FAIA; Peter D. Cook, Design Principal, HGA Architects & Engineers, AIA, NOMA; Thomas Heatherwick, Founder and Design Director, Heatherwick Studio; Mikyoung Kim, Founding Principal, Mikyoung Kim Design; Bonnie McDonald, President & CEO, Landmarks Illinois.

The finalists included four additional proposals that the jury awarded honorable mention:

- "Rejuvenation" wraps the existing exterior in a new "smart glass" façade using electronically tintable glass controlled by occupants to improve comfort, maximize daylight, and reduce energy costs. Exterior video projections share Chicago civic news and digital arts media. Submitted by Yuqi Shao and Andrew Li, students at the College of Architecture at Illinois Institute of Technology.
- "Ripple" envisions a new sustainable public attraction comprised of auditoriums, art galleries, and community spaces rising within the exterior arc of the current atrium. These new spaces lead to a top-floor urban farm with rooftop green houses that use the existing CTA tracks to distribute the produce from the farm to food deserts around the city. Submitted by Patrick Carata, Simon Cygielski, Sarah Bush, Ilyssa Kaserman, Sean King, Amparito Martinez, Marcin Rysniak, Mica Manaois, Ed Curley, and Cameron Scott of Epstein.
- "There's Something for Everyone" creates an authentic new civic and social space linked to cultural groups across the city. Existing floor plates contain support or "back of house" spaces while the volume of the atrium will house performance stages, cinemas, art galleries, and rehearsal spaces creating strong ties to the diverse arts and civic life of the City of Chicago. Submitted by Chava Danielson, Eric Haas, Tim Jordan, Bohan Charlie Lang, and Xixi Luo of DSH architecture, Los Angeles.
- "Thompson-Scraper" opens the atrium to the outdoors while wrapping the interior floors above with a façade that becomes a 3D LED matrix able to display images and video. Using the existing elevator banks as a core tube support structure, new floors rise above the existing structure with the familiar step-backs and topped with a conical "spire" also wrapped in 3D LED matrix. Submitted by Wenyi Zhu of Zhu Wenyi Atelier at Tsinghua University, Beijing.

The sale and possible demolition of the Thompson Center has been controversial among Chicagoans and architecture and design professionals around the world. Despite the toll caused by lack of maintenance, Helmut Jahn's design of the Thompson Center is prized by the design world as a unique example of post-modern architectural design in a civic building meant to draw citizens into the daily workings of government. The State of Illinois issued a request for

proposals for the Thompson Center site in August 2019. On August 17, 2021, the State of Illinois delayed the announcement of the winning bid from January to April 2022, reportedly at the request of developers submitting proposals.

The CAC's [pop-up exhibit](#) featuring the winning and finalists' designs will join the CAC's current Helmut Jahn retrospective. Both will be open to the public through October. In July, the Chicago Architecture Center (CAC) opened its first, major limited-run exhibit, [HELMUT JAHN: LIFE + ARCHITECTURE](#), the eagerly anticipated career retrospective of Helmut Jahn's innovative architectural designs. The July 8 announcement of the new exhibit garnered global interest for the pathbreaking architect whose bold building designs can be found in virtually every major metropolis—from his adopted home of Chicago to Bangkok to Berlin to New York to Shanghai to Tokyo—buildings which are all part of Jahn's enduring legacy. The exhibit, organized after Jahn's death in May, includes numerous scale models of Jahn's pathbreaking designs throughout his career and runs through October.

The pop-up exhibit is open through October. The early November public forum on the future of the Thompson Center will feature the architects of the three winning design proposals, a representative of the jury and civic leaders. For more information visit [architecture.org](#).

Legacy of Helmut Jahn - January 4, 1940 - May 8, 2021

Helmut Jahn, FAIA, has earned a reputation on the cutting edge of progressive architecture. His buildings have had a “staggering” influence on architecture according to John Zukowsky, former Associate Curator of Architecture at the Art Institute of Chicago. Jahn's buildings have received numerous design awards and have been represented in architectural exhibitions around the world.

Born in Germany, Jahn graduated from the Technische Hochschule in Munich. He came to the United States for graduate studies in architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology. After attending IIT, he worked at C.F. Murphy Associates as a Project Architect under Gene Summers, designing the new McCormick Place. In 1976, his first major high-rise building in Chicago, Xerox Centre, received great critical acclaim.

Jahn has been called Chicago's premier architect who has dramatically changed the face of Chicago. His national and international reputation has led to commissions across the United States, Europe, Africa, and Asia. His projects have been recognized globally for design innovation, vitality, and integrity. Featured in numerous publications, his work has generated much excitement amongst the press and general public alike.

Jahn's work has been included in exhibits worldwide since 1980. He has taught at the University of Illinois at Chicago, was the Elliot Noyes Professor of Architectural Design at Harvard University and the Davenport Visiting Professor of Architectural Design at Yale University, and Thesis Professor at IIT.

About the State of Illinois “James R. Thompson Center”

Designed by Helmut Jahn, the State of Illinois Center, also known as James R. Thompson Center, is facing the threat of complete demolition. Located in the Chicago “Loop” it is a major transportation node, commercial center, and workspace. The building has been criticized for being ugly, oversized, inefficient, and poorly maintained. However, the Thompson Center has been pivotal to urban transit and a highly democratic contemporary civic center. At the time of its construction in 1985, Helmut Jahn's State of Illinois Center was a stark contrast to Chicago's historic and modernist architecture, yet today it is an architectural icon in its own right. For the fourth year in a row, the Thompson Center has been listed in the Landmarks Illinois' annual Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois and it was included in Preservation Chicago's Chicago 7 Most Endangered list in 2018, 2019, and 2020.

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 30,000 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 of 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.

About the Chicago Architectural Club

The Chicago Architectural Club provides an open forum, an infrastructural framework and support platform for architects, artists, and writers to discuss, challenge, and enrich a dialogue among practitioners and scholars.

The Chicago Architectural Club organizes and hosts annually recurring international architecture competitions, lectures, and exhibitions that foster debates within contemporary theory and criticism in art and architecture in order to promote a younger generation of architects and designers. Through our publications, outreach, and collaboration we seek to engage the city of Chicago, its public and the larger audience of artist, architects, and designers throughout the world.

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