

For Immediate Release

**Chicago Architecture Biennial and Danish Arts Foundation
Announce Winning Design Team for
North Lawndale Commission -- the first for 2021**

CHICAGO (February 22, 2021) – The Chicago Architecture Biennial (CAB) and the Danish Arts Foundation (DAF) today announced the winner of a DAF Open Call for a major new commission in the North Lawndale neighborhood of Chicago. The winning project, titled Soil Lab, will include workshops and built elements grounded in bricks, a material with significance to both the Chicago and the Danish architectural vernacular. The commission responds to CAB's 2021 edition theme *The Available City*, a global urban design approach rooted in community engagement that brings together local and international design thinkers with Chicago community stakeholders, residents, and students.

The commission reflects the DAF's mission to highlight Danish architecture and design traditions and facilitate conversations about how arts and design can shape communities. The DAF project represents a global collaboration—between cultures and between disciplines. The \$192,000 project budget for Soil Lab is a portion of DAF's total commitment of \$300,000 for community-based programming during the 2021 edition of the Chicago Architecture Biennial.

"Chicago continues to be a world-renowned city whose residents dream big and remain resilient in the face of both physical and social challenges," said Chicago Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot. "This commission is an exciting opportunity to highlight this reputation while also using design as a strategy to transform and beautify underused, vacant spaces in our city. I want to thank the Chicago Architecture Biennial, the Soil Lab team, and the Danish Arts Foundation for a commission that encourages Chicagoans to learn and grow through the use of art."

The Available City, led by Artistic Director David Brown, is charting new, impactful uses for design and architecture that respond to the reality of the existing city fabric. The DAF commission enacts this mission on a global scale between an international design team that includes Eibhlín Ní Chathasaigh (Dublin), James Albert Martin (Dublin), Anne Dorthe Vester (Copenhagen), Maria Bruun (Copenhagen) and Chicago residents. Soil Lab builds on ongoing efforts across Chicago to transform vacant lots into community assets to create a new, shared space with and for residents of North Lawndale.

"We are delighted to have been chosen to represent Denmark at the 2021 Chicago Architecture Biennial and are grateful to the jury for believing in our proposal," shared the team behind Soil Lab. "Soil Lab revolves around a workshop in North Lawndale where the community can come together to build from readily available materials: creating fired bricks and unfired rammed earth components through interaction and play. Our hope is that Soil Lab won't just be a meeting

point during the Biennial, but that it will allow the community to build new meeting points around their neighborhood long after the event has ended.”

The Soil Lab project involves two main efforts: the making of structures out of bricks, rammed earth, and ceramic tiles; and the construction of spaces for communal gathering. Soil Lab is inspired by the work of Jens Jensen—a Danish-American landscape architect whose work can be seen throughout several of Chicago’s major parks—who believed in the importance of reconnecting with oneself and one’s community through nature and natural materials.

“The winning project by an international design team takes a close look at materials and systems of building to shape a new kind of gathering space that directly responds to the theme of *The Available City*,” said 2021 CAB Artistic Director David Brown, who sat on the jury for the DAF Open Call. “The jury was excited to see a team use the invitation to produce a site-specific project in collaboration with community stakeholders to create something rooted in history and materiality while at the same time open to new ideas and activities.”

The Soil Lab group will begin work this spring through a series of virtual conversations with North Lawndale community groups, including CCA Academy and the Young Men’s Employment Network (YMEN). Over the course of the next seven months, the design will take shape, in collaboration with local residents, near the corner of 13th and Pulaski just down the street from a permaculture food forest run with students from CCA Academy. Various proposed built elements such as benches, tables, and a gallery wall made from brick will encourage movement, interaction, pause, and conversation. The project will be activated throughout the 2021 Biennial, which opens in September.

“The energy and creativity of residents of Chicago’s neighborhoods are building a newer, brighter, more equitable city,” said Alderman Michael Scott, Jr. representing Chicago’s 24th Ward. “We’re proud of the contributions by the CCA Academy and YMEN, in collaboration with the Soil Lab team, will make it to the Chicago Architecture Biennial in 2021 and to North Lawndale in the years to come.”

“As a youth leadership organization that has been working for decades to create opportunities for North Lawndale residents, we were excited to hear about this new initiative that looks to local expertise for exchange and collaboration at a global scale,” said Marcus Thorne, who sits on the board of YMEN in North Lawndale. “We look forward to playing a role in creating something that can have a lasting impact on the community.”

Learn more about the partnership between CAB and the DAF and the 2021 commission during a special program on Tuesday, March 16 at Noon. This event is part of CAB’s new year-round programming model which provides a platform for ongoing conversations about critical topics and engages audiences throughout the development of Biennial projects.

CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE BIENNIAL

For more information about the DAF collaboration and *The Available City*, visit chicagoarchitecturebiennial.org

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Resources

[CAB 2021 Digital Media Kit](#) (PW CAB2021)

[CAB/DAF Soil Lab Digital Media Kit](#)

[About the DAF Commission Open Call](#)

About the Soil Lab Team

[About YMEN and CCA Academy PermaPark](#)

Image of the Soil Lab Team

[Early Rendering of Soil Lab space in North Lawndale](#)

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About the Chicago Architecture Biennial

The Chicago Architecture Biennial (CAB) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to creating an international forum on architecture and urbanism. Within the context of the city of Chicago's unique architectural legacy, CAB's diverse set of programs include exhibitions, publications, workshops, performances, and more. CAB advances architectural innovation and thinking by engaging practitioners, students, and the public to collectively envision the designed environment—both globally and locally—by engaging a global audience in conversations that explore critical ideas and questions facing the field. CAB is a platform that is invested in exploring ways community-driven, sustainable, and equitable architecture and design can shape our lived experiences.

CAB's signature program—the largest architecture and design exhibition in North America—creates opportunities for emerging talent in architecture, design, and the arts that engage a wide

public audience every two years. Since the inaugural edition in 2015, CAB has presented more than 350 projects and programs from contributors representing more than 50 countries that reflect the ongoing significance of contemporary discourse in the field. The fourth edition of the Biennial titled *The Available City*, led by Artistic Director David Brown, will open in September of 2021 featuring free, public programming at sites in neighborhoods across Chicago and on digital platforms.

About the Danish Arts Foundation

The Danish Arts Foundation (DAF) is Denmark's largest arts foundation. The DAF works to spread the arts to a wide audience all over Denmark, to promote Danish art internationally, and to pave the way for talented artists. The DAF supports creative thinking and innovative ideas by funding more than 6,000 artists and art projects every year.

Through more than 60 different funding programs, the DAF funds the production and promotion of the visual arts, film, literature, music, performing arts, architecture, crafts, and design—and all that transcends the borders of these art forms. The DAF's 16 expert committees are responsible for awarding grants to both Danish and foreign art projects, based on the 12,500 applications that they receive every year from artists, institutions, schools, organizations, and companies. The Danish Arts Foundation previously collaborated with the Chicago Architecture Biennial and the Chicago Park District in 2019 to support *Cabbage Patch*, an installation of 10,000 planted cabbages along with an outdoor kitchen and related programming at the Garfield Park Conservatory.