

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR LOCATING INTERSHIPS AT WORKPLACES THAT ENGAGE THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT – MOSTLY IN CHICAGO

Architecture firms

The greatest benefit of an internship in an architecture office is the opportunity to observe professional architectural life, see the real-life steps of design unfold amid the challenges designers grapple with, grasp the practicing architect's perspective on the built environment (which will help you understand architecture better whatever you go on to do), and assess whether it's a career that would suit you. Try to observe and learn as much as you can. Do ask questions during the quieter moments in the office and do ask if you may attend meetings or presentations as a fly on the wall.

For students in a liberal arts program (rather than a professional architecture degree program at the undergrad or graduate level), internships generally don't involve design work. You're apt to be given odd jobs and auxiliary tasks or be asked to apply your writing and research skills to the public relations/marketing work that leads to new design commissions; although you could get to do some creative research or help with design, it's best not to count on that.

Architecture offices have unpredictable workflows, related to the state of the economy, office reputation, and sheer luck. Work may be more-than-full-time and very heady or it may be slow and contemplative, a time for entering competitions and doing background research. Both situations are good to observe. This means that sometimes you could be asked to rush to help meet an imminent deadline, or you might need to wait and watch because for the moment nobody has time to figure out something for you to do.

Shadowing: An alternative to an internship is to ask architectural firms if you could shadow one of their architects for a short time, informally, to see what his or her work is like.

In addition to the architecture internship opportunities advertised by Career Advancement, you could ask architecture firms on your own initiative whether they would take an intern; for example, you might want to ask firms in your hometown about summer internships. If you take an unpaid internship set up by Career Advancement or one that you found on your own, you are welcome to apply for a stipend from the College to help cover your internship expenses. Contact [Ben Waltzer](#) or [Nely Rentas](#), both at Career Advancement, about options; you can make an appointment [here](#).

If you're seeking an internship at a point in your life when the stakes feel high – for example, after graduation rather than between years of college – or if you're choosing between multiple options or if a particular internship would require you to make a big change like moving to an unfamiliar city, please schedule a conversation with Ben or Nely at Career Advancement and/or with [Luke Joyner](#) to help you find a good fit. Although we don't have deep information about each opportunity, we have enough experience to help you evaluate the possibilities. Other students who have held architecture internships also can provide helpful information but do keep in mind that individual experiences vary, even at the same office.

Below are listed some firms that have taken University of Chicago interns or expressed willingness to do so. Also, keep an eye out for occasional announcements of specific internship opportunities on the Architecture [listserv](#) and subscribe to Career Advancement's [listserv](#).

[Civic Projects Architecture](#), Chicago

A collaborative design practice emphasizing social impact. Based in Woodlawn at the Experimental Station. Contact Monica Chadha at info@civic-projects.com.

[JF\(\)AK](#) (John Friedman Alice Kimm Architects), Los Angeles

From the website: We believe in architecture that communicates and inspires, expresses identity, and encourages social interaction. Our design process integrates intuition, play, and dialogue with close analysis of each project's physical, programmatic, and cultural context, as well as the underlying intentions of those who initiate it. Architecture, after all, is for people, and its creation is always collaborative.

[Parra Design Group](#), Houston

From the website: An architecture company that designs, builds, and develops projects, our mission is to improve the quality of life in the community by enhancing its aesthetic environment with residential and commercial buildings. We offer a complete range of services: architectural design, general construction, contracting, construction management, and space planning.

The firm of a college student's parent. Contact Ben Waltzer for details.

Erik Peterson and Bryan Saner, builders, Chicago.

They do custom-designed, hand-made projects, mostly wood, often for community purposes such as playgrounds or social spaces. Best for students with some capacity for physical labor and an interest in wood construction. Contact Erik Peterson, eriklpeterson@yahoo.com.

[John Ronan Architects](#), Chicago

From the website: An internationally-recognized design firm that aspires to conceptual innovation, exploration of materiality, and a rigorous attention to detail. The firm has a studio culture and its working method is research-based and collaborative. It seeks to produce designs that feel intuitively correct for each situation, based on its unique site, program and context (cultural, historical, economic, social).

Contact John Ronan, ronan@jrarch.com.

[Sandvick Architects](#), Cleveland, OH

Specialty in historic preservation and adaptive reuse

From the website: Sandvick Architects is committed to assisting the revitalization of downtowns and urban neighborhoods large and small, encouraging reinvestment in our nation's existing building stock, finding new uses for underutilized buildings, and promoting planning with preservation as a central initiative to renew and invigorate community vitality and viability.

[Symmes Maini & McKee Associates](#) (SMMA), Cambridge, MA

From the website: an employee-owned firm that approaches design as a deeply collaborative process. Unlike the typical single architect-focused model, we take advantage of our firm composition by involving every design discipline in all aspects of our projects. We believe our approach helps create a more holistic outcome.

