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New Designs for the 'Missing Middle'

John Hill

10. March 2023

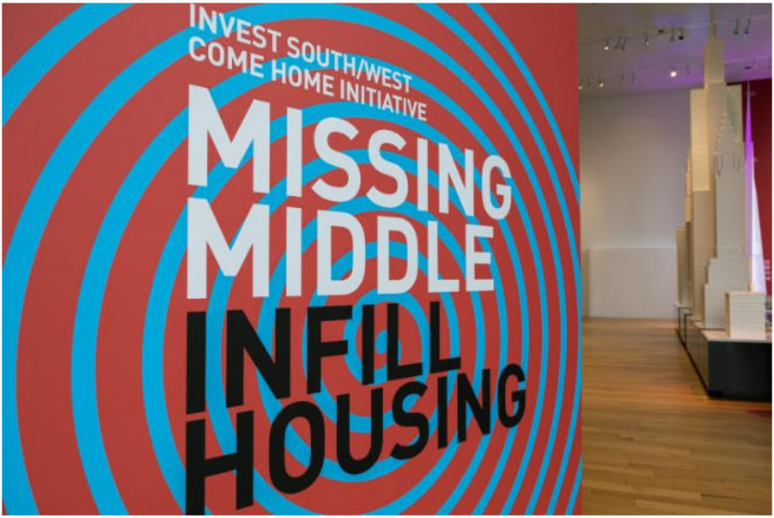


Photo: Eduardo Cornejo (All images courtesy of Chicago Architecture Center)

Forty-two architects/teams have been shortlisted in the Missing Middle Infill Housing competition, part of the Chicago Architecture Center's (CAC) Come Home Initiative, which “aims to reverse decades of disinvestment and depopulation and transform the urban fabric of Chicago’s South and West Side neighborhoods.”

“Missing Middle” is an intentional double entendre, referring both to the middle class being squeezed out of some parts of the city and to vacant lots in the middle of residential blocks. While the former is more indicative of the Loop and Chicago's North Side neighborhoods, the latter is more widespread in the neighborhoods of Auburn Gresham, Bronzeville, East Garfield Park, Englewood, Humboldt Park, and Woodlawn on the city's South and West Sides; these are the neighborhoods that are the target for the Missing Middle Infill Housing competition.

Late last year, architects were asked to respond to an RFQ accompanied by design proposals in four housing types, some of which are unique to Chicago: Single-Family Homes, Two-Flats and Three-Flats, Rowhouses, and Six-Flats. From the 74 firms/teams responding to the RFQ, 42 were selected for the pop-up exhibition that is on display at the CAC from March 3 – 26, and to present their work to a jury* "who will assess the submissions based on, design excellence, buildability, and replicability," per the CAC. Additionally, the pubic can provide their input on the designs via an online portal, with the jury hopefully taking those comments into account.

Rather than selecting one winner in each category as an infill project to be built, the third phase of the competition "will include the finalists selected by the expert jury," per the CAC, "and will be published in a pattern book this summer to serve as a resource to city planners and emerging developers by providing a snapshot into innovative housing design."

***The Missing Middle Infill Housing competition jury:**

- REED KROLOFF, Dean and The Rowe Family College of Architecture Endowed Chair, IIT College of Architecture
- CATHERINE BAKER, Founder, Nowhere Collaborative
- JACKIE KOO, Principal, KOO Architecture
- BRIAN LEE, Consulting Partner, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill
- LEON WALKER, Managing Partner, DL3 Realty

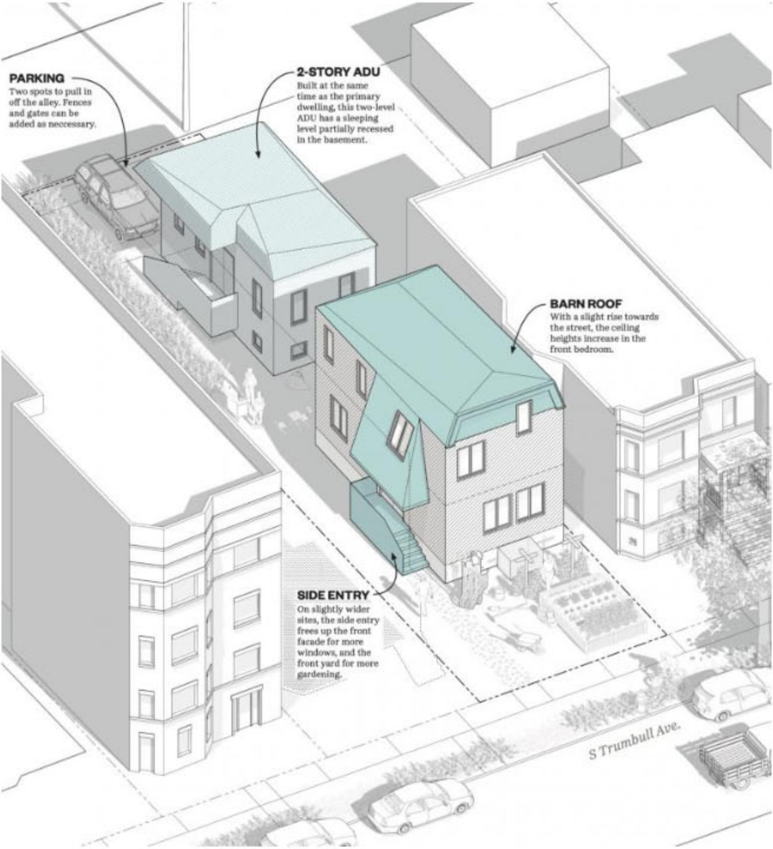
Images of each of the 42 architects/teams are presented below, grouped according to housing type and in alphabetical order by firm name. Be sure to visit the online portal to see the full presentation boards for each of the designs — and be sure to vote by March 26.

