SACRAMENTO
THREE & UP CHALLENGE

A Missing Middles Design Challenge

Missing Middles

June 16, 2026 - Version 4.0

This addendum applies to Professional Division submissions submitted after June 17, 2026. Student Division closeout procedures are governed by previously issued student instructions and any administrative cure notices. Current dates, deadlines, and submission instructions are maintained on the competition website and official submission portal.

Missing Middles

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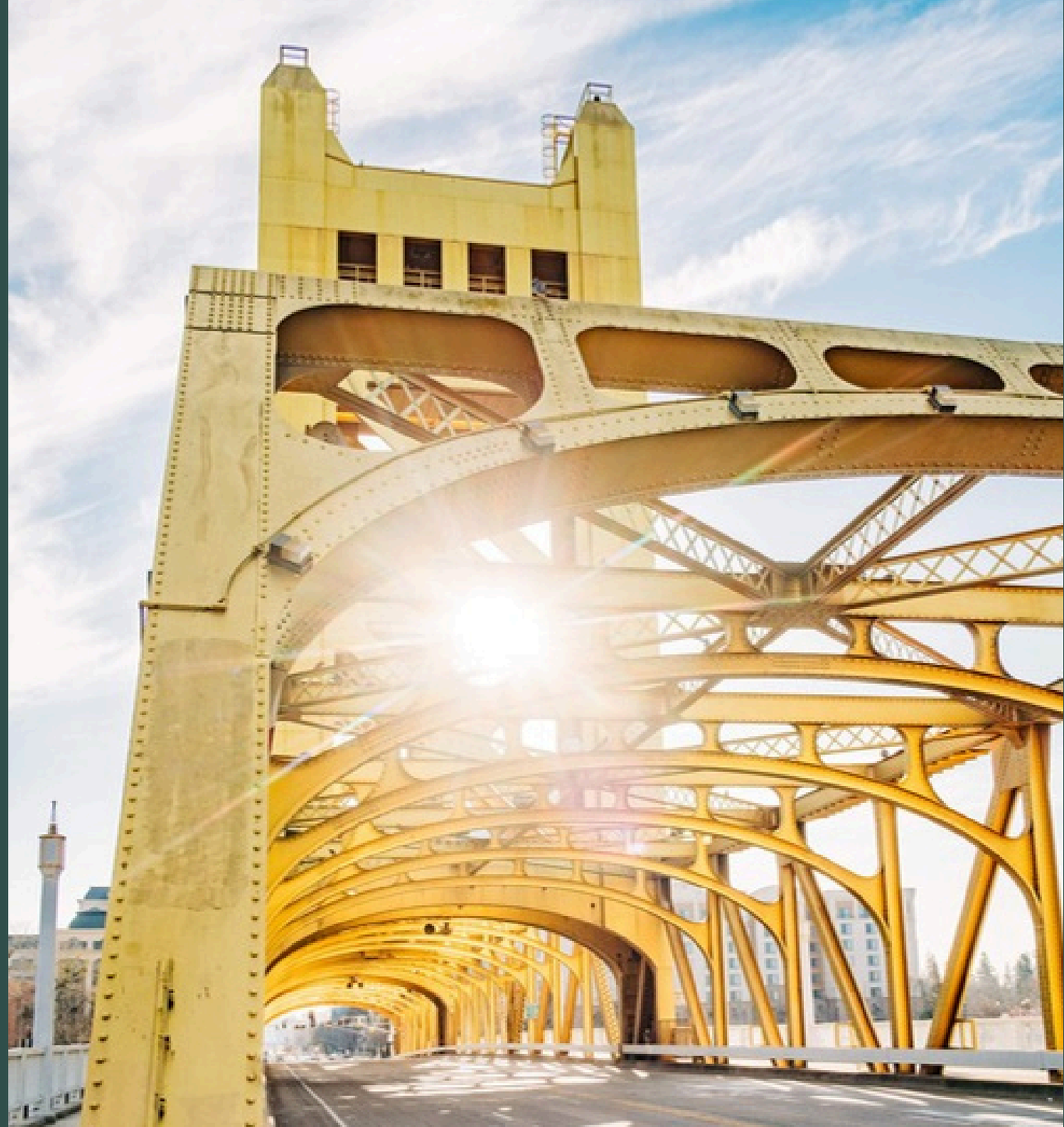
Current dates, deadlines, and submission instructions are maintained on the competition website and official submission portal.

