

CHICAGO ARCHITECT

THAWING OUT

Google's New HQ Warms Up the West Loop

THE AMERICAN DISABILITIES ACT AT 25 // 16
CHICAGO'S MIDCENTURY MOTELS // 32



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHICAGO ART DECO SOCIETY / BRINCE

The building retains the original limestone façade with an elaborate Art Deco cast iron entrance surround.

original suite of offices for the [Chicago Motor Club] president, and it was the only interior that was left above the first floor, [so] we were asked to keep it," Alessandro said. But this was hard to do as they were trying to fit in hotel rooms, and the original setup didn't meet the accessibility codes and requirements of the hotel brand. After a discussion with MacRostie and the State Historic Preservation Office, the solution they came up with was to create partition walls and carve rooms out of the offices—creating a floor of suites entirely different from the rest of the hotel's rooms.

This fit in with Murphy's grand vision for the hotel—a compact, intimate setting that's tucked away and showcases the brilliant architectural detail of a bygone era. With the Hampton Inn as its occupant, Murphy hopes to bring in a diverse clientele.

"And whether they stay at the hotel or not," Murphy added, "visitors to Chicago will be able to enjoy [the architecture], as the lobby will be opened up as a public space."

by Adilla Menayang

PARADIGM SHIFT

Changing the way designers think about disability

SUSTAINABILITY IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF today's architecture. Even those who do not list it as their number one priority incorporate different sustainable elements into projects as a matter of course.

This is what the leaders of ADA 25 Chicago, the 25-year commemoration of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), would like accessibility to become: a built-in consideration of the design process.

ADA 25 Chicago, helmed by the Chicago Community Trust, will be a six-month long initiative to not only celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ADA, but to push for further progress for the disability community, which includes not just people who have disabilities, but their families and friends. ADA 25 Chicago will begin programming in July 2015, with different events taking place through December. More specifics about programs will emerge as the year progresses.

Organizers hope to involve up to 25 cultural institutions across all disciplines, both in the planning of ADA 25 Chicago itself and in long-term plans for the advancement of disabled people, said Emily Harris, the executive director of ADA Chicago.

While the event is for people in all practices and professions, architects have a special place in the crowd because they have a direct link to providing accessibility, says Harris.

"Given that it's the 25th anniversary, we'd like to find 25 cultural institutions that commit to cultural accessibility plans, to moving forward and who take a step towards improving," Harris said. "As you can imagine, there's a lot of architectural opportunity."

The goal of this initiative, said Jack

Caitlin, FAIA, a partner at LCM Architects and co-chair of the ADA 25 Chicago Leadership Council, is no less than a paradigm shift in the perception of disability as a social rather than a medical issue. If people begin to think of disability issues as social, he says, then their minds will naturally turn to architecture, design and the built environment.

"Without an accessible environment, there's not much opportunity for any social interaction," Caitlin said.

Universal design and its applications will be ADA 25 Chicago's major component for architects, and organizers plan to make this a focal point of the initiative. By highlighting its usefulness to multiple groups in society—mainly seniors, children and people with disabilities—they hope to make it a more widespread practice, said Caitlin.

"Integrating these minimum accessibility standards and enhanced functionality concepts into the designs of buildings and facilities at the earliest stages—it's not only easy to do, it's inexpensive to do, and a much wider range of people benefit from it," said



PHOTO BY SERGE MELIKI VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The Crown Fountain provides a half-inch wide flush transition between the wet and dry surfaces, allowing everyone, including people using wheelchairs, to enjoy the attraction.



IMAGE COURTESY LCM ARCHITECTS

The reception desk at Access Living, located in Chicago and designed by LCM Architects, provides both a forward and side approach for a person using a wheelchair.

Caitlin, referring to the idea that universal design creates buildings that work for as many people as possible.

Architects can become involved in ADA 25 Chicago individually or as firms. Firms can become project partners and commit to taking action toward improving accessibility or applying universal design in future projects. As for individual architects, ADA 25 Chicago can become an educational experience or an inspiration to change the way one designs.

ADA 25 Chicago's organizers say they hope not just to remind the city of Chicago the ADA was a monumental piece of legislation, but

to also inspire people from across all disciplines to push progress forward for those with disabilities. In the long term, said Caitlin, the initiative aims ultimately to make accessible design "invisible."

"If you look at a building that has no steps or no ramps, that's a universal design entrance. But you don't see it. You just see an entrance," Caitlin said. "It's going to be easy for me to look in 10 years to see these things, but the general public won't see it. That's what I would be looking for in 10 years, an integrated environment that is virtually invisible. People don't see it."

by Lynne Fort

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