Single-Family Homes (7 Entries)

CAMESgibson (Chicago)

DAAM (Chicago)

New Office (Chicago)



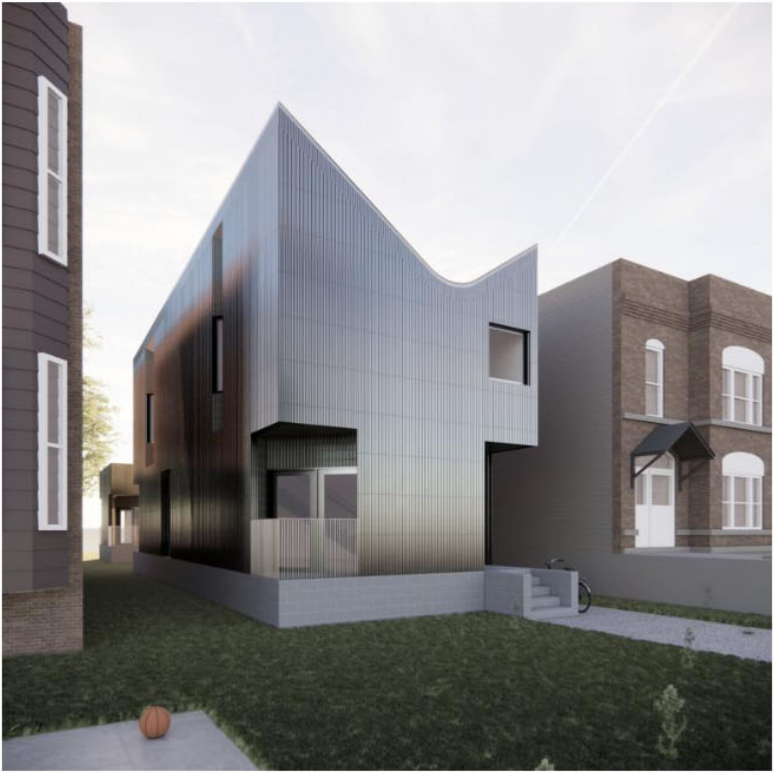
PARKING
Two spots to pull in off the alley. Fences and gates can be added as neccessary.

2-STORY ADU
Built at the same time as the primary dwelling, this two-level ADU has a sleeping level partially recessed in the basement.

BARN ROOF
With a slight rise towards the street, the ceiling heights increase in the front bedroom.

SIDE ENTRY
On slightly wider sites, the side entry frees up the front facade for more windows, and the front yard for more gardening.

OJT (New Orleans)



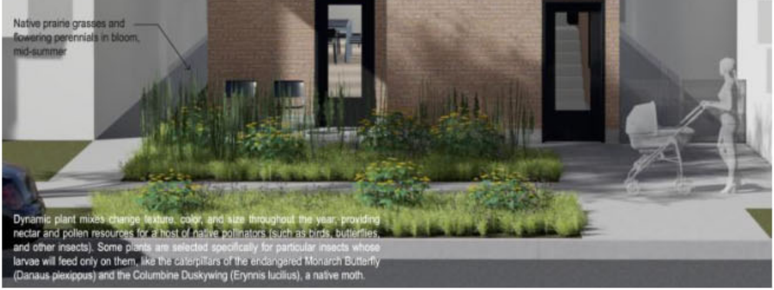
Studio Sean Canty, LLC (Boston/NYC) + Office III

Vladimir Radutny Architects Inc. (Chicago)

von Weise Associates (Chicago)

Two-Flats and Three-Flats (8 Entries)