Introduction

The Missing Middles Sacramento Three & Up Challenge™ is a design competition focused on buildable, small-scale multifamily housing within Sacramento's existing residential neighborhoods. Participants are asked to design three or more attached dwelling units on real infill parcels identified in Appendix F: Site Selection & Neighborhood Information. This competition prioritizes clarity and feasibility. Proposals should demonstrate an understanding of site conditions, zoning requirements, construction logic, and basic development economics. The emphasis is on work that could plausibly move from drawing set to permit, and from one site to many.

In addition to feasibility and regulatory alignment, the competition encourages age-friendly and life-cycle responsive housing strategies. Proposals should consider how small-scale multifamily housing can support aging in place, multigenerational living, and long-term neighborhood stability within Sacramento's existing residential fabric.



What Makes This Competition Different

Real Sites

Projects must use the pre-selected prototype parcels provided in Appendix F within the designated competition areas.

Real Rules

Designs must comply with Sacramento's Missing Middle Housing Interim Ordinance and objective development standards.

Real Feasibility

Submissions must demonstrate credible development logic through the required Feasibility PDF and related design/narrative assumptions.

What We Are Evaluating

Submissions will be evaluated on their ability to balance design excellence, neighborhood compatibility, and feasibility. Strong entries will demonstrate proportionality of scale, clarity of intent, and thoughtful responses to climate, access, and shared open space. Successful proposals will show how a small-scale multifamily concept can be replicated across multiple sites, not treated as a one-off solution.

What This Is Not

This is not a speculative or abstract design exercise. Participants should approach the challenge as a real infill development scenario, grounded in code compliance, constructability, and realistic assumptions.

Where the Context Lives

Background information on policy, demographics, climate, neighborhood context, and regulatory frameworks is provided in the appendices. The purpose of this brief is to define what to design, how to submit, and how entries will be evaluated.

Competition Program

Site Selection

- Participants must use the pre-selected Sacramento parcels provided in the competition materials (see Appendix F for prototype parcels)
- Sites are zoned for MMH (R-1, R-1A, R-1B, R-2)
- Designs must respond to site-specific constraints and opportunities including lot dimensions, orientation, access, and surrounding context.
- Each submission must address both one interior lot condition and one corner lot condition within the selected neighborhood, using the prototype parcels provided in Appendix F.

Scalability & Repeatability

- Designs should be replicable across similar Sacramento parcels, not tailored to a single site.
- Proposals should employ clear, developer-friendly frameworks that support adaptation and reuse.
- Density should be balanced with neighborhood-scale performance, including massing transitions, access, and open space.
- Designs should demonstrate how a single architectural approach adapts across typical infill lot conditions.
- Building systems and materials should reflect constructability, availability, cost efficiency, and procurement realities appropriate for small-scale infill development.

Community Integration & Equity

- Designs should foster resident/neighbor connections.
- Massing and frontage should demonstrate contextual fit through form, scale, and performance
- Designs should address affordable, livable, and climate-resilient housing.

