

QUESTIONS FOR  
THE ARCHITECTS OF

# Between States

by Jessica Cilella

This fall, CAF's new exhibit, *Between States*, will feature innovative ideas from 50 Chicago design firms. Representatives from four of the firms gave us a sneak peek at their proposals and explained why they believe these sites should be transformed into rejuvenated civic anchors. The 50 projects you'll see at the exhibit beginning in September are in neighborhoods all across the city. These four ideas for the Near West Side, Far South Side and Bronzeville are just a taste of what's to come.

► To read the full interviews, visit [architecture.org](http://architecture.org).



JOE  
GONZALEZ  
*Ghafari*

**Proposal** Transform the existing buildings and parking lots surrounding Guaranteed Rate Field into a vibrant urban destination.

**This area has been filled with parking lots for a long time. Why do you think it deserves attention now?** The baseball stadium and its parking requirements are not an excuse to leave a significant number of city blocks vacant for 75 percent of the year. With many planned improvements surrounding this site—Lake Meadows, IIT, Michael Reese, among others—it is easy to imagine increased demand for housing/retail/entertainment uses. Our proposal will provide 3–4 levels of structured parking on various blocks, which will be “wrapped” by ground floor commercial and residential above. This revitalized neighborhood model, seen across the country, builds on a diverse, mixed-use theme. We are drawing inspiration from multiple successful sports-related venues such as PETCO Park, Staples Center, PNC Park, Camden Yards and oh yes, Wrigley Field.

**How can architects improve the way they work with residents on community-based projects?** Understand that what we do is a fine balance between listening, learning and leading. Architects possess incredible 3D tools that allow communities to see possibilities, good and bad, at early stages of the process. Exploring and communicating 3D options early and often can facilitate communication, ease the tension and often lead to amazing results.

[ghafari.com](http://ghafari.com)



ELLEN BAILEY  
DICKSON  
*Bailey Edward*

**Proposal** Convert South Side Masonic Temple into a mixed-use artist live/work space, both within the temple and on adjacent vacant lots.

**Why is this building worth saving?** As one of only a few remaining buildings from Englewood's commercial golden era, the Masonic Temple is a treasure to the entire community's history. On its own, it is a beautiful historic building whose size alone dominates the central neighborhood landscape, providing potential as a community beacon. As a masonic temple, the building represents the sense of community that has been fleeting for Englewood. Reviving this existing cultural icon makes practical and symbolic sense.

**What is your favorite example of adaptive reuse in Chicago?** The Stony Island Arts Bank is a project that is exemplary and used in a similar vein to our proposal for the Masonic Temple. Renovating an existing historic bank building into an arts center repurposes existing cultural infrastructure, creates a space for local residents to take part in and develops a local arts community while bringing people from across the city into the community to share ideas and interact with a neighborhood they may not have had a reason to visit. As a project, it's great architecture and great community building that is truly inspiring.

[baileyedward.com](http://baileyedward.com)



DIRK LOHAN  
*Wight & Company*

**Proposal** Salvage what remains of Bronzeville's Pilgrim Baptist Church and turn the building into a multipurpose performance and event space that focuses on African-American music.

**Why do you think what remains of the church should be salvaged?** We have torn down several Sullivan buildings over the years. In this case, we still have the entire façade available to us as a historical landmark of the late 19th century architecture by one of America's most influential architects. It is my concept to combine these relics of history with a contemporary design, as a solution that combines the old and the new in a symbiotic juxtaposition.

**What similar projects are sources of inspiration?** I am inspired by the integration of old parts with new architecture by German architect Egon Eiermann for the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin. Here, certain elements of the World War II destruction were left in place, combined with new 20th century architecture. The design has become a symbol of the ever-evolving human spirit and serves as a reminder of the good and bad that occurs in history. The Pilgrim Baptist Church was originally a synagogue and it ultimately burned mostly down, but I feel strongly that it should be revived for future generations to enjoy.

[wightco.com](http://wightco.com)



RADA  
DOYTCHEVA  
*RADA Architects*

**Proposal** Construct an Illinois Medical District (IMD) pedestrian bridge over the Eisenhower Expressway between Ogden and Damen Avenues, creating a “handshake” between historically divided communities.

**How would this bridge be different from other pedestrian bridges in Chicago?** A majority of Chicago's pedestrian bridges built in the last decade are mostly utilitarian, allowing people a safer and faster crossing over busy traffic arteries. This is only one aspect of the IMD Pedestrian Bridge. More importantly, it allows for the continuous vitality of shops, cafes, gardens and meeting points as people move toward their destination. Creating more amenities for pedestrians in a safe and covered-from-the-elements bridge would replicate the downtown Pedway. In addition, the glass “cloud” towers hovering over the bridge will allow the area to be identified from a distance.

**What existing pedestrian bridges are you drawing inspiration from, and why?** Architects are usually very interested in what others have done in history. I am not an exception. Ponte Vecchio in Florence is an inspiring example to follow. It is not only a functional structure for crossing the Arno River, but also a marketplace and a piazza. In my native Bulgaria, the well-known Covered Bridge in Lovech is populated with shops too. Other, more recent inspirations include the Zaragoza, Spain bridge pavilion designed by Zaha Hadid for Expo 2008 and Frank Gehry's BP Pedestrian Bridge. •

[rada-arch.com](http://rada-arch.com)