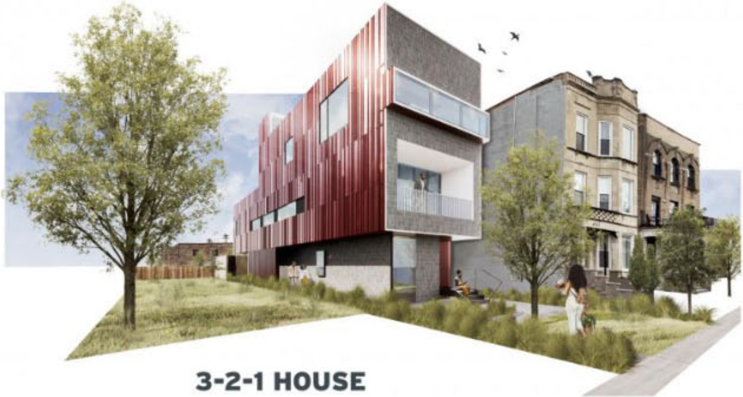
Street view
Reclaimed brick facade



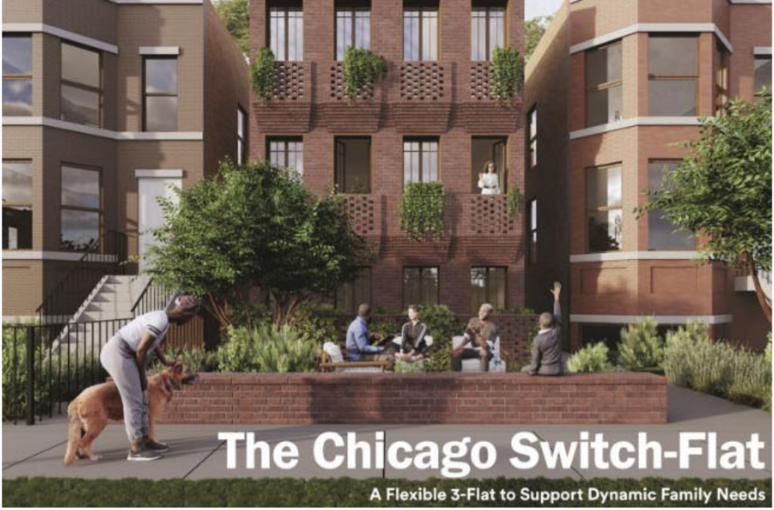
Native prairie grasses and flowering perennials in bloom, mid-summer

Dynamic plant mixes change texture, color, and size throughout the year, providing nectar and pollen resources for a host of native pollinators (such as birds, butterflies, and other insects). Some plants are selected specifically for particular insects whose larvae will feed only on them, like the caterpillars of the endangered Monarch Butterfly (Danaus plexippus) and the Columbine Duskywing (Erynnis lucilius), a native moth.

Chicago Design Office (Chicago)



Civic Projects Architecture (Chicago) + Marlon Blackwell Architects (Fayetteville, AR)



Dirk Denison Architects (Chicago)

Nia Architects (Chicago/Washington, DC) + Yu & Associates Collaborative (Chicago)

PRODUCTORA (Los Angeles, New York and Mexico City)

A FAMILY OF FORMS

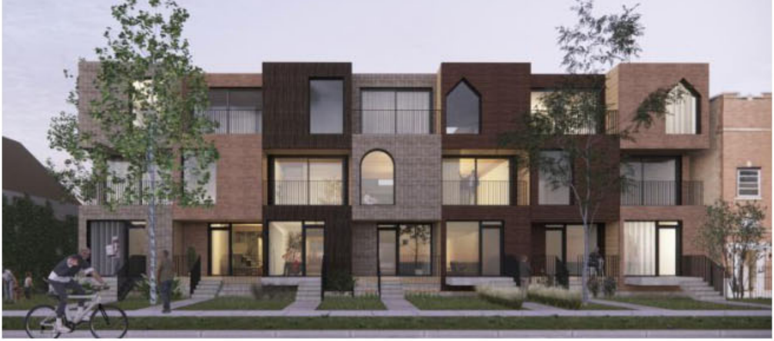
the high cost of delivering them to market.
Our proposal addresses this issue by introducing a new family of forms that responds to current market forces, provides user comfort, and enhances the character of the neighborhood.

Range Design & Architecture (Chicago)

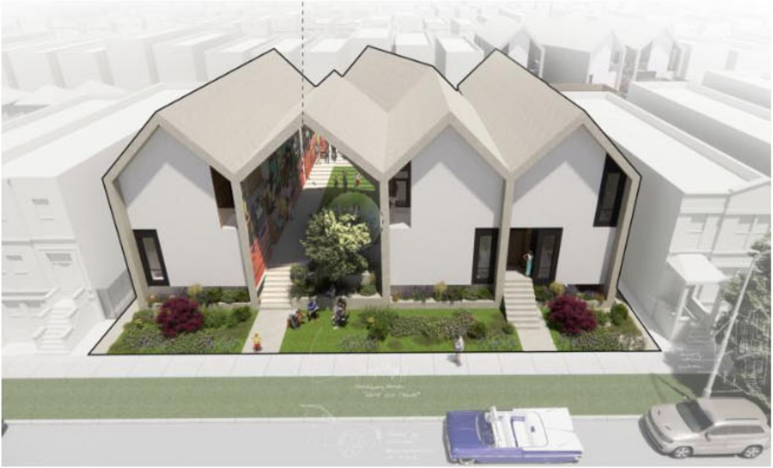
Studio Becker Xu (Chicago)

UrbanLab (Chicago) + The Available City (Chicago)

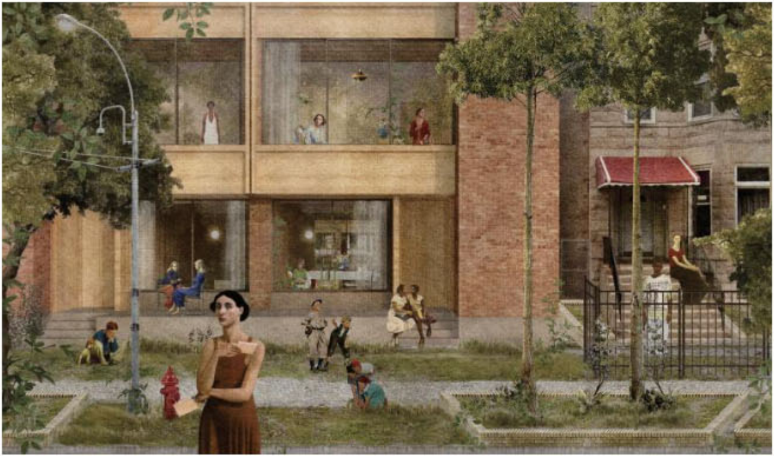
Rowhouses (13 Entries)