Building Configuration

- Minimum three (3) attached dwelling units per project (attachment encouraged for efficiency).
- Unit layouts may accommodate a range of household types, including families, older adults aging in place, multigenerational households, co-living arrangements, or other non-traditional living patterns. Designs are encouraged to demonstrate adaptability over time, including potential for ground-floor living, flexible bedroom configurations, or accessory spaces that support caregiving.
- Proposals should generally assume Type V-A, Type V-B, or comparable low-rise construction systems appropriate for small-scale infill housing. The Missing Middles Feasibility Engine uses standardized benchmark assemblies and cost assumptions for conceptual comparison. Teams may propose alternative systems, materials, or assemblies, but material deviations from Feasibility Engine assumptions must be clearly noted in the Narrative and Feasibility PDF.
- Material strategies should support repeatability, availability, cost efficiency, and alignment with the feasibility assumptions used in the Feasibility PDF.
- Exterior assemblies should balance durability, maintenance, and performance, particularly in relation to heat, sun exposure, and long-term operation.

Competition Program

Site Design & Functionality

- Pedestrian and vehicular circulation, including emergency access.
- Integrated trash storage, metering, and service access.
- Parking compliance with Sacramento zoning requirements or clearly articulated alternative strategies.
- Private, shared, and/or communal outdoor areas that support wellness and social interaction.
- Tree shading and access to daylight (per MMH Ordinance).
- Drought-tolerant and climate-appropriate plantings.
- Green infrastructure and low-maintenance landscape strategies.

Climate Responsiveness & Future Resilience

- Passive energy strategies such as solar orientation, natural ventilation, shading, and thermal mass.
- Low-carbon approaches such as high-performance envelopes and consideration of modular or off-site construction.
- Solar PV, battery storage, and emerging residential energy technologies where appropriate.
- Climate adaptation such as strategies to address heat, drought, flooding, and energy reliability.
- Design strategies that reduce fall risk and support long-term accessibility, including lighting quality, clear circulation paths, and adaptable bathroom configurations.

Economic Feasibility

- Use the Missing Middles Feasibility Engine to prepare the required Feasibility PDF.
- Reference Appendix F for site information, parcel assumptions, and neighborhood context.
- Reference Appendix G as a financial feasibility glossary and reference guide for understanding key terms, cost categories, revenue concepts, and development logic.
- Clearly identify any assumptions that differ from the Feasibility Engine benchmarks.
- Submissions should clearly describe the intended end user and attainability strategy in the Narrative PDF and, where applicable, in the Feasibility PDF.

Regulatory Compliance

- All designs must comply with the City of Sacramento's MMH Ordinance and applicable objective development standards. Refer to the ordinance and Appendix F for zoning, parcel, overlay, and site-specific information.
- Maximum building height: 2.5 stories (up to 35 feet).
- Submissions should assume by-right development and should not rely on discretionary approvals, variances, or rezoning.
- Participants are responsible for confirming and responding to applicable site-specific constraints, including zoning overlays, easements, and environmental conditions associated with their selected parcel.
- Planning overlays and parcel-specific constraints are documented in Appendix F.
- Neighborhood and site selection information should be incorporated into the design approach.
- Designs must clearly demonstrate regulatory compliance through drawings, diagrams, or annotations.

Submission Requirements

Submission Requirements

Participants must submit exactly four (4) presentation board PDFs:

- Board size: A2, landscape orientation
- File format: PDF
- Maximum file size: 10 MB per board
- Language: English only

- File Naming Convention:
  - MM2026-####_Board01.pdf
  - MM2026-####_Board02.pdf
  - MM2026-####_Board03.pdf
  - MM2026-####_Board04.pdf
  - MM2026-####_Narrative.pdf
  - MM2026-####_Feasibility.pdf

Boards must include the required drawings, diagrams, calculations, compliance information, and architectural perspective described in Section 10.2 of the Official Rules & Regulations.

Required content (must be shown at minimum):

- Exterior elevations, required building section, and massing/height information as described in Section 10.2 of the Official Rules & Regulations

Diagrams demonstrating:

- Site organization and circulation
- Building form and unit arrangement
- Open space strategy
- Regulatory compliance indicators, including height, setbacks, FAR, open space, bulk plane / 3D envelope compliance, and required/provided summary information

Narrative (1,000 words max)

The narrative should concisely describe the proposal as a real infill housing project. Narratives should focus on design decisions and tradeoffs, not advocacy or policy arguments. Narratives should be clear, specific, and internally consistent. Broad claims should be supported by design logic shown in the drawings.

