

unfuse  
**Ignite**

Reinventing Thompson Centre of 2020

<https://uni.xyz/competitions>



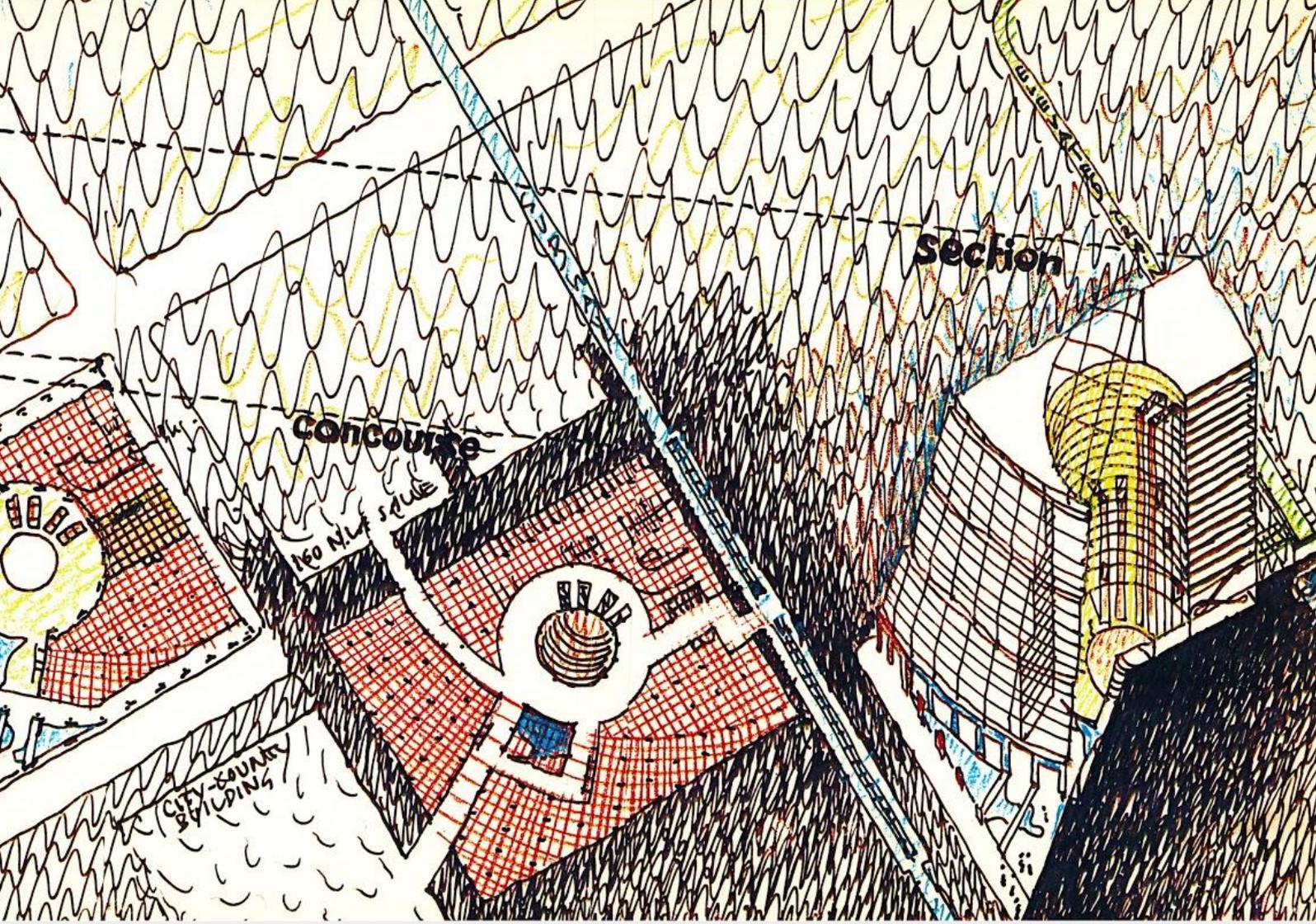
img\_1a: Concept illustration of Thomson Centre by Helmut Jahn

## Premise

A beautiful idea or evocative image may stir our imagination more than an object, a building, or even an entire city. Yet, it is materiality that constitutes the great power of architecture, its ability to turn a physical building into a truly transcendental experience.