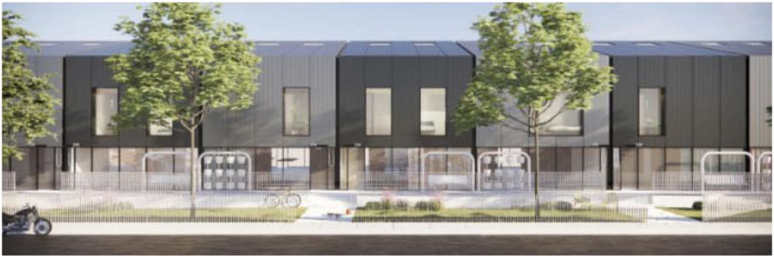
ACDF Architecture (Montreal)



DMAC Architecture & Interiors (Evanston, IL)



Frida Escobedo Studio (Mexico City)



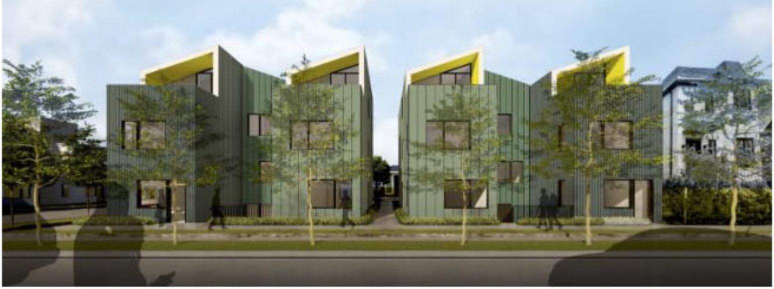
Future Firm (Chicago)

Hufft (Kansas City)

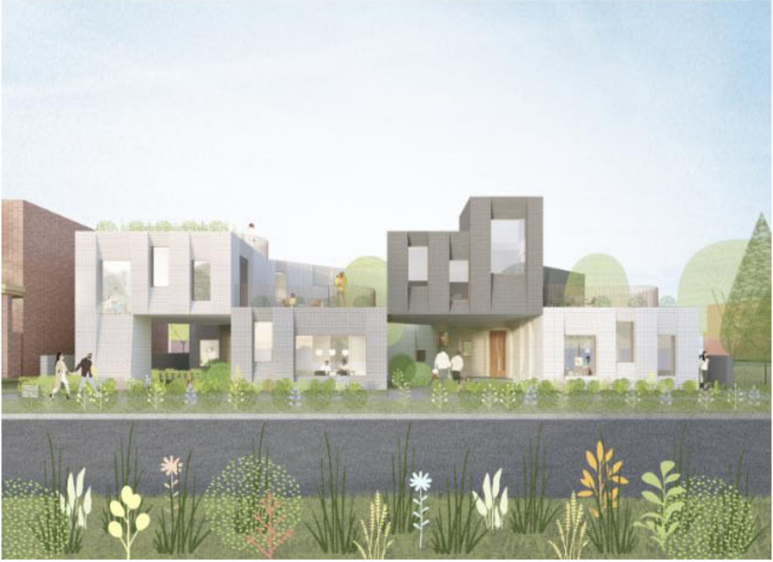
kevin daly Architects (Los Angeles/NYC/Miami)

CELEBRATE BRONZEVILLE

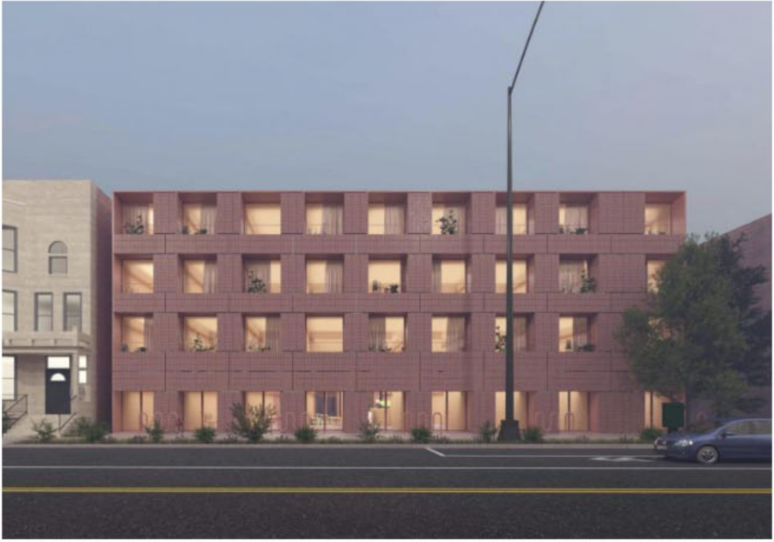
Krueck Sexton Partners (Chicago)



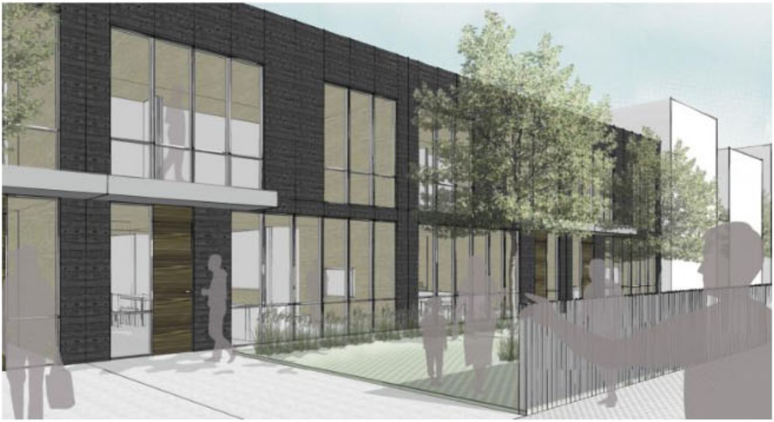
Latent Design (Chicago)



