

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 17, 2022

CONTACT

Commissioner Scott Britton's Office

(917) 849-9436

Julie.Kaviar@cookcounty



COOK COUNTY ANNOUNCES FINALISTS IN FLAG REDESIGN COMPETITION

Nearly 300 submissions down to six as Board of Commissioners consider final designs



Cook County Board of Commissioners today accepted the top six student-finalist flag designs for the next Cook County flag. In celebration and recognition of more than 190 years since the founding of Cook County, Commissioners will choose a new flag that is an inclusive representation of Cook County, the rich diversity of its residents, the beauty of its landscape, the innovation of its institutions, and the pride of its history.

The entire County congratulates and celebrates the student designers who created these top six designs.

- Freedom: Jaime Joshua Fregoso (Ray Graham Training Center)
- Harmony: Alex Tomy (Maine East H.S.)
- I Will Banner: Andrew Duffy (Glenbrook South H.S.)
- New Century Flag: Tim Mellman (Oak Park H.S. and River Forest H.S.)
- Our Star: Sofia Hogue (Evanston Township H.S.) and Ryan Bradley (Disney II Magnet H.S.)
- Strides for Cook County: Charlye Hunt (Alan Shepard H.S.) and Rayn White (Providence St. Mel)

“As we approach Cook County’s bicentennial, we look forward to presenting a flag that will represent the County for the next 200 years,” said President Preckwinkle. “Our gratitude goes to the Cook County youth that put their minds and hearts into their designs. Their work will serve generations of Cook County residents to come.”

“The best flags are symbols of the values and spirit of everyone in that community,” said Flag Advisory Panel Co-Chair and 14th District Commissioner Scott Britton. “I thank the student designers, professional mentors, and Flag Advisory Panel members for their time, expertise, and passion for Cook County. It has been an honor to usher in this new era of representation for Cook County that engaged every corner of the County.”

Cook County, the nation’s second largest County, is deserving of a modern flag that is not simply a white background, with the County seal, and the title of the County. According to the North American Vexillological Association (NAVA), a flag should be simple and easily memorized, use meaningful symbolism, have two or three basic colors, have no lettering or seals, and should be distinctive while using similarities in other flags to show connections.

“Cook County’s high school students answered our challenge to design a flag for the 21st Century that connects our past and present together,” said Matthew DeLeon, Cook County Historian and Flag Panel Co-Chair. “The unique role Cook County played in the growth and development of the region, the state, and the nation is a story that should be told, and I am confident the Cook County Board will select a flag which will help to do just that.”

The current flag was created in 1961 along with the County seal, which presents Lake Michigan as the nation’s center for trade and transportation, as well as symbols of the government, schools, churches, fine arts, dwellings, business, and industry that comprise the County. The flag does not highlight important aspects of Cook County such as the diversity of residents, the iconic history, the Forest Preserves and many other natural resources, the hospital system, and the role the County plays in criminal justice and social change.

“It was such an honor to work with civically engaged youth in this radically generous and inclusive process. The brilliant flags they created through their collaborative efforts, honor the past, recognize the present, and help us reimagine our collective futures,” said Flag Advisory Panel member and Director of the National Public Housing Museum & an Associate Professor of Public Culture and Museum Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago Lisa Lee.

This years-long process began with a high school student competition that yielded nearly 300 flag submissions from every corner of the County. The thoughtful flag designs were representative of Cook County’s history, varied geography, important institutions, and diverse residents. The 297 submissions were then narrowed to the top 25 designs by an appointed Flag Advisory Panel. The 11-member Flag Advisory Panel is comprised of:

- Matthew DeLeon, Cook County Historian and Panel Co-Chair
- Scott Britton, Commissioner and Panel Co-Chair
- Cook County Commissioner Alma Anaya
- Cook County Commissioner Bridget Degnen
- Cook County Commissioner Stanley Moore
- Lisa Lee, Director of the National Public Housing Museum and Director of the UIC School of Art & Art History
- Ty McCarthy, City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development Project Coordinator
- Jonathan Meitus, WEBSTER9
- Stephany Rimland, Harper College Professor and Art Department Chair
- Arnold Randall, Forest Preserve District of Cook County Superintendent
- Carl Vogel, Forest Preserve District of Cook County Director of Communications

The designs were scored using a rubric that graded composition, such as colors and design elements, and representation of the County’s mission, history, people, and geography as well as the student’s description and title of their flag. All designs were reviewed without regard for the mode or detail in design - that is, whether it was created in crayon or on a computer. Teams of students were created based on similar aesthetics or symbolic choices.

The 23 semi-finalist teams, made up of 38 students, were paired with professional designer mentors who volunteered to help formalize, refine, and clarify flags. The Flag Advisory Panel then used the same rubric to score these professionalized designs to get the final six submissions presented to the Board of Commissioners. With the advice and consent of the Board of Commissioners, the Flag Advisory Panel and County Board President will select the new flag of Cook County from these final six designs.

The volunteer design professionals were: Heather Anderson, Graphic Designer at the Forest Preserve District of Cook County; Steve Batterson, Director of Brand Strategy at Simple Truth; Martin Burciaga, Graphic Design Specialist at Cook County Graphics Department; Dan Chodrow, Freelance Executive Creative Director; Sarah Davis, Creative Director at Sarah Davis Creative; Martinez E-B, Art Professor at Harper College; Bill Gatewood, CEO at Webitects; John Geletka, CXO and Founder at Geletka+; Gerald Griffin, Artist and Owner at Gerald Griffin Gallery; Mark Jarzemsky, Freelance Creative Director; Jim Kelly, Executive Creative Director at Closerlook; Lisa Lee, Executive Director at the National Public Housing Museum; Denny Liu, Senior Designer at The Office of Experience; Denis McNamara, Graphic Designer at Cook County Graphics Department; Lauren Meranda, Professor of Design at Northeastern University; Faiz Razi, Designer and Faculty Member at Northwestern University; Scott Rench, Freelance Creative Director; Dave Straus, Creative Director and President at Happy Tokyo Productions; Carl Vogel, Director of Communications at the Forest Preserve District of Cook County; and Josh Witherspoon, Executive Creative Director at VSA Partners.

During the March 17 Board of Commissioners Meeting, Commissioners were presented with the final six flags for the first time. In December 2019, the Cook County Board of Commissioners [unanimously voted](#) to create a contest to redesign Cook County's flag. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the competition and subsequent process were delayed. Commissioners will discuss the flag designs during the Legislative Committee hearing on the flag redesign during the April Board cycle.

To learn more about the flag redesign process, competition, participants, and designs, please visit: www.ANewFlagForCookCounty.com

###