

A big open space. A diverse audience. An iconic structure.

One week. 5,000 dollars.

What will you do?

ACTIVATE UNION STATION

2013 Placemaking Chicago Contest

MPC's Activate Union Station Contest Guidelines

Train stations across the country are undergoing a major renaissance. In [D.C.](#) and [Philadelphia](#), Union Stations have transformed into community hotspots. They still serve a robust commuter and tourist base, but they have become something more: a place for people to mix, mingle and enjoy.

Meanwhile, Chicago's Union Station languishes unloved. An iconic building like that deserves more than a slow decay into obsolescence. Now is your chance to help us revive it. This summer, the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC)'s fifth annual placemaking¹ contest wants you **to go beyond the drawing board** with a bid to reactivate Chicago's Union Station. We want you to dream it, design it...**and then make it happen.**

From now through Wednesday, July 24, at 5 p.m., submit your plans to Activate Union Station for a chance to **implement your idea** for 10 days this summer. Looking for a venue to host an event? Union Station is the place. Interactive gallery, bocce ball court, outdoor cinema, urban dance hall or alien invasion – whatever you dream up, from Aug. 24 through Sept. 2, the space is yours and we want to see you implement it².

We've singled out three prime locations for activation:

- **The iconic Headhouse, located west of Canal Street:** Home of the Great Hall and its 110-ft-tall atrium, the Headhouse provides an excellent backdrop for any variety of event programming.
- **The east-facing arcade on Canal Street:** Partially covered and accessible from the public sidewalk, the space caters to a range of summer events while providing shelter from the elements.

¹ Placemaking, a people-centered approach to planning, designing, and managing vibrant public spaces, provides activists, designers, and community organizations with an opportunity to showcase their talents and passions.

² This is a design/build/program competition. This means winners will be responsible for running ALL aspects of the design and programming. You must carry this through the end of the competition.

- **The Plaza of Fifth Third Center, along the Chicago River:** Between Adams and Jackson on the west side of the river, the plaza is a very popular summertime lunch destination; it has the potential to become much more.

Two of the three sites will be selected for implementation; winners will receive \$5,000 per site to implement their ideas at Union Station over 10 days this summer, from Aug. 24 through Sept. 2. MPC thanks Fifth Third Bank for its generous sponsorship of the contest.

Winners will be chosen by the Placemaking Chicago Review Panel, which includes representatives from Chicago's arts, architectural and planning communities, as well as representatives from Amtrak. The Placemaking Chicago Review Panel also will take into consideration results of a public vote.

The Fine Print:

Who Can Participate?

This competition is open to anyone 18 and over with a vision of what Chicago's Union Station could become: architects, landscape architects, planners, students, graphic designers, industrial designers, artists, neighborhood groups, chambers of commerce and others with demonstrated ability to design, implement and program these spaces is eligible to enter.

This is a design-build-program competition. Winners will be responsible for all three stages. Winning means you implement it!

Background

Located in Chicago's West Loop neighborhood, Union Station accommodates over 120,000 Amtrak and Metra passengers every day – that's more daily traffic than Midway Airport ranging from local commuters to those traveling across the country, all 120,000 pass through the station on their way to or from their train.

One thing they aren't there to do, however, is hang around. Make a day of it. Take in the station sights. Union Station is – sadly – not the city's most scintillating attraction. And yet, it is full of untapped space and resources. The "Activate Union Station" competition challenges Chicagoans to explore the station's dormant potential and create a place that in turn activates and engages residents, commuters and visitors alike. Several cities across the nation have already accomplished these kinds of transformations. At [D.C.'s Union Station](#) commuters plan early morning breakfast meetings and local office workers frequent the food courts and restaurants for lunch or run midday errands. The [Porch at Philadelphia's](#)

[Union Station](#) has morphed from just a place to catch a train into a place that invites you to play a game of mini golf, enjoy a frosty beverage in the beer garden or relax with a yoga session (or even all of the above).

Challenge

Develop a plan for designing and programming to activate one, two or all three of the eligible sites (see list of sites, below). We aren't just talking about furniture, either: Designs should program and engage the space, inviting diverse, multigenerational users and fostering an engaging, active gathering place. Beyond a great concept, plans need to be implementable in a weekend and removed completely at the end of the implementation period. Maintenance considerations, such as day-to-day care for the site and securing any movable pieces at night, if applicable, should be included in the design plan.

Remember: This contest is not about the best-looking design. The **emphasis** and the **top criteria for our judges** is the plan that **best draws people in to engage and activate the space**.