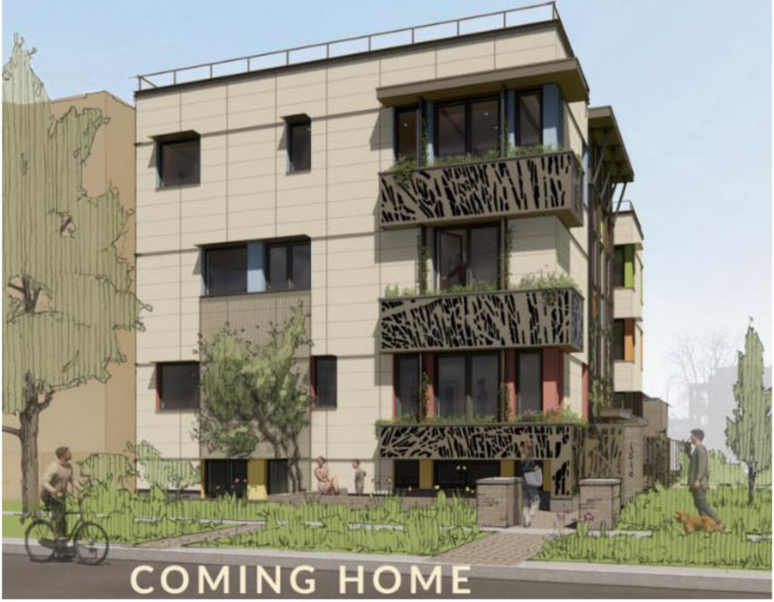
LOHA (Los Angeles)



MOS (New York)



Ross Barney Architects (Chicago)



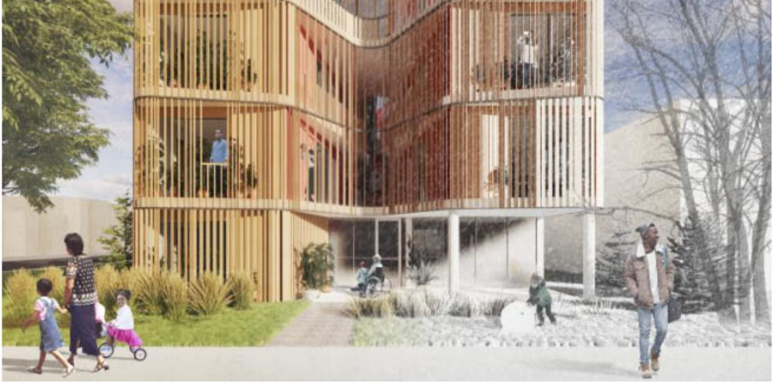
TBDA (Oak Park, IL) + Blacks in Green (Chicago)

Valerio Dewalt Train (Chicago)

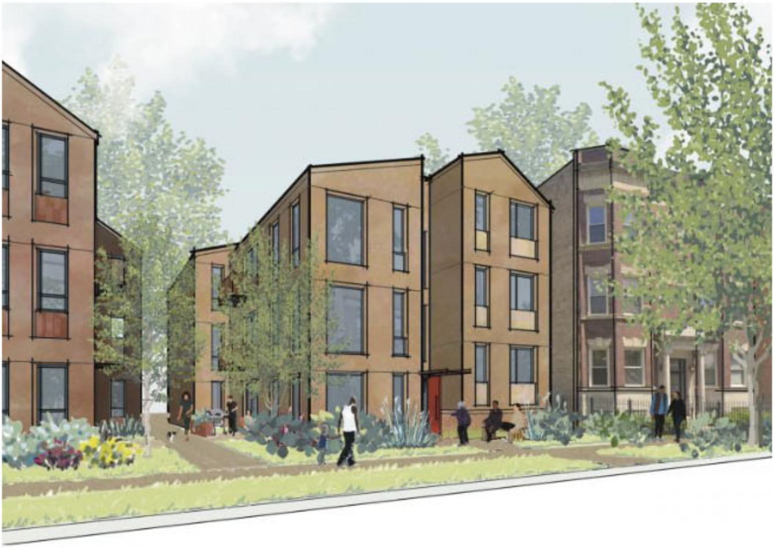
Six-Flats (14 Entries)

Architecture for Public Benefit (Chicago) + Peter Rose + Partners (Boston)

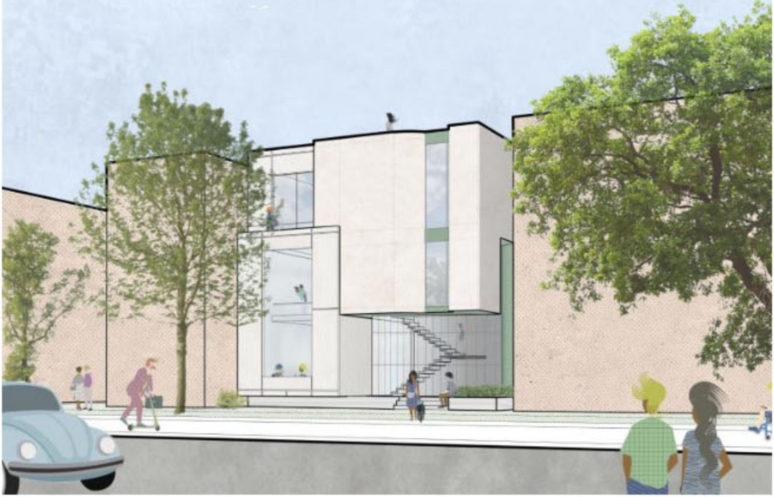
SIX PLUS
Resilient Housing for
Collective Restoration



