Greetings Archeworks Friends, Colleagues, and Alumni:

In 2014, Archeworks celebrated its 20th year as Chicago’s multidisciplinary design educator and incubator for design in the public interest. As we look forward to the next 20 years, we are delighted to share exciting news about new leadership and recently launched urban design initiatives focused on creating a more livable city. This newsletter also features highlights from last year’s programs including our public transit and community garden design challenges, and updates on innovative design projects engaging a diverse group of experienced practitioners.

Creating a Green Neighborhood School Campus

Partners: Chicago Public Schools, Sullivan High School, Kilmer Elementary School, Kilmer-Sullivan School Health Center

We are collaborating on a design initiative to transform the parking lots and alleyways surrounding Sullivan High School and Kilmer Elementary into a shared green neighborhood school campus that fosters student health and wellness. Located on adjoining blocks in a dense neighborhood on Chicago’s north side, these two schools serve over 1400 primarily low-income youth without access to proper outdoor recreational space. The team will develop design concepts for the green campus that encourage healthy lifestyles through physical activity, support positive interaction among students, and provide opportunities to connect with nature.

Promoting Sustainable Energy Use through Innovative Design

Funder: Illinois Science and Energy Innovation Foundation

We are engaging in a collaborative effort to promote efficient energy use in Chicago communities, with a focus on empowering residents to realize the benefits of a modern electric grid. Working with environmental and advocacy organizations, an Archeworks design team will use design strategies and communication tools to demystify smart grid programs and technologies as the region transitions to more efficient energy infrastructure. The team will craft innovative campaigns to educate about individual energy consumption, create excitement about efficiency programs and tools, and encourage residents to adopt energy-conscious behaviors.

Introducing Archeworks New Executive Director

The Archeworks Board of Trustees is pleased to announce the appointment of Andrew Balster as the new Executive Director of Archeworks. Andrew will lead Archeworks by evolving, expanding and reimagining our innovative design education programs and public interest design initiatives. Prior to joining Archeworks, Andrew served as the Director of Chicago Studio, a multidisciplinary design residency program integrating education and practice offered through the College of Architecture and Urban Studies at Virginia Tech. As Director of Chicago Studio, Andrew developed and fostered alliances between academia and the professional design community to implement collaborative design initiatives that enhance the urban environment. Prior to joining Virginia Tech, Andrew was a senior designer at Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill (SOM) in Chicago where he worked on a broad range of projects - from small civic centers to super-tall towers to entire urban districts.

Andrew creates strategic partnerships between academia and practice that drive community-focused design solutions and address urban challenges. We are excited to bring Andrew on board and are confident in his ability to drive the successful future of Archeworks. Please join us in welcoming Andrew into his new role as Executive Director of Archeworks.

Become a Donor!

With your financial support, we can continue to build a more sustainable and equitable city through innovative urban design initiatives. Your tax deductible gift will allow us to:
- purchase supplies and materials for our community-based design projects
- offer scholarships to emerging designers enrolled in our programs
- convene designers, educators, thinkers, and activists committed to creating a better city

Best wishes for a healthy and inspired new year!

John Syvertsen, FAIA
Archeworks Board Chair

Sustainable Urban Design Certificate Program

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Board members: John Syvertsen, Chair | Howard Conant Jr. | Ned Cramer | Martin Felsen | Eva Maddox | James Nagle | Elva Rubio
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Beyond Efficiency: Train Station Revitalization

Partner: Regional Transportation Authority

In 2013-14, we partnered with the Regional Transportation Authority on an initiative to bring integrated design thinking to Ogilvie Transportation Center. Guided by the theme “Beyond Efficiency,” the design team developed a range of strategies to bring greater wayfinding coherence, promote equitable access, and create a vibrant sense of place for this busy downtown station. These proposals included improvements to navigational messaging, graphics, and signage; concepts for universally-designed informational kiosks and participatory public art projects; and strategies for revitalizing the station as a welcoming gateway to the City. The team compiled their research and design ideas into an advocacy toolkit for use by the RTA. (View the Beyond Efficiency Toolkit at archeworks.org/beyond_efficiency.swf)

Growing Chicago’s Community Gardens

Partner: NeighborSpace

Our 2013-14 design collaboration with NeighborSpace, a non-profit land trust protecting more than 90 volunteer-run vegetable, flower and prairie gardens in the city, focused on cultivating a strong network of community gardens across Chicago neighborhoods. The team created a multimedia archive of individual garden stories and best strategies to promote inter-garden knowledge sharing and strengthen community engagement. Responding to a need for increased learning opportunities and access to gardening tools and supplies, the team also designed and built a prototype modular bike cart that serves as a mobile educational resource center and tool-lending library.

New and Ongoing Programs

Good City Group: Re-imagining the Rider Experience

The Good City Group is a collective of Chicago-based architects, artists, industrial designers, urban planners, and design strategists dedicated to promoting urban mobility through walking, biking and public transit use; and fostering healthy, active lifestyles among city residents. The group is developing an urban design, placemaking, and cultural heritage initiative in two culturally rich neighborhoods at the city’s edge. Planned to launch in the fall of 2015, this interactive installation and series of public engagement and placemaking experiences will encourage the use of neighborhood transit assets and promote resident cultural stewardship.

New Practice Program: Seminar Series and Public Symposium

Since 2012, our New Practice program has engaged over 45 advanced design practitioners from diverse disciplines in a series of seminars focused on developing and integrating socially-engaged design work into professional practice. Through this program, design professionals across Chicago firms are building a community of practice dedicated to collaboration, community building, and civic innovation. In November 2014, we held a public symposium where New Practice designers presented emerging models of socially-engaged design work. The evening also featured our year-long collaboration with Columbia College’s Convergence Academies on a path breaking initiative at Chicago Public Schools to foster student engagement with digital media.

New Practice Partnership with Convergence Academies; Digital Atelier Toolkit

In 2013-14, a senior team of architects, design strategists and graphic designers from the New Practice program collaborated with Columbia College’s Convergence Academies on a digital media learning initiative piloted in high-need neighborhood schools in the Chicago Public School system. This senior team advised on participatory design and planning strategies to guide Convergence Academies as it launches Digital Ateliers - innovative, student-directed digital media learning spaces - at Tilden Career Academy and Morrill Academy of Math and Science. These design planning tools were compiled in a publication, the Digital Atelier Toolkit, which will guide Convergence Academies as it replicates its Digital Ateliers at other schools in the future. (View the toolkit at: archeworks.org/Toolkit Digital Atelier Archeworks New Practice team_sm.pdf)

Chicago Expander: Food and Water Workshops

The Chicago Expander offered a series of workshops and public forums on regionalism and urban design. Past workshops explored our region’s energy infrastructure, economic systems, and transportation networks by using geography as a research and design paradigm. The 2014 Chicago Expander workshops focused on the socio-economic, cultural, and ecological effects of our region’s food systems and waterways, and challenged participants to develop design-driven strategies that reshape region formation processes in Chicago. Learn more at archeworks.org/chicagoexpander.

Chicago Expander: Public Programs

In 2013-14, a series of panel discussions brought together policy-makers, urbanists, artists and designers working on water issues that impact the Chicago region and beyond. Panelists discussed large-scale water issues that cross boundaries of jurisdiction and governance, and impact larger territories. The panel series also explored individual and community actions that have system wide influence on big infrastructure. This panel series was co-sponsored with the Chicago Architecture Foundation and Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill LLP.