Let's think of how to improve buildings that we already have rather than, as often happens, raze them to start new ones from scratch. And when it comes to dealing with recent buildings, yet unprotected by a landmark status, there is a lot of freedom as far as how they could be transformed.

One of the most iconic buildings in Chicago, James R. Thompson Center is a case in point. Illinois state government's decision to sell it for new development puts this 35-year-old gem of late-20th century architecture in great danger. The only way to save it is to reimagine it.



img 1b: Concept illustration of Thomson Centre by Helmut Jahn

## Fabula

Built in 1985, Thompson Center occupies the entire urban block in Chicago's Loop area defined by W Lake, N LaSalle, W Randolph, and N Clark streets. It was designed by Chicago's most renowned living architect Helmut Jahn.

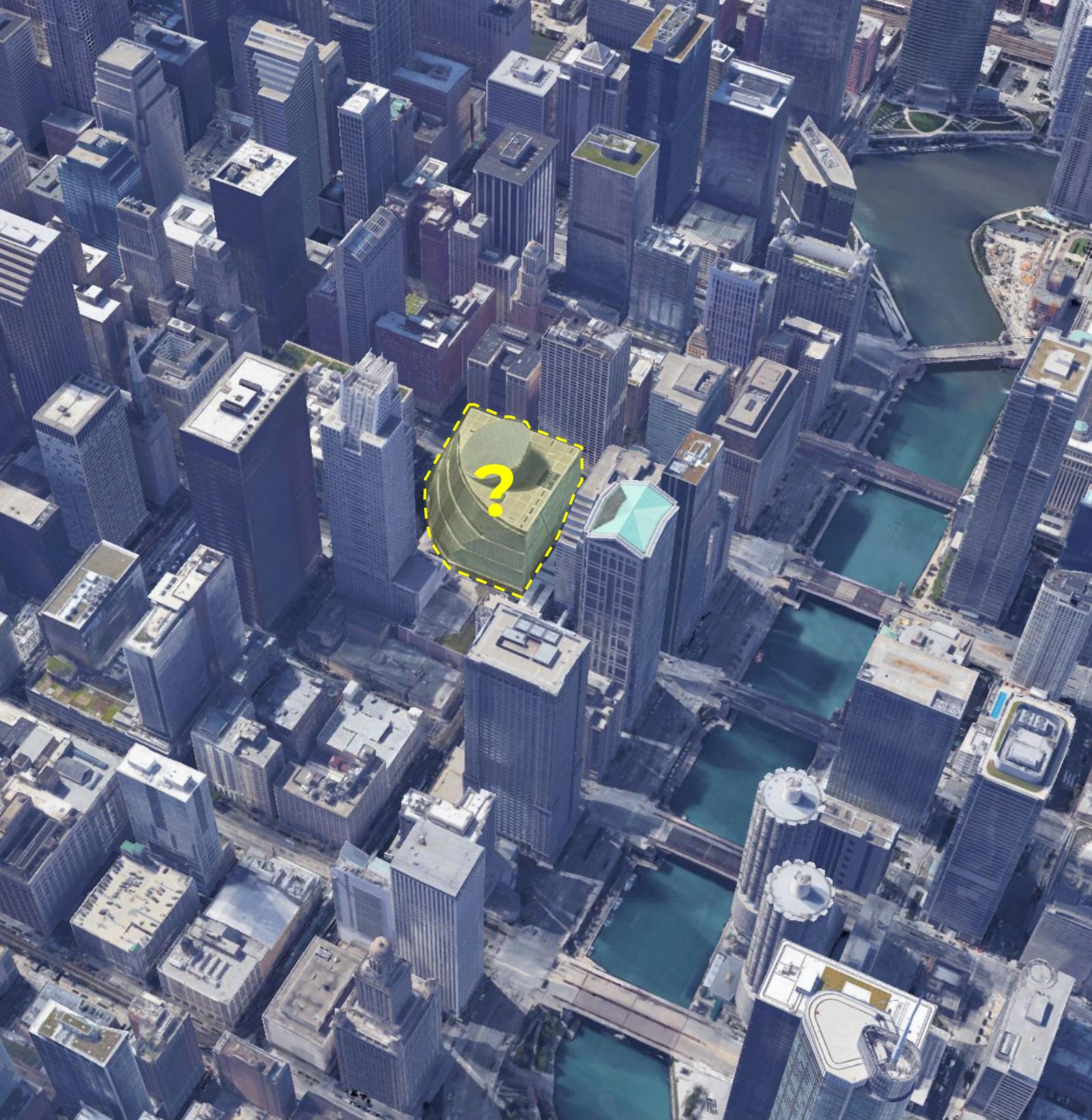
Home to offices of the Illinois state government, the building is a unique civic gesture and one of the grandest public spaces in America, Chicago's Pantheon, if you will. Nicknamed a starship for its futuristic shape, this 17-story steel and color-glass structure is a primary example of both High-Tech and Post-Modernist styles of the highest caliber. It is a symbolic building, a contemporary take on traditional state capitol. Apart from state offices, the domed building with its remarkable 160-foot-diameter rotunda, energized by moving escalators and glass-enclosed elevators, comprises Chicago Transit Authority train station, basement-level cafeteria, and commerce.