[Vero Design | Build | Maintain](#), Chicago

A general contracting, custom millwork and design firm. Contact Jacob Shapiro, jacob@verollc.com; 312-374-1344

[Wight & Company](#), Chicago

From the website: our Design Led-Design Build approach offers clients the option of integrated architecture, engineering and construction services. This

multidisciplinary practice connects architects to the cost implications of their design decisions and empowers collaboration to discover the most creative and responsible solutions. Clients choosing this more holistic process benefit from an unprecedented savings of time and money.

Museums

Art Institute of Chicago, [Architecture and Design Department](#)

Search online for “AIC” plus “internships” for application information, [here](#).

[National Public Housing Museum](#), Chicago

The only cultural institution devoted to telling the story of public housing in the United States. Its mission is to preserve, promote, and propel the right of all people to a place to call home. Hopes to establish internships in the future; check with them.

Museum of Modern Art, [Architecture and Design Department](#), NYC

Search online for “MoMA” and “internships” [here](#).

[Glessner House Museum](#), Chicago

This restored house of 1887 is a well-known Chicago landmark, designed by Henry Hobson Richardson and admired by Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Mies van der Rohe. Its formal internship program is currently on hold because of the pandemic but will be revived in the future. It is interested in volunteers, who serve as docents, among other things.

Information is available [here](#) and [here](#).

Architectural organizations in Chicago

[American Institute of Architects, Chicago Chapter](#)

An internship assisting with its professional activities— a magazine and newsletter and varied events, from lectures to continuing education courses, architectural awards and architectural design competitions—would provide a good vantage point on the workings of the profession.

Note: although the AIA Chicago website includes a job posting board that lists architectural internships available at member firms, those are intended for architecture school students or graduates with substantial design experience.

[Chicago Architecture Biennial](#)

The biennial exhibition and related programming mounted by this non-profit organization provides an international forum on contemporary architecture and urbanism. The inaugural exhibition took place in fall 2015. A different curatorial team provides the theme and guidance for each exhibition, which is headquartered at the Chicago Cultural Center in the Loop.

[Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat](#)

From the website: The Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat (CTBUH) is the world's leading nonprofit organization for all those interested in the future of cities. It explores how increased urban density and vertical growth can support more sustainable and healthy cities, especially in the face of mass urbanization and the increasing effects of climate change worldwide. The relationship between policy, buildings, people, urban density, urban space, interior space, and infrastructure is key.

A global organization headquartered in Chicago. It is interested in taking interns who study architecture, urban studies, environmental studies, etc.

[Driehaus Foundation](#)

Contact Anne Lazar, executive director, annelazar@driehausfoundation.org, or Amy Domagalski executive assistant, amydomagalski@driehausfoundation.org

Description of its [Built Environment Program](#): The Driehaus Foundation works to ensure that viable, healthy urban environments are designed to meet the needs of the humans who inhabit them. We are committed to the idea that successful historic preservation, urban planning, and new architecture must be understood and undertaken as part of a decades-long continuum that endows a given city, town, or village with a singular sense of place. We support organizations and projects that advocate for effective policies, undertake urban planning aimed at the preservation of Chicago's historic built fabric, protect its parks and open spaces, and otherwise celebrate and preserve the unique character of its neighborhoods.

[Frank Lloyd Wright Trust](#)

Maintains and gives public tours of several buildings designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, including the Robie House on our campus as well as Wright's family house and office and his church, Unity Temple, all in the Chicago suburb of Oak Park. [Internships](#) are available to college students and may be based in a variety of department or involve giving tours. They are coordinated by the Trust's human resources manager, who places interns based on their interests.

[Graham Foundation](#)

Fosters the development and exchange of diverse and challenging ideas about architecture and its role in the arts, culture, and society. Makes project-based grants to individuals and organizations and organizes exhibitions, events, and publications. It has taken Metcalf-funded interns in the past.

Architectural preservation organizations

City of Chicago, Department of Planning and Development, [Historic Preservation Division](#)

Search online for "city of Chicago internships" [here](#). Look for a list of available internship positions in the Department of Planning and Development, Historic Preservation Division.

[Landmarks Illinois](#)

A nonprofit organization whose main office is in Chicago.

From the website: the state's leading voice for historic preservation. We promote preservation, restoration and adaptive reuse of buildings and sites of many types in order to leverage our past to create a better future. We know that blending old and new makes communities resilient and interesting places.

[Mies van der Rohe Society](#), at the Illinois Institute of Technology

Works to preserve Mies's legacy and maintain the architectural integrity of the buildings Mies built for the IIT campus that he planned and designed.

[Preservation Chicago](#)

From the website: protects and revitalizes Chicago's architecture, neighborhoods and urban green spaces. We influence stakeholders toward

creative reuse and preservation through advocacy, outreach, education, and partnership. A nonprofit organization.

