

HorizonLines



To: Anyone Who Has a Compelling, Credible Vision for Chicago
From: World Business Chicago
Re: Horizon Lines Visions for Chicago 2050 FAQs
Date: Updated March 17, 2026

Horizon Lines: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What is Horizon Lines?

Horizon Lines is a signature initiative of World Business Chicago, the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, and the Department of Planning and Development. It's also the next chapter of a citywide effort focused on 2050.

We're inviting architects, designers, artists, planners, community leaders, students and creative thinkers to propose bold ideas that could shape Chicago's future over the next 25 years.

The goal is to surface visionary concepts that can inform planning, policy and investment decisions across the city and region.

Find [more information here](#) and [enter here](#).

2. What kind of ideas are you looking for?

We are looking for bold, future-focused ideas that could shape Chicago by 2050. Think of the next Millennium Park or Riverwalk.

Ideas may address topics such as:

- New architectural icons or civic landmarks

- Transformative public spaces
- Future mobility, transit or infrastructure
- Housing and neighborhood vitality
- Climate resilience and environmental innovation
- Economic engines or cultural districts
- Street-level improvements that enhance daily life

If your idea can influence how Chicago lives, works, moves or competes globally, we want to see it.

3. Does my idea have to have or be about a specific site?

Not necessarily.

Your proposal may:

- Focus on a specific site, corridor or neighborhood, or
- Use a representative location to illustrate a broader concept.

The key requirement is that the idea is grounded in Chicago, located within or intended for the city limits and clearly connected to the city's future.

4. Do submissions need to be construction-ready or technically detailed?

No.

Horizon Lines is not a traditional design competition and we are not asking for construction-ready proposals.

You do not need to submit:

- Construction drawings
- Engineering studies
- Cost estimates
- Zoning analysis
- Detailed development plans

We are looking for compelling, credible ideas — clearly explained and visually communicated.

5. What do I need to submit?

Each submission includes three primary elements:

1. Vision Statement (1,000–1,500 words)

A narrative describing the idea, the opportunity it addresses and how it could shape Chicago by 2050.

2. At least one visual representation

This can be a conceptual rendering, drawing, collage diagram or other image that helps people imagine the idea. Have more than one image? That's OK.

3. Team information (up to 500 words)

Basic information about the team and the Chicago-based lead organization. (Teams can come from anywhere in the world, but we do need to have a Chicago-based lead.)

Additional visuals are optional.

[You can find the full open call here.](#) And [you can submit your idea here.](#)

6. Who can apply?

Horizon Lines is an open call because we believe great ideas can come from anywhere.

Anyone can apply, but we especially welcome submissions from:

- Architects, planners and design firms
- Artists and creative practitioners
- Community organizations and neighborhood leaders
- Universities and student teams
- Technologists and futurists
- Interdisciplinary teams formed specifically for the competition

If you have a compelling vision for Chicago's future, you are encouraged to apply.

Multiple submissions:

- Individuals may submit one proposal/idea.
- Organizations may submit one proposal/idea as the lead and as many as desired where they are a partner organization.

7. Do I need to live in Chicago to participate?

The lead organization (for-profit or nonprofit) or individual must be based in the greater Chicago area.

However, collaborators and team members may be located anywhere. We encourage teams that combine local knowledge with national or global expertise.

8. Can students apply?

Yes.

Students and university teams are welcome to apply, provided the submission includes a Chicago-based lead organization, student or student group.

9. Can individuals apply, or do I need a team?

Both are welcome.

You may submit as:

- An individual
 - An existing organization
 - A newly formed team or partnership
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10. How will submissions be evaluated?

Submissions will be evaluated by a panel of civic leaders based on the following criteria:

Vision

Does the idea demonstrate bold, future-facing thinking?

Impact

Will it make meaningful improvements for Chicagoans?

Equity

Does it benefit communities across the city?

Credibility

Is there a plausible pathway to test or advance the idea in the next decade?

Inspiration

Does it expand the public imagination about what Chicago could be?

Alignment

Does it strengthen Chicago's competitiveness and quality of life?

11. Who is on the selection panel?

The jury includes:

- Phil Clement, CEO, World Business Chicago
 - Kenya Merritt, Deputy Mayor and Interim Commissioner, Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events
 - Ciere Boatright, Commissioner, Chicago Department of Planning and Development
 - Julia Stasch, Board Chair, Lever for Change
 - Andrea Sáenz, President & CEO, The Chicago Community Trust
 - Nora Daley, Board Co-Chair, Chicago Architecture Biennial
 - Eleanor Gorski, CEO and President, Chicago Architecture Center
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12. What do finalists receive?

Finalists will receive:

- Public exhibition at the Chicago Cultural Center this summer
 - Early engagement with city planning and economic development officials
 - Opportunities for their ideas to gain visibility through ChiForward, World Business Chicago's platform for advancing catalytic projects
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13. Are there prizes?

Yes.

World Business Chicago will award:

- One \$5,000 honorarium for the winning submission
- Five \$1,000 honoraria for notable projects or runners-up

These honoraria recognize the time and effort involved in preparing submissions.

14. What happens after finalists are selected?

Finalist ideas will be:

- Featured in a public exhibition at the Chicago Cultural Center this summer
- Highlighted in communications and programming related to the initiative
- Introduced to civic, planning and investment networks through [ChiForward](#)

The overall winner will be announced in September 2026.

15. When are submissions due?

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

[Submit here.](#)

16. When will finalists be announced?

Finalists will be notified in May.

17. Where will finalist projects be shown?

Finalist ideas will be presented in a public exhibition at the Chicago Cultural Center this summer..

18. Will there be opportunities to ask questions before submitting?

Yes.

World Business Chicago will host informational webinars where participants can learn more about the competition and ask questions.

Upcoming sessions include:

- [March 17 at 10 a.m.](#)
 - [March 19 at 3 p.m.](#)
 - [March 24 at 2 p.m.](#)
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19. Do I retain ownership of my idea?

Yes.

Participants retain ownership of their concepts. By submitting, you grant World Business Chicago permission to display and promote the ideas as part of the Horizon Lines initiative, including exhibitions, communications and media coverage.

20. How does Horizon Lines connect to Chicago's long-term economic strategy?

Horizon Lines is part of [Chicago 2050 | A Plan for Economic Growth & Jobs](#).

The initiative helps connect civic imagination with economic development, feeding promising ideas into [ChiForward](#), World Business Chicago's platform for advancing catalytic projects that support inclusive economic growth.

21. Where can I submit my idea?

More information is available at:

<https://worldbusinesschicago.com/horizon-lines/>

[Submit your idea here by April 15.](#)