[img\\_2](#): View of the Thomson Centre from Street - Rainer Viertlböck

## Conflict

It is quite clear that the Center's original ambition to create a truly grand civic space was a mismatch with its limited function from the outset. Occupied primarily by bureaucrats' offices the building was not accessible to the public after working hours and on weekends. The government's vision was never idealistic enough and, as a result, was destined to fail due to the building's high maintenance cost, exacerbated by years of neglect.



img.3: Aerial view of Thomson Centre in its urban context - Source: Google Maps

## New Future

But imagine a much more resourceful program in the very heart of Chicago, the architectural capital of the world – with the government offices out of the picture, the space could be entirely repurposed through soaring expansion, diversified by introducing such functions as headquarters for major IT companies, workshare spaces for start-ups, event spaces, museums, galleries, hanging public gardens, retail, restaurants, observatory, hotels, condos, and more.



Img 4: Helmut Jahn - Architect of Thomson Centre, Chicago

## Endorsement

In 2015 we proposed to repurpose the Thompson Center with the addition of a tall hotel-condo tower to meet the market to come. I propose the doors to come down, so the atrium becomes a public place with upgraded retail and restaurants. The new space no longer belongs to the state of Illinois; it belongs to the people of Chicago. The original vision of Governor James R. Thompson and the architect to make the building a symbol for the openness and transparency of the state government, an active urban center in the city, and a lively urban and public place has not been upheld by the administrations that followed. The building has not been maintained or repaired, the retail lacks style and attraction. The best way to save the building is to improve it by making it the most exciting place in the city, with around-the-clock activities. One important aspect of this project would be to enhance the idea of public space. The ground floor would be opened up at the plaza level to make the atrium a true public space. The architectural history is full of examples where adaptive reuse and repurposing has brought new life to similar structures. It is the only way this building will survive and become a landmark for the 21st century.

**Helmut Jahn, July 2020**

Original Architect, Thomson Centre,  
Chicago



[img\\_5](#): Thompson Center Atrium

## Brief

The competition participants are asked **to develop a new vision for the Thompson Center, as a creative hub in the center of Chicago.** There is no guidance on how much of the existing Thompson Center should be preserved, but it is encouraged to keep the original rotunda space, as a nucleus for the new Center. Both height and depth limits for this project are suspended. The real constraint here is your own imagination. You are the architect and you have to convince your potential client to implement your speculative scheme, to which this eventual new owner may be aspired by. The existing glass-and-steel structure comprises 1.2 million sq. ft. of space and in order to make **the new complex feasible, proposed schemes should plan for at least 2.5 million sq. ft. of space.** Submissions should include a short statement with a breakup of program outlines, plans, key section, and renderings.



