

POP-UP CULTURE

A SMALL PROJECT PRACTITIONER DESIGN COMPETITION

In 2014, the AIA Small Project Practitioners Knowledge Community launched the *Pop-Up Project* design competition, specifically created to showcase how small design challenges may be solved creatively, often in a very unique and original manner, while also participating in social change.

The competition will occur annually in collaboration with the AIA National Convention host city and a local non-profit which would benefit from the constructed winning design.

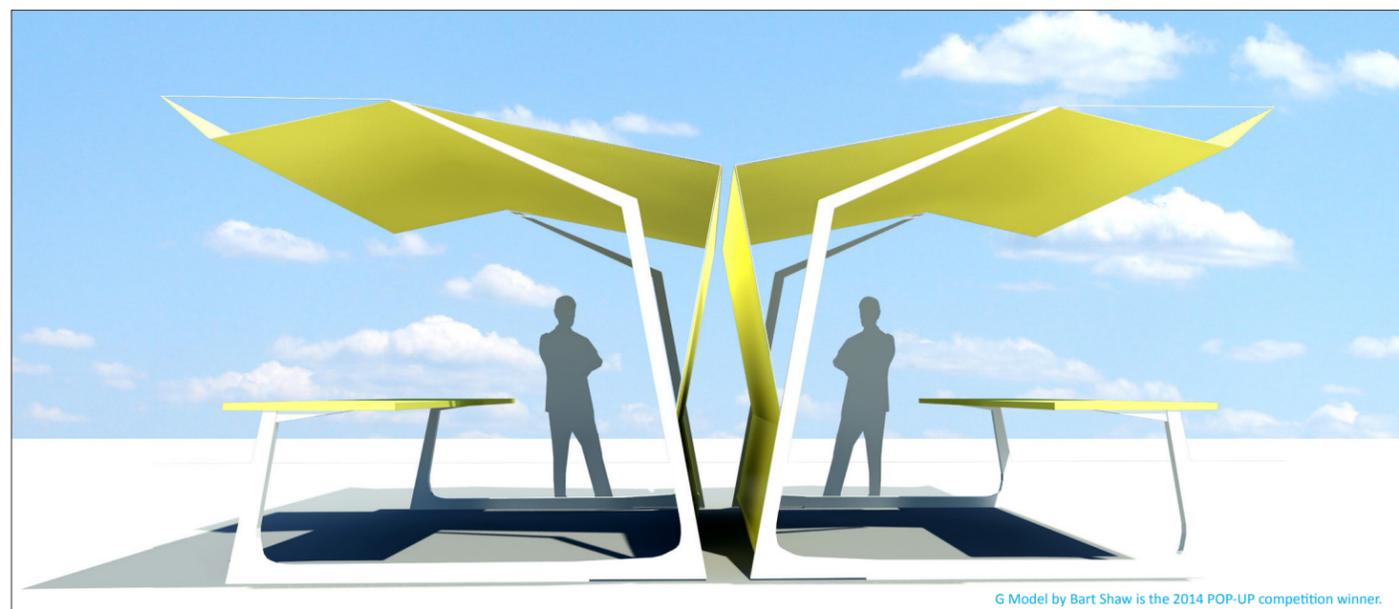
This year, for the host city of Chicago, participants were asked to re-imagine the simple and generic white canvas farmer's market canopy. Chicago is a FOOD city. It has thousands of restaurants and a very active and influential "foodie" community. Mix in the growing "local" food movement and you have created a very vibrant food culture in Chicago. Throughout the spring, summer and fall, the streets are full of street festivals and farmer's markets where local producers sell their harvest. These markets occur all over, often in dense areas with little to no green space, where a neighborhood street is blocked off for an evening or a day, allowing local farmers to set up their wares under the cover of the typical white vinyl pop-up canopy.

The structures are light and portable, which also means that vendors have to get creative when anchoring them to the ground. To add to the blandness of the canopy, most vendors can't afford a custom tent, so most are a generic white, with flimsy or most often totally absent signage.

For the inaugural Pop-Up Competition, we were thrilled to receive well over a dozen entries from across the country, from architecture students and architects. We assembled a great group of jurors to pour over these submissions, including Katherine Darnstadt of Latent Design and recipient of the 2013 AIA Young Architects Award, local farmers Alex and Allison Needham from Radical Root Farm, as well as representatives from our local non-profit partner, Growing Home Inc., Tim Murakami and Melissa Mahon.

