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“SWEET HOMES CHICAGO” CHALLENGES DESIGN COMMUNITY TO ADDRESS LOCAL HOUSING CRISIS

Design Makes Change and Unit 2 Launch Initiative Aimed at High Foreclosure in Austin Neighborhood

Chicago, IL, March 1, 2012 – Local organizations Design Makes Change and Unit 2 Art and Design Collective today launched their second annual joint initiative, Sweet Homes Chicago: The Neighborhood Preservation Design Challenge. The project urges designers, urban planners, architects, civil engineers and others to turn their talents to their own backyard, where the nation’s housing crisis has hit the Chicago community area of Austin. Entrants are encouraged to develop hyper-local strategies to help this neighborhood, in partnership, if possible, with city block clubs, schools or other neighborhood organizations.

Looking at social issues on a local level, Sweet Homes Chicago asks entrants to create a design or plan that helps answer one of the following questions:

- How can design help the residents, businesses and institutions in neighborhoods like Austin face and adapt to the current economic environment?
- How can design help residents keep or get back into their homes?
- Using Austin as a model, how can design help Americans stay invested and economically engaged in the places where we live?

“When we talk about preserving neighborhoods that have been ravaged by the foreclosure crisis, like Austin, our conversations tend to be driven by policy makers, housing advocates and community organizers,” said Austin Coming Together’s Andrew Born. “The opportunity to have designers influence our conversations and help us formulate strategies for preserving Austin’s housing stock is something that we are extremely excited about. We expect them to bring new ideas and a fresh perspective to help the community re-examine an issue that we have been struggling to address for years.”

Submissions to Sweet Homes Chicago will be accepted through August 15. The first-place winner will receive seed money, starting at \$2,000, and professional assistance to help further develop and implement their design.

Entries will be evaluated by a multidisciplinary team of jurors from the fields of design, social justice, advocacy, activism and community development. Confirmed jurors include:

- John Paul Kusz, president, JPKusz Ltd sustainability consultancy
- Stephen Melamed, professor of industrial design, University of Illinois Chicago, founder of Tres Design Group
- Carl Boyd, professor at Columbia College, Dept. of Art and Design
- Lynda Pulik, design researcher, Motorola
- Monica Chadha, architect, Studio Gang and instructor at IIT
- Elce Redmond, organizing director, South Austin Community Council Coalition
- Erica Swinney, associate director, The Center for Polytechnical Education, director of career and community programs at The Center for Labor and Community Research
- Melissa Kelsey, communications specialist, Bethel New Life
- Frances Cox, Austin resident and neighborhood activist

To learn more about Sweet Homes Chicago and to find out how to enter the competition, visit: www.DesignMakesChange.com or contact Siobhan Gregory at info@designmakeschange.com.

Design Makes Change is a volunteer group of designers, artists, and educators whose mission is to partner with local organizations, community leaders, businesses, and educational institutions to organize and support a series of annual design competitions to address environmental, social and infrastructural issues in Chicago and beyond.

Unit 2 Art and Design Collective is a non-profit organization that brings together artists and designers from various genres to support projects, lectures, workshops, and exhibitions that emphasize research, innovations, social change, and dialog. Unit 2 strives to build and maintain a powerful network of artists, exhibition opportunities, and creative resources.

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