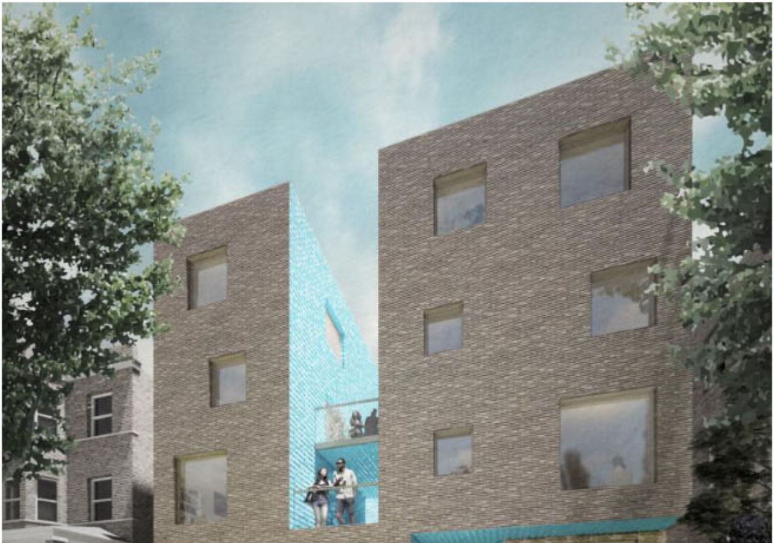
Canopy Architecture and Design (Chicago)



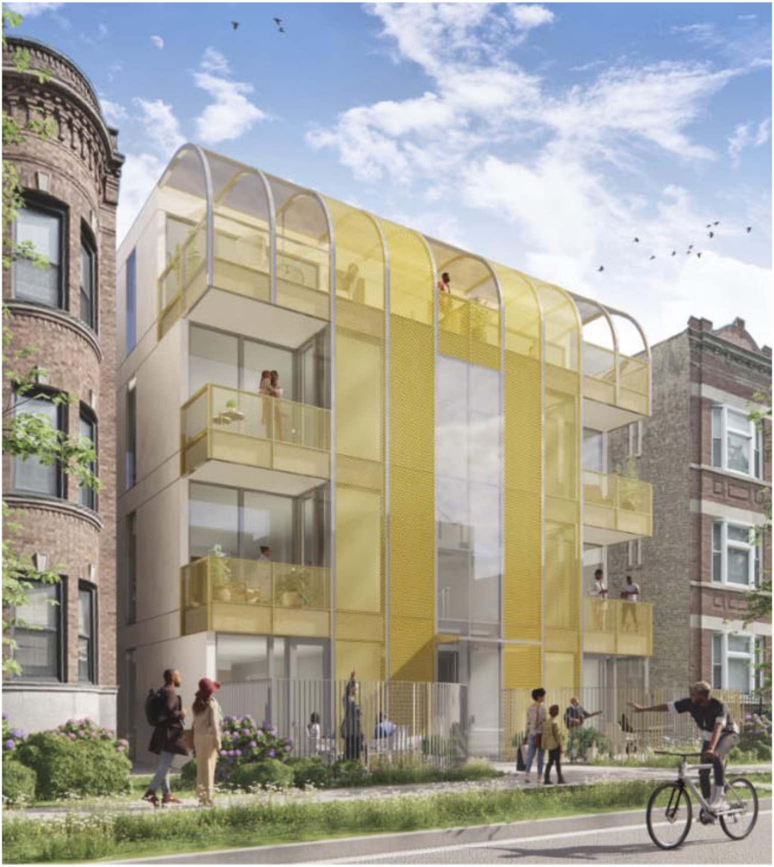
David Baker Architects (San Francisco)



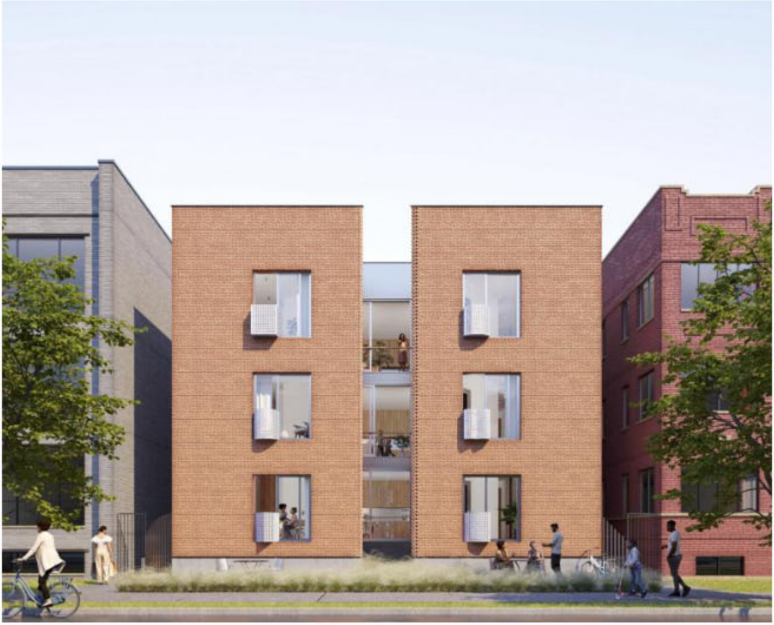
DNA Architecture & Design, Inc. (Los Angeles)



