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# **UIC Grad Students Design Solutions for CHA Property, Win First Place in HUD Competition**

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CHICAGO (April 28, 2023) – Graduate students from the University of Illinois-Chicago recently scored the winning design for an underdeveloped Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) site as part of a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Innovation in Affordable Housing (IAH) Competition. Their design plans beat out finalist groups at Harvard University, University of Texas and University from Maryland.

The four teams designed solutions for a CHA site at 420-430 W. North. UIC, which won the \$20,000 first-place prize, was announced as the winner at an event earlier this month at HUD Headquarters in Washington D.C.

CHA CEO Tracey Scott was at the event and offered UIC her congratulations. “I am proud to be the partnering agency because there is such a need for affordable housing, but there’s never enough resources, money time or talent,” CEO Scott said. “Innovation is the way we have to look at the future of public housing and this competition is truly a part of that. It’s also about maximizing affordability and ensuring there is a continuity between affordable housing and the thriving neighborhood around it. I’m looking forward to ideas and solutions that the UIC team developed, which can have a real impact on the future of housing and the future of urban development.”

The Innovation in Affordable Housing Student Design and Planning Competition is an initiative from HUD’s Office of Policy Development & Research. Now celebrating its 10th year, the competition invites teams of graduate students from multiple disciplines to submit plans in response to a “real life” affordable housing design issue. The competition focuses on proposed solutions that demonstrate the interdisciplinary team’s understanding of community, population served, housing affordability, equity, and the development process, including design and finance.

The primary goal of this year’s competition was to maximize the number of affordable units on the North Ave site, which is located in a thriving neighborhood and contains two vacant, low-rise six-unit public housing buildings past their useful life. Densifying and adding additional amenities on the site,

ensuring congruity with the surrounding neighborhood and alignment with the City of Chicago's Climate Action Plan and retrofit and electrification goals are additional priorities.

“The need for affordable housing has never been greater, not just here in Chicago, not just in the state of Illinois, but across the globe,” CHA’s Chief Property Officer Eric Garrett said. “The focus of CHA is to preserve our existing housing and increase the number of affordable housing units and these innovative ideas are exactly what CHA needs to move its goals forward.”

Finalist teams presented their revised project solutions in front of a jury and audience. Following presentations, the jury selected winners and runners-up.

“The HUD Innovation in Affordable Housing competition is designed to foster and develop innovative ideas and solutions,” said Miriam Savad, CHA’s Director of Planning. “The CHA was excited to be the partnering Public Housing Agency for this 2023 competition and we look forward to seeing how the creative approaches by the UIC students will address our affordability and sustainability goals for the site.”

For additional information, please visit the About the Competition page  
<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/challenge/about.html>

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**About Chicago Housing Authority:** *CHA’s vision is to foster strong, vibrant communities throughout Chicago by increasing affordable housing choices for low-income families. As the largest rental housing provider in the City of Chicago, CHA serves more than 133,000 people in 63,000 households across the city through our Public Housing, Housing Choice Voucher, and Project-Based Voucher programs. For more information, visit [www.thecha.org](http://www.thecha.org)*