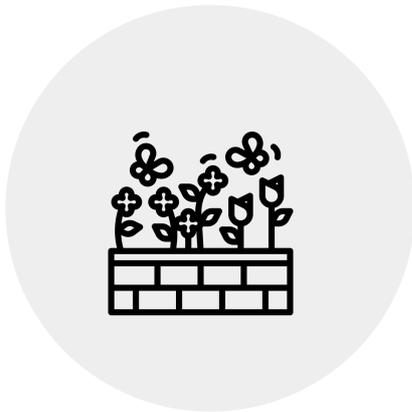
### **Adaptive Reuse**

The project should look at reusing what's already there - In parts or full



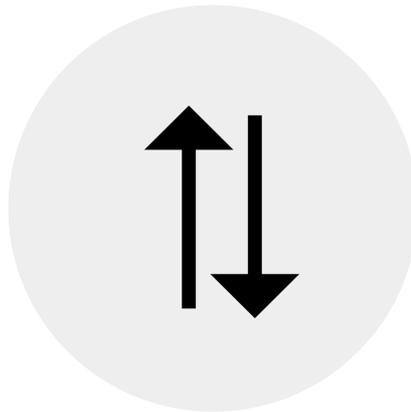
### **Public Space**

The project should sustain the feature of being public oriented at parts of project.



### **Hanging Gardens**

Promote green spaces on multiple levels



### **Vertical Living**

Create a holistic vertical living for its residents.