Höweler + Yoon (Boston)

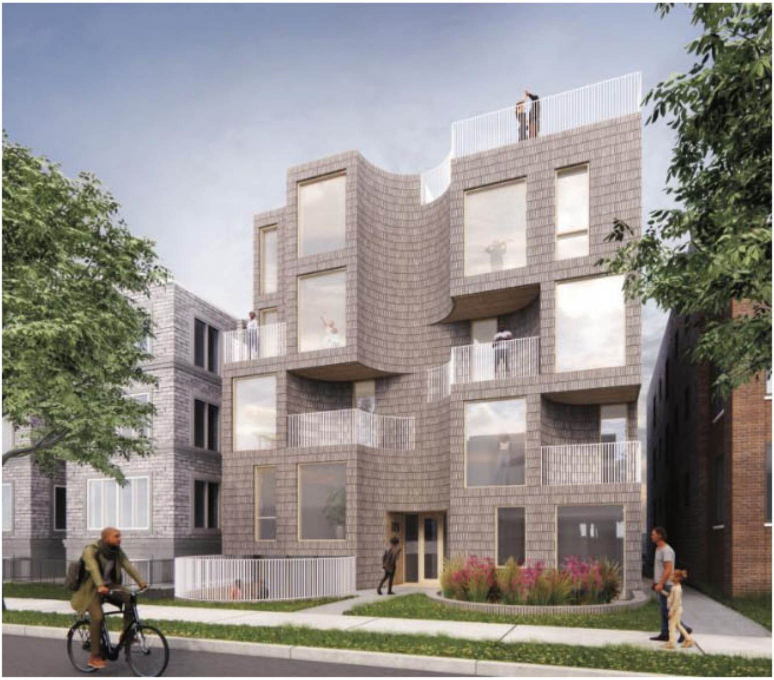


Jahn/ (Chicago)

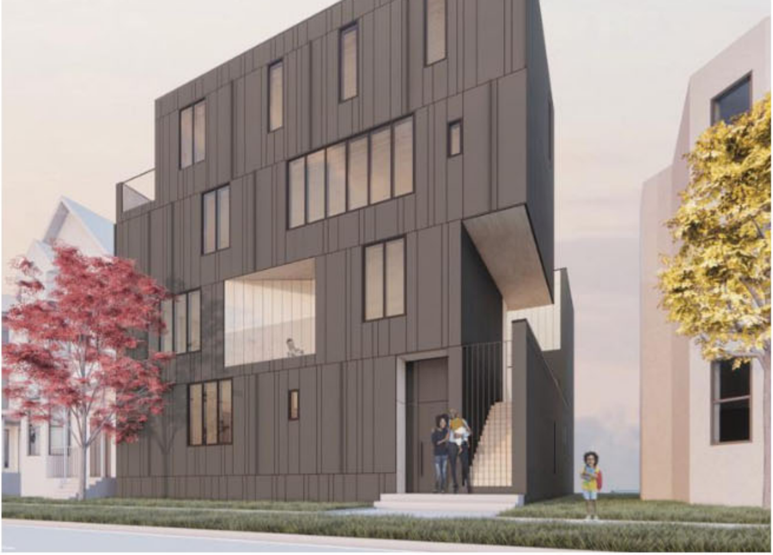


Kwong Von Glinow (Chicago)

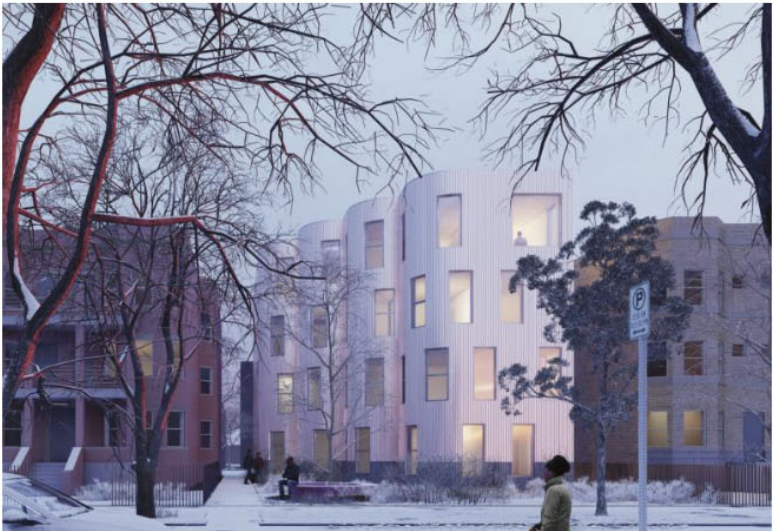
Lamar Johnson Collaborative (Chicago/Kansas City/Los Angeles/Phoenix/Overland, MO)