At a minimum, the narrative should address:

- Design intent: the organizing concept and primary design moves
- Site response: how the proposal responds to parcel conditions, access, orientation, and applicable constraints
- Building form and organization: unit layout, massing strategy, and shared or private open space
- Intended users: the target household type(s) and how the design supports livability and attainability
- Feasibility and repeatability: key assumptions related to the construction approach, Feasibility Engine output, deviations from benchmark assumptions, cost logic, and adaptability across similar sites

Submission Requirements (cont.)

ROM Costs & Feasibility

Each submission must include a Feasibility PDF generated using the Missing Middles Feasibility Engine. The Feasibility PDF should summarize site assumptions, land/acquisition assumptions where applicable, ROM development costs, major cost categories, and high-level revenue or attainability assumptions as generated or documented through the Feasibility Engine.

Acquisition Costs

- Review and document land/acquisition assumptions through the Feasibility Engine. If a team adjusts assumptions, the deviation should be clearly noted.
- Provided market information may be used as reference context. Teams are not required to prepare independent CMA.

ROM Development Costs

- Use the ROM cost assumptions embedded or referenced in the Missing Middles Feasibility Engine.
- Incorporate high-level allowances for infrastructure or site improvements where applicable.
- Cost assumptions may distinguish between residential and commercial construction typologies, including recognition that commercial construction typically carries higher fire/life-safety and code compliance costs.

Pro Forma Summary

- Use the Missing Middles Feasibility Engine to generate the required Feasibility PDF. The engine output serves as the required feasibility/pro forma summary for submission purposes

Clarifications

- Detailed financial underwriting, contractor bids, or fully itemized cost estimates are not required.
- Feasibility will be reviewed for reasonableness, internal consistency, alignment with submitted design materials, and clear explanation of any deviations from Feasibility Engine benchmarks.
- All assumptions should be clearly stated and traceable to the provided competition materials.

AI Disclosure

- If AI tools are used, teams must provide an AI disclosure statement in the designated portal field.

Feasibility & Cost Disclaimer

All cost, acquisition, revenue, and feasibility information, including Feasibility Engine outputs, is provided for conceptual and comparative purposes only and is not a guarantee of cost, approval, financing, or financial performance.

Judging Criteria

Submissions will be evaluated holistically based on the criteria below. Jurors will consider the clarity, rigor, and internal consistency of each proposal, with emphasis on buildability, feasibility, and repeatability. No single criterion is intended to be evaluated in isolation.

Design Excellence

The strength and coherence of the architectural proposal. Jurors will consider:

- Clarity of the organizing idea and primary design moves
- Spatial logic, unit organization, and circulation
- Quality of shared and private open space
- Legibility of drawings and diagrams
- Integration of universal design principles and adaptability for changing mobility needs.

This criterion assesses how clearly the design communicates and functions, not stylistic preference.

Sustainability & Resilience

How effectively the design incorporates site responsiveness and functionality.

- The project's response to real-world infill conditions
- Site planning and access (pedestrian, vehicular, emergency)
- Integration of utilities, waste, and parking strategies
- Response to lot dimensions, orientation, and adjacencies
- Functional efficiency of the overall site layout

Strong entries demonstrate disciplined responses to site constraints and opportunities.

Building & Feasability

How effectively the project operates at the neighborhood scale.

- Zoning alignment, ordinance compatibility, construction logic, feasibility assumptions, constructability for small-scale infill, and development realism
- Building massing, height, and envelope in relation to the site
- Transitions to adjacent parcels and street frontages
- Human-scale considerations and access
- Performance of the building form within its context
- Ability to support long-term resident stability across life stages.

This criterion emphasizes form-based compatibility, not replication of existing architectural styles.

Written & Visual Narrative

How effectively the design addresses environmental conditions relevant to Sacramento.