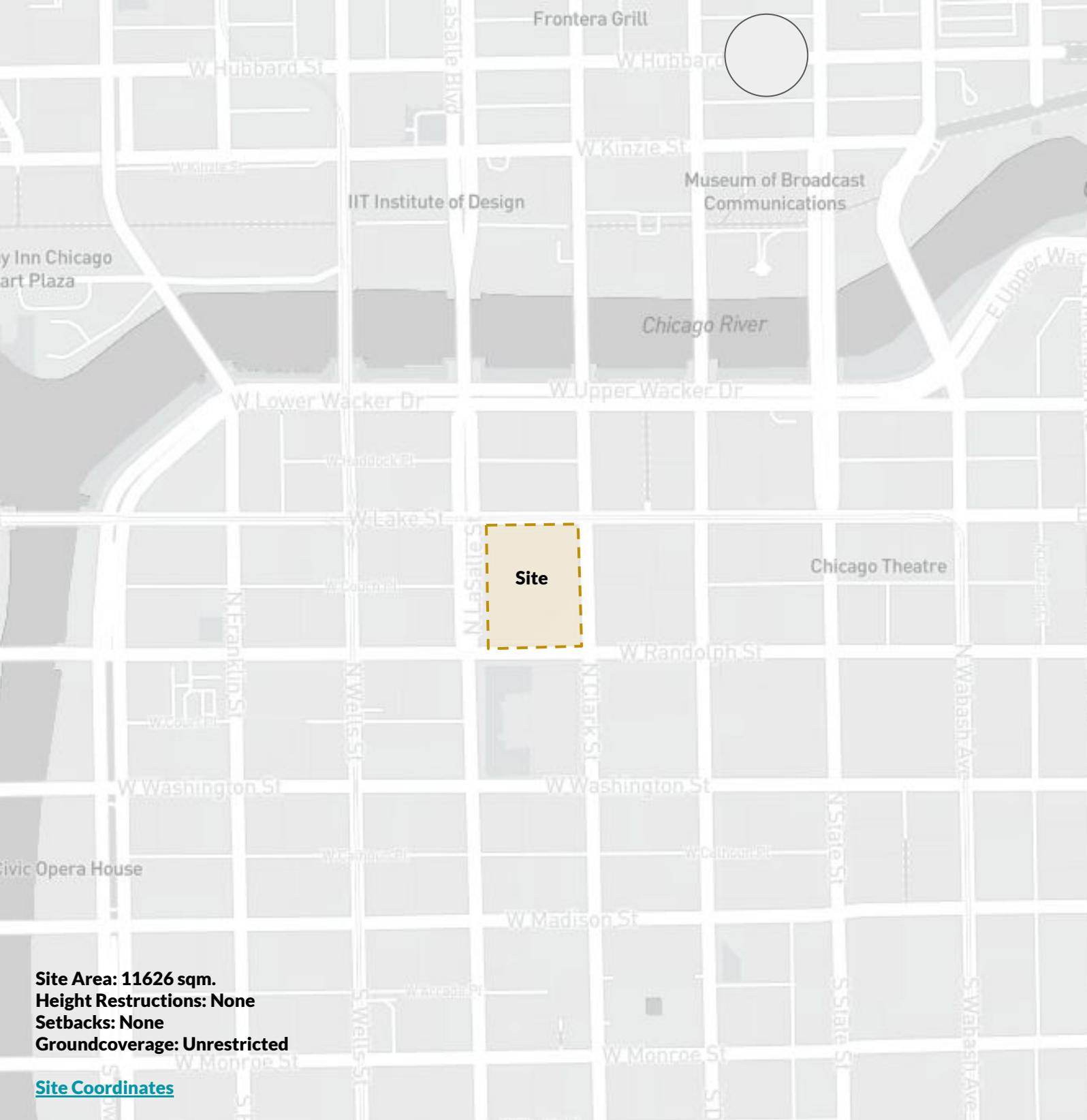
## **Objectives**

You can propose residential, commercial, administrative, leisure all kinds of usages that seem fit to you for this project. The above objectives are some factors you should consider while building your project.



[img 6](#): Drawings Thompson Center

**Drawings** by **Helmut Jahn** for the **Thompson Center** emphasizing the rotunda atrium and its relation with the plans, elevation and section.



**Site Area: 11626 sqm.**  
**Height Restrictions: None**  
**Setbacks: None**  
**Groundcoverage: Unrestricted**

[Site Coordinates](#)

[img Z](#): Thompson Center Map

## Site

Originally the State of Illinois Center; is located at 100 W. Randolph Street in the Loop district of Chicago and houses offices of the Illinois state government. The building serves as a secondary capitol for the State of Illinois in the most populated city and county of the state. The building has to be retained either metaphorically, or physically, or conceptually - the call is up to your rationale.

# Guidelines

You have to deliver an architectural outcome on the following site, based on the given outlines.

- Recommended number of sheets/presentation images/boards: **5 (Five)** of size [ **2800px x 3500px** ] in portrait digital format (**JPEG only**).

**Minimum 3 (Three) & No maximum sheet limit.** Each image should be less than **15MB**. (Do not submit PNG format)

**Minimum requisite submission** are sheets/boards + Cover image containing:

- Site plan (Compulsory)
  - Key conceptual sections x 1 (Minimum)
  - 3D views x 4
  - Additional cover image of 2000px x 1000px
  - This is the link for new file sizes, [here](#).
- Write a article/story in the **Journal section**<sup>#</sup> of the project (of about 700-1000 words) answering the questions given in the Additional Resources.  
**#Journal Section** appears midway in the project submission portal. More instructions in the additional resources.

# Deadlines

Discover the competition schedule and deadlines on the competitions page or on this link - [Schedule](#).

# Resources

This competition contains additional resources that contains a set of files useful to complete the competition submission. This folder is made available on your profile dashboard automatically as soon as you register.

**This folder contains:** Submission Format files in PSD | AI | InDD, Guide for Journal section, High Res maps, PDF Drawings of Existing building, Original Drawings by Helmut Jahn and Building photos.

# Rules

- + The competitions is open for **students and professionals** from all the disciplines of design.
- + The team limit for this competition is **4 members maximum per team**.
- + You can register more than one team but they have to be registered separately.
- + Ensure that the final sheets submitted **do not include your name or any other mark of identification**. Your submission is linked to your user account which stands as your identification.
- + This is a design **ideas challenge only**. There is no built commission/realization associated with the problem.
- + In case of publication in yearbook we will reach out separately for selected entries.

# Pro-Tips

- + Use exploded views to discuss multi levelled conceptual models better.
- + Mention sheet number on corner of every sheet.
- + Plagiarism of any idea / form / design / image will be disqualified with a notice.
- + All the sheets or images will be viewed on a digital device. **e.g.** Laptop screen or projector. Uploaded sheets or images will not be physically printed for evaluation. The submission hence should be prepared for digital viewing only.
- + Submit JPEG images only. (PNG will not function)



## Awards

Grants of up to a total of **20,000\$** can be won on this challenge. Learn more about the full conditions on the competition page [here](#).