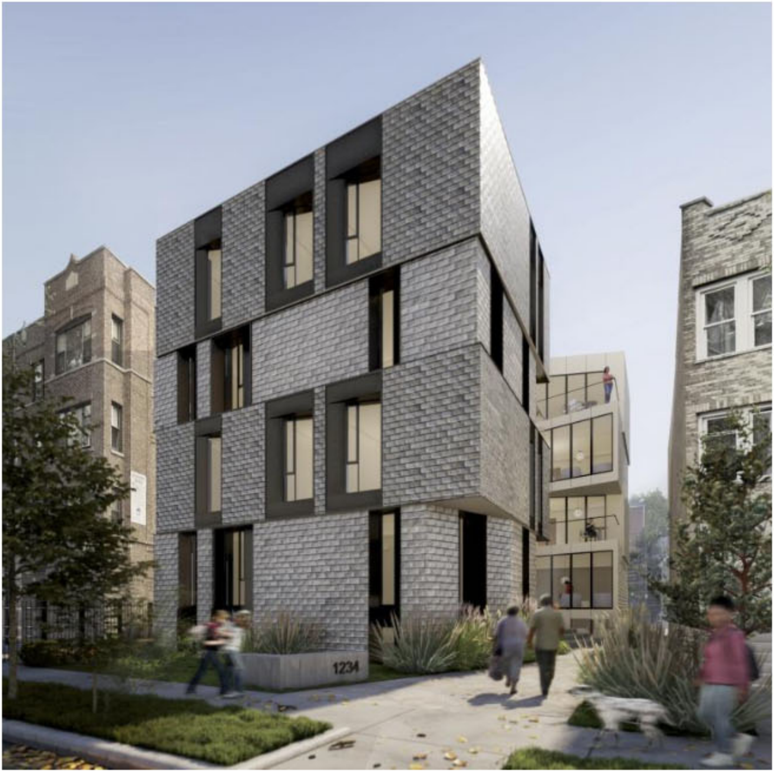
MERGE Architects (Boston)



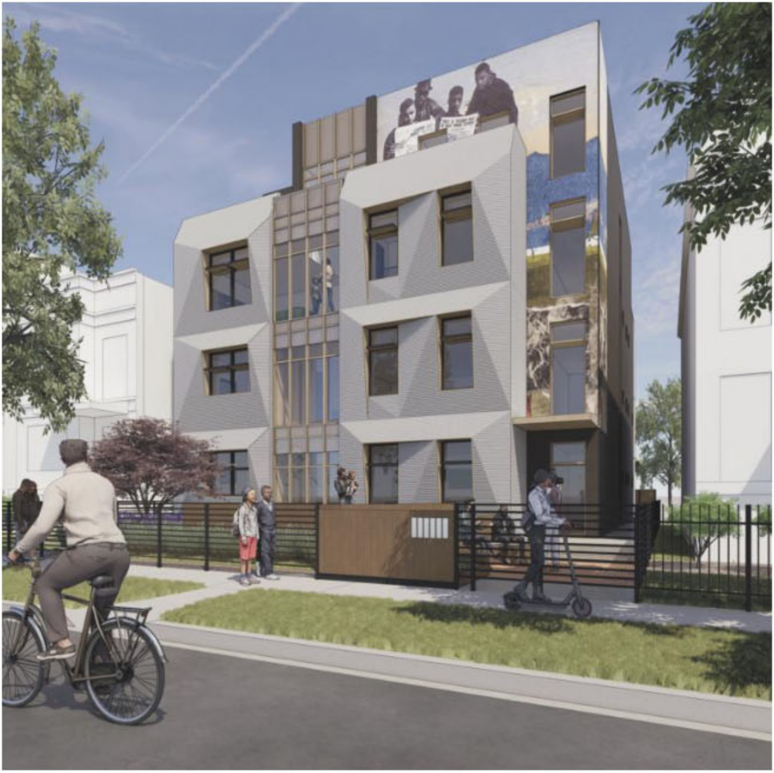
NADAAA (Boston)



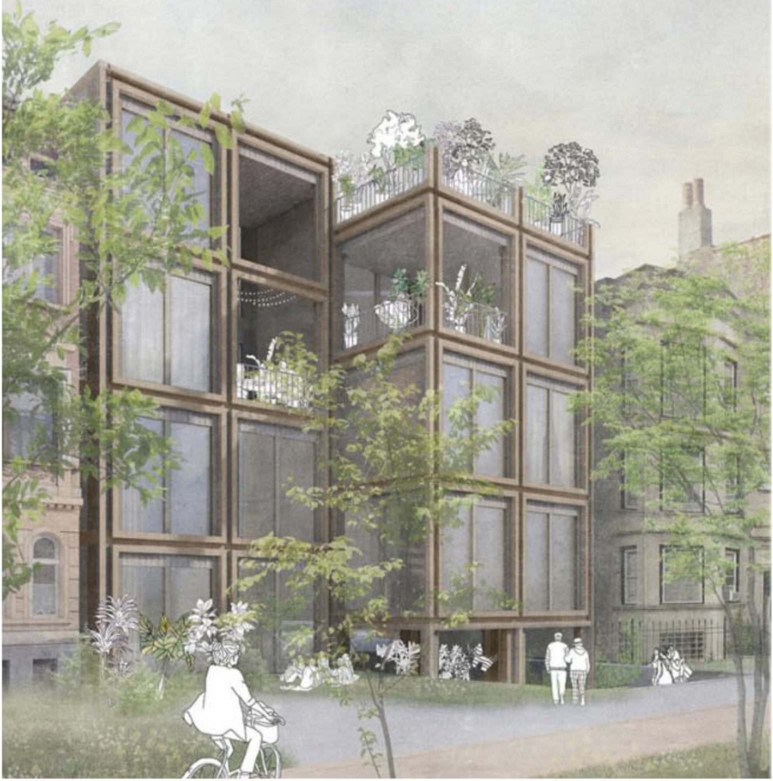
nARCHITECTS (NYC)



Park Fowler Plus (Chicago)



Sheehan Nagle Hartray Architects (Chicago)



Tatiana Bilbao Estudio (Mexico City)

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