Successful designs not only will **serve as a gathering place**, be **universally accessible, inclusive and free to the public**, they also will be **active and engaging**. All design aspects should be **focused on our emphasis on programming this space**. (In case it's unclear, we really do expect the winner to **implement the designs during the implementation period!**)

***Note: For this contest, the sale of items or participation fees are not permitted on Amtrak property; all activities must be free and open to the public.**

Judging Criteria

- Inventive use of space that emphasizes the activation of the site – 20%
- Programming – 50%
- Ease and flexibility of construction, maintenance and deconstruction – 20%
- Design innovation and aesthetic – 10%

Awards & Jury Process

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Winners will be determined by the Placemaking Chicago Review Panel, which includes representatives from Chicago's arts, architectural, and planning community, as well as representatives of Amtrak.

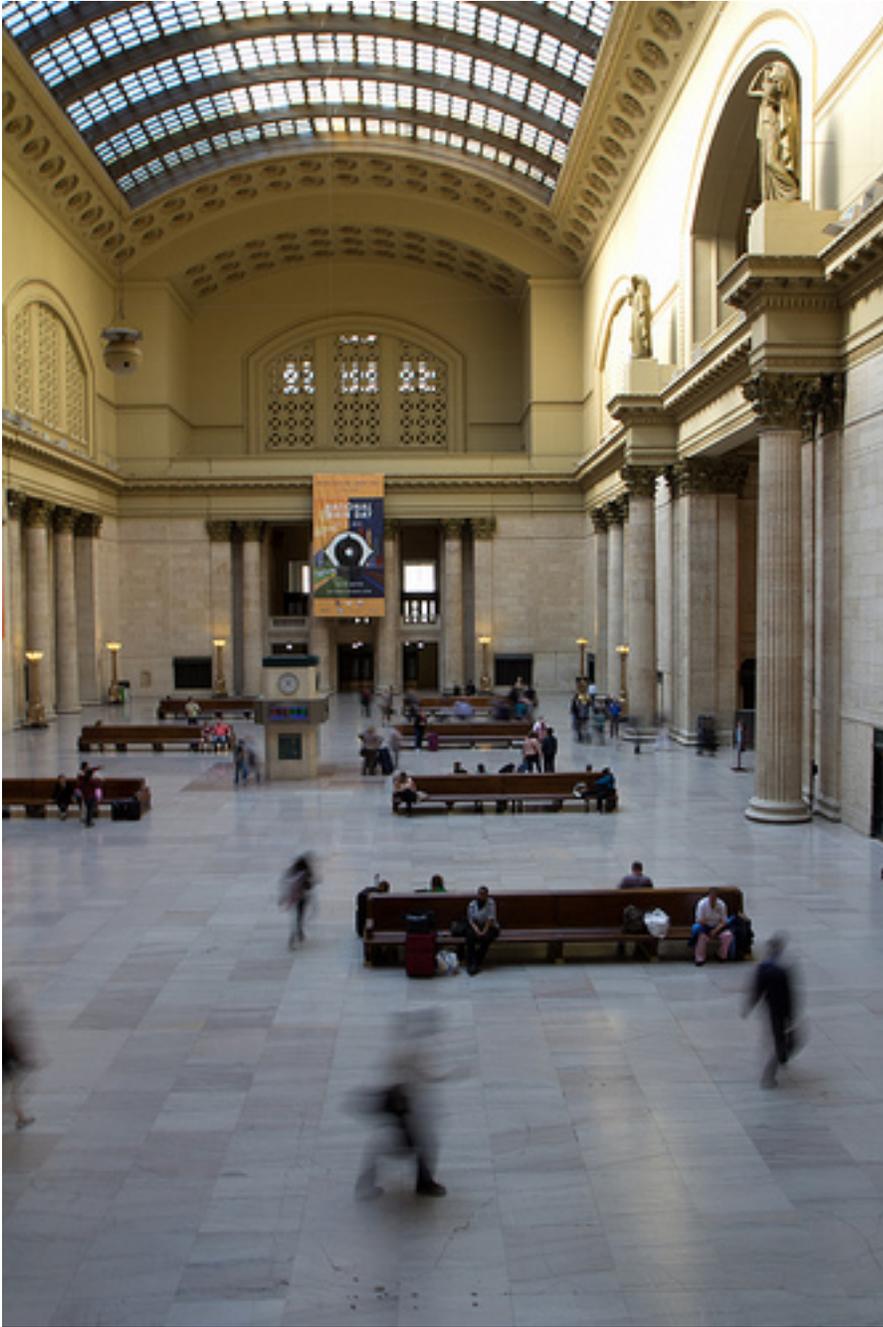
In addition to \$5,000 and space at Union Station from Aug. 24 through Sept. 2 to bring their ideas life, winners can expect to receive significant publicity of their efforts. Previous winners of the Metropolitan

Planning Council's Placemaking Contest have been featured in TimeOut Chicago, World Business Chicago, Wall Street Journal's Market Watch, Chicago Tribune, ABC 7 News, Illinois Housing Council, GreenNet, Milwaukee County Community Journal, Rebellious Magazine and Project for Public Spaces, in addition to MPC's large web and social media audience.