The entries will be judged by an international jury of the competition on the following criteria:



### **Presentation**

The fundamental to a good entry is a good presentation.



### **Concept/Idea**

Quality of thought and intent in pre-design phase.



### **Spaces/Programme**

How the spaces are calculated and ordered.



### **Design Outcome**

The final architectural outcome of the solution.

## **Judging Criteria**

The judging panel can also add other criteria based on their internal discussions - which will be in line with the problem statement. Participants are advised to fulfil above given criteria first in their design.

About  
**unfuse**<sup>™</sup>

**Unfuse** serves as a unit for **Uni** in the field of Architecture. It intends to break the fusion of traditional design barriers and methodologies by making it a platform for experimentation and conceptual exchange of ideas in architecture, urbanism, society, culture and ecology. It is a research initiative dedicated to providing opportunities for designers from all domains to explore ideas that go beyond the boundaries of architectural discipline and enrich our built environment; thereby opening up possibilities for promotion of architectural thought at a global level.

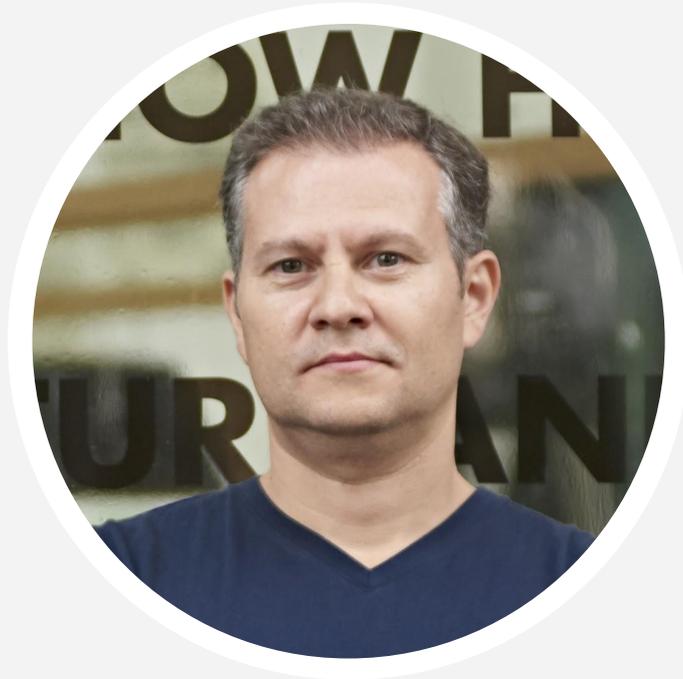
Queries: [support@uni.xyz](mailto:support@uni.xyz)

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# Curator | Vladimir Belogolovsky

## Curator

**Curatorial Project**

[www.curatorialproject.com](http://www.curatorialproject.com)

New York, USA

**Vladimir Belogolovsky** (b. 1970, Odessa, Ukraine) is an American curator and critic. He has graduated from the Cooper Union School of Architecture in 1996. After practicing architecture for 12 years, he founded his New York-based Curatorial Project, a nonprofit organization, which focuses on curating and designing architectural exhibitions worldwide. He writes for architectural journals *Arquitectura Viva* (Madrid), *SPEECH* (Berlin), and his columns on *ArchDaily* and *Stir*. He has interviewed over 350 leading international architects and has written ten books, including *China Dialogues* (ORO Editions, 2020); *Iconic New York* (DOM, 2019); *Conversations with Architects* (DOM, 2015); *Conversations with Peter Eisenman* (DOM, 2016); *Harry Seidler: Lifework* (Rizzoli, 2014); and *Soviet Modernism: 1955-1985* (TATLIN, 2010). Belogolovsky has curated over 50 international exhibitions in North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. Among them *Architects' Voices Series* (World Tour since 2016), world tours on the work of Emilio Ambasz and Harry Seidler, and *Chess Game* exhibition for the Russian Pavilion at the 11th Venice Architecture Biennale. In 2018-19 he was a visiting scholar at Tsinghua University in Beijing. The curator has lectured at universities and museums in more than 30 countries.

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Institutional **Access**<sup>TM</sup>



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*L.M. Stewart*