HISTORY
The post office site lies along the central axis of congress parkway proposed by Daniel Burnham in The Plan of Chicago.
The Old Chicago Main Post Office was constructed in 1932, before the Eisenhower Expressway. The building was designed to accommodate the planned extension of Congress Parkway and in 1953 it cut through the building.

PRE-Eisenhower Expressway

POST-1953
Chicago is to have the largest post office in the world. The fifty-acre, twelve-story building will be completed and ready for occupancy within about a year and a half, according to a recent announcement of the United States Post Office Department. It will handle 100,000,000 letters, cards, and packages per day expected by 1934, in addition to the parcel post, packages, and newspapers. In one year, it is estimated, the total amount of mail handled would be sufficient to fill completely a structure four times its size.

More like a factory than a post office are the workings of this structure. Motor trucks, one every minute, will bring in letters from collection boxes throughout the city. These boxes will be transported upward in elevators to the upper floors, and travel by gravity down through the building. By the time they reach the ground floor they will be canceled, sorted, and ready for dispatch by train or airplane. On this page our artist shows some of the mechanical devices behind the scenes that will speed letters.

In the parcel post room, for example, an attendant drops packages from a belt upon conveyors that classify them by states. Where the volume of mail is greatest, a special system of conveyors, mail for cities with the initials "A" to "Z" goes on one belt, and "M" to "E" on the other.
The post office was abandoned by the postal service in 1997 and remains unused to this day.
SCALE
The Old Post Office has a floor area of 3,000,000 square feet.
The area of the post office is equal to the area of the John Hancock Center.
In the Post Office, you could live in a new 8’x 10’ room every day for 100 years.
MONUMENTAL ADAPTATION: REIMAGINING THE OLD CHICAGO POST OFFICE

Built in 1932, the Old Chicago Main Post Office was the largest post office in the world at three million square feet. It was designed to accommodate the extension of Congress Parkway and in 1953 the Eisenhower Expressway cut a void through the center of the building. Finally, the Post Office was vacated in 1997 and remains unused to this day. This project proposes the adaptation of the Post Office into a hybrid fieldhouse that contains public recreation and retail space. This proposal keeps the Post Office public, utilizing income generated through retail to maintain the building for Chicagoans. Recreation program is inserted into voids carved out of the original building. Retail occupies the peripheral space, surrounding the voids.