Government

Chicago Park District

The Chicago Park District is the largest municipal park manager in the nation. It maintains 600+ parks, in which it sponsors sports and physical activities and cultural and environmental programs. It is also responsible for numerous swimming pools and 26 miles of lakefront including many beaches. [Volunteers](#) are welcome to assist with park gardening, maintenance, and stewardship, as well as programming. See the application form on the website. As for other unpaid internships, consult Career Advancement about university funding.

City of Chicago government

Search online for “city of Chicago internships” [here](#). Look into available internship positions in the following departments: Buildings (which issues building permits); Cultural Affairs and Special Events; Planning and Development, which includes a Historic Preservation Division.

National Park Service

Offers a variety of [internships](#) involving environmental conservation, historic preservation (including documentation of buildings), community planning, archaeology, cultural resources, etc.

Nonprofit community organizations with socially-oriented architectural programs

Most don't have formal internship programs. Instead, students are encouraged to research the organizations' missions online, identify organizations that match their own interests, and write to them to express interest in doing an internship, enclosing a resume.

Center for Urban Pedagogy, New York City

From the website: CUP uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement, especially in underrepresented communities. CUP staff collaborate with art and design professionals and community-based advocates and policymakers to take on processes like the juvenile justice system, zoning law, and

food access and break them down into simple, accessible, visual explanations. Its projects aim to demystify the urban policy and planning issues and processes that affect communities, so that more individuals understand how these systems work and can take a role in shaping them.

Summer internships are usually posted on its website in February or March and can also be found in its News & Events section.

[City Bureau](#), Chicago

A nonprofit civic journalism lab based on the South Side of Chicago. Brings journalists and communities together in a collaborative spirit to produce media that is impactful, equitable and responsive to the public. Could provide a good vantage point on the processes that shape the built environment.

[Elevated Chicago](#)

From the website: Presents collaborative, community-led solutions to neighborhood displacement and inequities using an underutilized asset: our public transit system. Equitable Transit-Oriented Development, or eTOD, is the tool that we are using to build a global, inclusive city where all residents thrive in neighborhoods whose health and resiliency indicators no longer depend on race. With 145 train stations and 129 bus routes serving virtually every neighborhood, the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) provides an opportunity to build a different city by leveraging its stops and hubs as assets that can connect communities. We are working around seven CTA train stations, in partnership with community-based, city- and region-wide organizations.

[Habitat for Humanity Chicago](#)

Local chapter of an international nonprofit that provides affordable housing owned by its occupants. Promotes home ownership in a framework of neighborhood planning. Volunteers help residents build their own homes and acquire an affordable mortgage. A Christian organization, it does not proselytize.

[Illinois Green Alliance](#), Chicago

A member-based non-profit involving a network of real estate professionals, architects, engineers, designers, contractors, product manufacturers, policy makers, utility experts, home builders, and others committed to promoting green buildings and sustainable communities. It hosts many educational programs that showcase new technology and design, advocates new policies such as energy

benchmarking, and runs community projects with volunteers. Affiliated with the US Green Building Council.

[Open Architecture Collaborative Chicago](#)

The Chicago chapter of an American nonprofit with a global chapter network. It is a collaborative group of volunteer design professionals and students who pursue advocacy and social change through the built environment. Its mission is to work with communities to create sustainable, innovative, and socially responsive design and to develop educational programming for designers and architects to grow as leaders and changemakers.

[Rebuild Foundation](#), Chicago

Established by Theaster Gates, artist/architect and UChicago faculty member. Based at the Stony Island Arts Bank in Chicago's Greater Grand Crossing neighborhood. Goals are to reactivate underutilized properties and collections of cultural artifacts; support and promote local networks of artists, creative entrepreneurs and scholars; help neighborhood residents to lead positive transformation of their communities.

[ReBuilding Exchange](#), Chicago

From the website: A nonprofit social enterprise that repurposes building materials that would otherwise devalue a community and provides job training for people with barriers to employment, making a commitment to education and economic development in Chicago's underserved communities. Four distinct social enterprise areas: Our retail warehouse provides affordable reclaimed building materials to the general public. Our public workshops educate Chicago-area residents on how to use reclaimed materials and live more sustainably. RX Made, our in-house custom fabrication workshop, demonstrates the potential reuse of our materials through the creation of beautiful, repurposed furniture. And our employment training program provides opportunities for Chicagoans with barriers to employment to earn transferable skills and certifications through on-the-job training and pathways to permanent employment.

[Sweet Water Foundation](#), Chicago

Established and directed by architect Emmanuel Pratt, who has exhibited at the Smart Museum and taught at the university. Uses a blend of urban agriculture, art and education to transform vacant spaces and abandoned buildings into economically and ecologically productive and sustainable community assets that

produce engaged youth, skilled workers, art, locally-grown food, and affordable housing. It is based at The Commonwealth, a four-block campus including a farm, located between the Englewood and Washington Park communities.