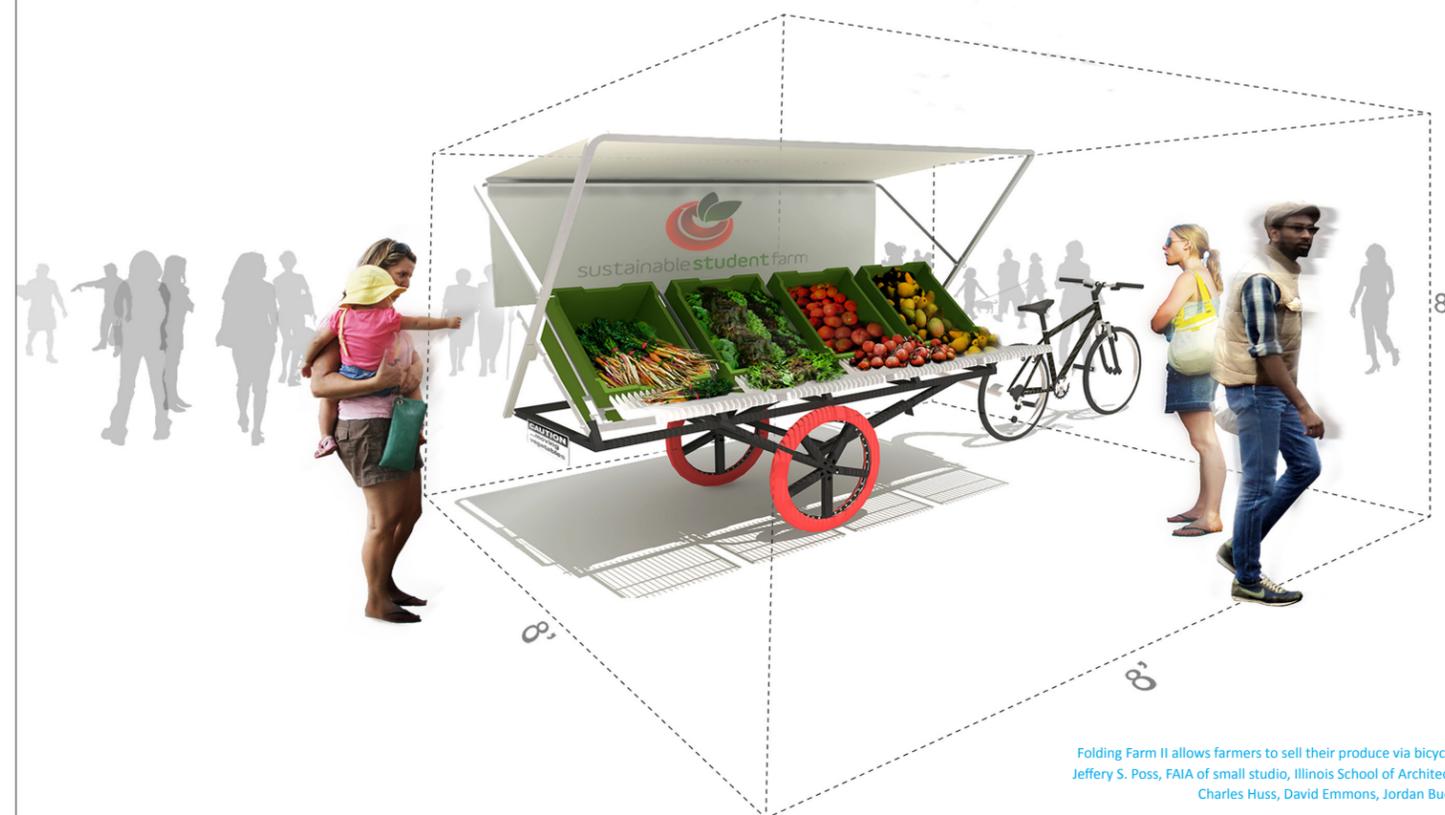
This year's winner, *G* by Bart Shaw, of Fort Worth TX, is an elegant design which provides great branding opportunities for the vendors. And true to the design competition parameters, Mr. Shaw developed a simple and lightweight way by which to transport the system. The jury fell in love with how well several of these canopies could line a market street, while also creating a cover for the shoppers.

We were focused on selecting a single winner, but could not forget to mention some of the incredibly original entries we received. *Folding Farm II* received an honorable mention for its hyper-local solution to the problem. Mounted to a bike, this mobile pop-up kiosk allows a small farmer or vendor with a limited amount of produce to cycle from place to place with ease. This design certainly would stand out in a crowd of tents, would be perfectly suited for a specialized vendor and tells a beautiful story about the locally grown movement.



G Model by Bart Shaw is the 2014 POP-UP competition winner.

“The problem seems simple enough, but these are the ones which are usually deceptively complex. The greater challenge, based on the entries, was to create something that was easy to carry while also easy and quick to assemble/disassemble by one or two people.”



Folding Farm II allows farmers to sell their produce via bicycle. by Jeffery S. Poss, FAIA of small studio, Illinois School of Architecture, Charles Huss, David Emmons, Jordan Buckner

Box It Up was another honorable mention recipient (not shown). Somewhat of a simpler design, and very close to the traditional tent in form, it was the unique way of anchoring and display of wares that attracted the jury to the entry. The design is one familiar to the farmers yet it allowed for a unique experience within the tent in how each vendor could customize the legs to display, brand and organize their space.

Last, but certainly not least, was a category the jury created specifically for this entry. *Naked* is based on the use of a technology none of us had heard of before, Fidu, inflated metal. The design was intriguing, but what was most captivating was the use of the inflated metal circular ribs. We all agreed that it did not solve the problem perfectly, but we all wanted to see it built.

As in all design competitions, some entries took the ideas too far and neglected to solve the problem at hand, while others took a simpler approach and failed to challenge the idea with greater vigor.

Our hope is that this competition will showcase to the general public and to the architectural community, that simple design problems can often be a source of tremendous design opportunity and creative release. And that put to good use, these designs can create interest and awareness that so many organizations like Growing Home need and deserve.

The winner will fabricate and assemble the pop-up design in Chicago where it will be displayed at the convention center, during the 2014 AIA National Convention, and then donated to the local non-profit partner, **Growing Home Chicago**, for use by their clients and program participants. During the convention, the Pop-Up Project will be used to display information about the competition, the winner and other submissions as well as feature information about our non-for-profit partner. ■

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is Co-Chair of the AIA Small Practitioners Group and Principal of Space Architects & Planners in Chicago.

The AIA Small Project Practitioners Knowledge Community generates, collects, and distributes knowledge for architects of small firms and designers of small projects.