- Coherence of design intent, clarity of environmental and feasibility strategies, drawing legibility, and communicative effectiveness
- Use of passive design strategies (orientation, shading, ventilation)
- Envelope performance and material logic
- Strategies for heat mitigation, water efficiency, and durability
- Appropriateness of proposed design features

Awards

Professional Awards	$30,000 in Total Prizes
→ **The Green Blueprint** Emphasis on environmental stewardship and energy efficiency.	$10,000
→ **Scalable Futures** Emphasis on repeatable designs that can be replicated with ease and precision.	$10,000
→ **The Community Catalyst** Emphasis on designs that facilitate aging-in-place and multi-generational living.	$10,000

Student Awards	$5,000 in Total Prizes
→ Gold	$2,500
→ Silver	$1,500
→ AIA California Bronze	$700
→ JMerit Awards	Two Awards of $150 Each

Eligibility & Teams

Eligibility

- The competition is open to participants 18 years of age or older
- Entries may be submitted by individuals or teams
- All participants must reside in the United States
- All submissions must be prepared in English
- Division classification (Student or Professional) is determined at registration
- Additional eligibility rules, conflict-of-interest provisions, and division definitions are provided in the Official Rules & Regulations

Team Formation

- Entries may be submitted by individuals or teams. Teams may include up to five members. It is recommended to have a team.
- Open to architects, designers, planners, students, and related disciplines
- Interdisciplinary teams are encouraged
- “Professional Division eligibility does not require licensure; however, team members must meet the applicable division requirements in the Official Rules & Regulations.

Jury

The competition will be evaluated by an independent jury of qualified experts. The Sponsor may adjust jury composition as provided in the Official Rules & Regulations. Current jury information will be maintained on the competition website.

To ensure a fair and impartial process, participants must not contact jury members directly. All competition-related communications must be directed to Missing Middles.

Sponsors & Collaborating Organizations

The Missing Middles Sacramento Three & Up Challenge™ is made possible through collaboration with the following organizations. Roles are noted to clarify the nature of each organization's involvement.

Sacramento Community Land Trust (SacCLT)
Fiscal sponsor providing administrative, financial, and compliance functions for the competition.

AIA California
Provides funding for the AIA California Bronze Student Prize Award.

AIA Central Valley
Provides in-kind support and professional outreach.

City of Sacramento
Public and community partner providing policy context, technical coordination, and advisory support related to local housing and planning frameworks.

Anna Curry Real Estate
Technical contributor providing market data and comparative market information used as reference context for feasibility analysis.

IncDev
Technical contributor providing a reference development pro forma framework used as background for feasibility methodology and conceptual development logic.

Additional collaborators and contributors may be acknowledged through the competition website or appendices.

Program Outcomes & Dissemination

The Missing Middles Sacramento Three & Up Challenge™ is designed not only to generate strong design proposals, but to extend impact beyond the competition itself. Following jury review, selected entries may be featured through a range of post-competition activities intended to support knowledge sharing, implementation, and broader professional engagement.

Public Exhibition & Symposium

A portion of the symposium will specifically focus on age-friendly housing delivery and implementation pathways, in coordination with Sacramento Community Land Trust and aligned with the City's ongoing housing policy discussions.

If pursued, the event is intended to function as both a public exhibition and a working forum, providing opportunities for selected teams to present their proposals and engage in moderated discussions. Topics may include implementation pathways, financing tools, zoning and permitting considerations, construction innovation, and land use policy.

Pattern Book & Documentation

Any publication or reuse of submissions will be governed by the Entrant IP License Agreement and applicable competition documents. The publication may include drawings, diagrams, and brief narratives, along with commentary from jurors or subject-matter experts.

The pattern book is intended to serve as a practical reference for municipalities, small developers, designers, and educators, illustrating repeatable approaches to infill housing delivery.

