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CHICAGO NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS ANNOUNCE CLEAN AIR DESIGN CHALLENGE

Local Non-Profits Design Makes Change and Unit 2 Collective Issue Design Challenge to Address Air Quality Issues in Little Village, Pilsen

Chicago, IL, January 10, 2011 – This season, design is in the air. Literally. The non-profit, volunteer-run initiative Design Makes Change and the non-profit organization Unit 2 Collective have announced that they are launching *The Air We Breathe: The Chicago Clean Air Design Challenge*.

These organizations are inviting students and professional designers in industrial design, graphic design, interior architecture, architecture and public space design to propose solutions that address the issues of air quality caused by two coal-powered plants in Little Village and Pilsen.

The Fisk and Crawford plants regularly emit lead and other toxins into the air. High rates of asthma and other air-quality illnesses are pressing concerns for the residents of these neighborhoods and for much of Chicago. While a tremendous amount of work has been done by environmental activists to shut down these plants and a Clean Power Ordinance has been supported by 15 Chicago aldermen, the plants continue to operate.

“The Air We Breathe is based on the belief that designers should think locally about the problem of air quality and address the problem through innovation and community partnership. The goal is to create solutions that can empower individuals, help raise awareness about the issue, and assist in educating communities about the effects of the coal plants,” said Siobhan Gregory, founder of Design Makes Change and coordinator of *The Air We Breathe*. “Designers are trained to entertain a broad range of possibilities when it comes to addressing a problem- whether through a provocative print campaign, a visualization study of air-borne contaminants, designs for air quality monitors to help understand levels of exposure, or plans for an information kiosk or environmental center. This contest is a platform not only for those types of ideas to be brought to the table but also a challenge to designers to understand how these ideas will work within a community.”

JohnPaul Kusz, founder of the Center for Sustainable Enterprise at the Stuart School of Business, IIT adds, “We need to take design thinking to the next level, moving from individual artifact solutions to whole systems of solutions that can be self-generating and operable within communities. This design competition is a strong start in that direction.”

Ian Viteri of the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization stated: “It is time for Chicago to incorporate crucial, local issues into the design process. Even though we claim to be one of the

greenest cities around, we are still plagued with a plethora of health issues due to our air quality. This challenge gives people a chance to take an initiative and create positive change through design.”

The Air We Breathe is open for submissions from January 5, 2011 through April 18, 2011. Cash prizes will be awarded to the top three outstanding submissions, beginning with a grand prize of \$2,000. The jury panel will be composed of a multi-disciplinary group of professionals and educators from the fields of design, environmental policy, community development, and medicine. Confirmed jurors include Amy Talbot from The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Ian Viteri of the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization; Sarah Finkel, member of the Pilsen Environmental Rights and Reform Organization; Carmen Velasquez Founder and Executive Director of Alivio Medical Center; John Paul Kusz, founder of the Center for Sustainable Enterprise at the Stuart School of Business, IIT; Stephen Melamed from UIC; Martin Felsen of Archeworks and UrbanLabs; Lynda Pulik, Design Researcher; and a representative from the Environmental Law and Policy Center.

To learn more about *The Air We Breathe* and to find out how to enter the competition, visit: www.DesignMakesChange.com or contact Siobhan Gregory at info@designmakeschange.com.

Design Makes Change is a volunteer group of designers, artists, and educators whose mission is to partner with local organizations, community leaders, businesses, and educational institutions to organize and support a series of annual design competitions to address environmental, social and infrastructural issues in Chicago.

Unit 2 Collective is a non-profit organization that brings together artists and designers from various genres to support projects, lectures, workshops, and exhibitions that emphasize research, innovations, social change, and dialog. Unit 2 strives to build and maintain a powerful network of artists, exhibition opportunities, and creative resources.