

Reimagining Chicago's Thompson Center for the next generation

Datum 16.9.2026
Subjekt Google Italia
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Region Itálie
Kategorie Nemovitosti, Firmy, Technologie

We're sharing the latest designs for our redevelopment of the iconic building as a space for work, culture, and community in Chicago. Plus, we're announcing new partnerships with local youth organizations.

We first opened our Chicago office in 2000, and since then, the city has grown into a tech hub — and Google's offices have grown to over 2,000 employees. In 2022, we announced our intentions to buy the James R. Thompson Center building — honoring its legacy while transforming it into a center of work and community for the next generation of Chicagoans.

Today, we're sharing new design renderings for the building's soaring atrium, and announcing new community partnerships. We're teaming up with After School Matters to commission a student-designed art piece for the retail concourse, and supporting A Better Chicago to combat chronic absenteeism and help local students thrive in school.

To top it off, artist Sanford Biggers has also been selected to create a major sculpture for the plaza, bringing a significant civic art moment to this central destination.

The design: A preview of the new Thompson Center atrium

The Thompson Center has always been a place where Chicago's many worlds collide — commuters, visitors, and professionals moving through the same space. Our new design aims to curate an inspiring space offering unique amenities for the Loop, including:

- A monumental architectural conversion: Conceptualized together with Architecture Plus Information (A+I), we expanded the central opening beneath the 17-story atrium, constructing a cascading staircase integrated with terraced seating and retail offerings.
- An activated atrium and plaza: Designed for the day-to-day as much as for special moments, the atrium and plaza brings a curated mix of quality food, distinctive retail, and space for seasonal events. The Thompson Center offers a natural place to grab lunch, catch up with colleagues, or simply take in the scene.

As you enter from the plaza off Randolph street, a dramatic view of the atrium is revealed through an oculus. Retail and dining spaces flank the entrance, with casual seating below.

A view of the grand staircase showcases the variety of activity, easy movement to the lower level, and connection to the CTA.

Looking southeast toward the sloping facade from the concourse level, the grand staircase becomes a moment for gathering and inspiration, with retail kiosks nearby.

The art: A plaza sculpture by Sanford Biggers

Sanford Biggers is creating a new sculpture that honors the Loop's rich history of public art. Biggers' sculpture reimagines traditional quilt patterns as a hyper-dynamic, tilted accordion structure that offers spaces for interaction and gathering. *Vector*, the 30-foot tall sculpture, will be a continuation of the artist's celebrated Codex series, in which Biggers explores the hidden meanings and sacred geometries found within antique quilts.

To create the sculpture, Biggers engaged with several local institutions to incorporate Illinois history into the glazed terracotta tile patterns, including historic 19th-century quilts from collections at the Illinois State Museum and Chicago History Museum, in addition to a Tumbling Block motif, a design historically associated with signalling along the Underground Railroad.

The installation deepens Biggers' connection to Chicago, where his artistic journey began at the School of the Art Institute in 1999 and continues today. This will be one of his most significant works, transforming the Thompson Center plaza into an intersection of local history and modern craft.

In addition to this commission, Google will be sourcing more art for the atrium from artists with roots in Chicago.

Situated on the plaza at Randolph and Clark, Sanford Biggers' 30-foot-tall sculpture, *Vector*, features glazed terracotta tile patterns inspired by historic 19th-century quilts.

At twilight, the view highlights the sculpture's dynamic geometry and vibrant terracotta tiles as a focal point in front of a glowing Thompson Center.

The community: New funding and partnerships

We're expanding our local partnerships to support the next generation of Chicagoans both inside and outside the classroom.

After School Matters

We are partnering with After School Matters, a local nonprofit celebrating its 35th anniversary that provides nearly 20,000 Chicago teens annually with paid after-school and summer opportunities. This fall, After School Matters will recruit teens for a 10-week program centered on the intersection of art and architecture. Inspired by the Thompson Center's design and surrounding architecture, the young artists will create a large-scale commissioned piece within the building's atrium, embedding local youth voices into the site's creative legacy.

A Better Chicago

To further support Chicago Public School students, Google.org is providing \$1 million in funding to A Better Chicago in support of "Every Day Counts." This new citywide initiative aims to strengthen student belonging and reduce chronic absenteeism in Chicago by 50% over the next five years. Our support will help community-based organizations on the ground provide vital services ensuring students have the support they need to stay engaged, attend school regularly, and reach their full potential.

The future: A look at our next steps

Our vision for the Thompson Center is a place for daily inspiration with world-class art, innovative workspaces, direct access to CTA, an activated plaza, and the iconic atrium — complemented by our ongoing investments in Chicago's youth through public art and educational grant support.

We're making strong progress on the transformation with our team, and plan to officially open our doors to Googlers, tenants and the public in 2028.

We can't wait to welcome you inside.

<https://blog.google/company-news/inside-google/company-announcements/chicago-thompson-center-designs>