Online Portal & Ongoing Access

Any participant profiles or identifying information would be displayed only after winner announcements and subject to participant opt-in and applicable competition agreements.

Competition Documentation

Current official competition materials are maintained on the competition website and official submission portal.

The Design Brief is provided for informational purposes only and should be read in conjunction with the Official Rules & Regulations, which govern eligibility, submissions, intellectual property, and legal terms. In the event of any conflict, the Rules & Regulations shall prevail.

Participants are responsible for reviewing the most current versions of all competition documents and for ensuring their submissions comply with stated requirements. The official Rules & Regulations can be found here.

Supporting Materials & Appendices

Supporting materials are provided to establish real-world context for the challenge, including historical and demographic background, site selection parameters, housing typologies, regulatory and permitting pathways, feasibility guidance, and cost frameworks. The complete set of appendices and reference materials is available here.

Registered participants can also access the contestant portal, which houses the Missing Middles Feasibility Engine and other contestant resources. Portal access requires competition registration.

Appendices are issued at launch and reflect current criteria and baseline analysis. Clarifications, refinements, additional guidance, or templates may be issued by addendum during the competition period. Participants are responsible for reviewing the most current versions of all competition documents and any issued addendums.

Disclaimer

The Organizers may issue clarifications or addendums to the Design Brief, appendices, or other supporting materials during the Competition period. Issued addenda, official portal instructions, and official competition communications form part of the Competition Documents. Entrants are responsible for reviewing and complying with all issued updates.

Missing Middles is an initiative of Middle Kingdom Holdings LLC.

Symposium: Community + Development Convergence

Missing Middles intends to pursue a public-facing symposium or similar public program following the competition, subject to available resources, partner coordination, and schedule.

- Competition participants
- Local and regional stakeholders
- Community advocates and residents
- Policy makers and planners
- Lenders and financiers
- AEC professionals (both seasoned and emerging)

The symposium is more than a celebration — it is a networking and knowledge-sharing platform. Selected participants may be invited to present or discuss their work, engage in moderated discussions, and connect with individuals who have the power to bring visionary ideas to life. Panels and roundtables will explore key topics like financing tools, zoning reforms, permitting pathways, construction innovation, and land use policy.

Pattern Book: From Vision to Toolkit

Select competition entries may be curated into a public-facing pattern book or digital publication showcasing exemplary designs that highlight replicable solutions for small-scale, infill residential development. The publication will:

- Feature detailed plans, illustrations, and concept narratives.
- Include commentary from jurors and subject-matter experts on why certain projects stood out.
- Offer guidance for scaling, adapting, or financing these concepts in the real world.
- Distribution may include planning departments, design schools, community-based organizations, professional associations, and related housing networks.

The Pattern Book will serve as both an inspirational catalogue and a practical tool — providing municipalities and small developers a starting point for building more equitable, livable neighborhoods.

Online Portal: A Living Network

An online portal may be developed to showcase competition submissions and related resources. Submitted work may be publicly showcased after jury review, subject to applicable competition agreements, permissions, and organizer discretion

- Users can explore entries by typology, site, or design strategy.
- Profiles and contact information (opt-in) will be included to connect developers, designers, community groups, and other stakeholders.
- Educational resources, design templates, and information about future events will be posted to keep momentum going beyond the competition.

This digital resource is intended to evolve into a living library and matchmaking platform for missing middle housing, supporting long-term implementation and collaboration.

Additional Organizer Support

In addition to the above, the competition organizers may pursue:

- Media outreach to local press, professional publications, and housing advocacy groups.
- Designated social media campaign featuring spotlights on participant work, interviews, and behind-the-scenes content leading up to and following the symposium.
- Potential mentorship, coaching, or implementation discussions may be offered where feasible.
- Any pilot or implementation pathway is discretionary and does not create an obligation to develop, fund, construct, or commercialize any submission.

Through these efforts, we aim to build visibility, foster implementation, and catalyze lasting relationships between designers, community stakeholders, and the housing delivery ecosystem.