Three Eligible Sites

As we mentioned earlier, entrants may plan their ideas for three eligible Union Station sites just waiting for a community programmer to sweep them off their proverbial feet. (Think visually? See photos, below.)

- 1) The iconic **Headhouse**, located west of Canal Street, is home to the Great Hall and features a 110-ft-tall, Daniel Burnham-designed atrium. While the space is increasingly being rented out for private events, public programming and other engaging uses, its vast space begs for more development.
- 2) The **east-facing arcade on Canal Street** is partially covered, accessible from the public sidewalk, and provides many opportunities for outdoor activation that is shielded from the elements.
- 3) Finally, the **Plaza of Fifth Third Center, along the Chicago River** between Jackson and Adams streets is a popular place to eat lunch outside in the summertime, but has the potential to be used for much more.



Site 1 – The Great Hall located in the Headhouse



Site 2 – The east-facing arcade along Canal Street



Site 3 – The Plaza of Fifth Third Center and the adjacent public way between Jackson and Adams streets

Contest Schedule

- **All submissions are due by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, July 24**
- Public Vote: Monday through Wednesday, July 29, 30, 31
- Placemaking Chicago Review Panel Judging: Wednesday, July 31
- Design Discussions with Winners: Thursday and Friday, Aug. 1, 2
- Winner Announced: Monday, Aug. 5
- Design Modification & Material Acquisition: Monday, Aug. 5 through Friday, Aug. 16
- Build Weekend: Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 17, 18
- Implementation: Saturday, Aug. 24 – Monday, Sept. 2

How to Enter

If you only skimmed over the Contest Guidelines, above – or skipped them altogether – go back and take 10 minutes to read them thoroughly before continuing. Trust us! We’ve peppered each section with helpful tips that could make or break your submission.

Submission Requirements

To enter Activate Union Station, please [submit](#) the following documentation by Wednesday, July 24, at 5 p.m. You can find the submission form at activateunionstation.com.

1. **Visual Plan.** Format as an 11x17-inch board using landscape orientation, and submit as a PDF. The Visual Plan must:
 - a. Include the project title.
 - b. Include the name of the entrant.
 - c. Show your design and programming idea, including how it would activate your chosen Union Station site or sites (Review contest guidelines for the three eligible sites.)
 - d. Include the name of your chosen site or sites and clearly indicate the footprint your design/programming will require. Please give an actual measurement of space required. For instance, if you propose a yoga class in The Great Hall, your Visual Plan should indicate how large a standard yoga mat is and how many yoga mats will fit in the space you’ve designated for class.
2. **Written Plan.** Format as a Word document that is three pages or less. The Written Plan must:
 - a. Include the project title.
 - b. Include the name of the entrant.
 - c. Describe your design and programming idea in detail. Be sure to indicate your chosen site or sites, as well as the specific dimensions of the space required for your plan.
 - d. Explain how your team will implement the project.
 - e. Explain how your project fulfills the judging criteria (see Contest Guidelines.)
 - f. List and describe any materials you will use. Designs should consider materials that can be reused and/or are readily available. The source of any third party materials must also be included.
 - g. Describe the build process, including how many people and how much time will be needed to bring your idea to life if you win.
 - h. Explain where you will store materials and/or furniture overnight, if applicable.
 - i. List all partners that would be involved in programming the space, including the applicant.
 - j. Note relevant experience your team brings to this project.
 - k. If applicable, include examples of previous work.
3. **Budget.** Format as a Word document or Excel spreadsheet. The Budget must:
 - a. Include the project title.
 - b. Include the name of the entrant.
 - c. Be as detailed as possible, include specific costs for materials, activities and labor.

- d. **Note:** The budget may not include paid participation. All programming must be free to the public.
4. **Team Information.** Format as a Word document, which must:
 - a. Include the project title;
 - b. List names, phone numbers and email addresses for all team members.
5. **Additional Supporting Documents:** If you have photos, videos or other materials that support your application, please submit them.