

CITY OF CHICAGO CULTURAL PLAN 2012

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM 2012 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Spring, 2012



Lord Cultural Resources is a global professional practice dedicated to creating cultural capital worldwide. We assist people, communities, and organizations to realize and enhance cultural meaning and expression.

We distinguish ourselves through a comprehensive and integrated full-service offering built on a foundation of key competencies: visioning, planning, and implementation.

We value and believe in cultural expression as essential for all people. We conduct ourselves with respect for collaboration, local adaptation, and cultural diversity, embodying the highest standards of integrity, ethics, and professional practice.

We help clients clarify their goals; we provide them with the tools to achieve those goals; and we leave a legacy as a result of training and collaboration.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“What would it be like to have not only color vision but culture vision, the ability to see the multiple worlds of others?”

- Mary Catherine Bateson,
Cultural Anthropologist

Cultural planning in the City of Chicago goes back over 40 years, to the first effort, in 1966, by the Mayor’s Committee for Cultural and Economic Development to create a composite voice for the direction of culture in the city. A second planning effort was completed two decades later under the administration of Mayor Harold Washington. That plan set the stage for the direction of growth of the city’s cultural resources and resulted in many downtown and loop cultural developments; including the redevelopment of Randolph Street as the Theater District; renovation of Navy Pier; and the creation of the Chicago Cultural Center as a center for visual and performing experiences in the city.

Chicago - and the world - has changed significantly in the quarter century since the 1986 plan was written and even since its update in 1995. In one of his first acts as Mayor of Chicago, Rahm Emanuel directed the Department of

Cultural Affairs and Special Events to revisit the Chicago Cultural Plan. Through a competitive process, the City of Chicago’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) led by Commissioner Michelle T. Boone, selected an integrated local and global team headed by the international consulting firm Lord Cultural Resources, with partners Research Explorers, Inc; Dickerson Global Advisors; cultural policy expert Nick Rabkin; and graphic communications firm Weetu, to guide the planning effort. The city also created a 32-member Advisory Committee of local arts, government and community members, specifically for the cultural plan. With this team in place, in February, the Chicago Cultural Plan 2012 was launched to identify opportunities for arts and cultural growth for the city.

The Planning Process

There are four legs on which this cultural plan stands: public engagement, a broad and deep wealth of up-to-date research, an emphasis on creativity and innovation, and, finally, buy-in from the citizens of Chicago, government and the business community. The planning process is unfolding in three phases, with Phase 1: planning, research, and development, and Phase 2: outreach, interviews, and information collection, occurring concurrently. The final phase, 3: information compilation and report generation will utilize all of the research and data gathering, along with insight from those inside and outside of city to make recommendations and an implementation plan to move the Cultural Plan forward.

To reach the broadest spectrum of participants, potential funders, and citizens at large, the planning team worked with partners from the Chicago Department of Housing and Economic Development and the Chicago Community Trust to create resource maps for the town hall meetings and the neighborhood cultural conversations.

Technology has reshaped the way many citizens engage with culture and participate in the arts; a National Endowment for the Arts finding shows that people who participate in the arts through electronic media are nearly three times as likely to attend live arts events as non-media participants. So to further the conversation on Chicago's cultural future, and to allow an even greater voice for citizens, the team launched an interactive website, where Chicagoans were asked to submit ideas and participate in the discussion.

The public phase of the 2012 Chicago Cultural Plan kicked off in February 2012 with a series of large public meetings in four locations throughout the city within a short public transit, walk, and car ride from over 90% of Chicago citizens. Those locations were; Columbia College's Stage Two in central Chicago, Nicholas Senn High School on the North side, DuSable Museum of African American History on the South side, National Museum of Mexican Art on the West side.

This report explains what happened at the public meetings, what the public said, how the information was captured and how it will be used moving forward.

The Big Picture: Town Hall Meetings

Table: Attendance at city-wide town hall meetings

Town Halls	Attendance Count
Columbia College	315
Nicholas Senn High School	161
DuSable Museum of African American History	158
National Museum of Mexican Art	201
TOTAL	835

The town hall meeting discussions were as spirited as the locations in which they were held. In breakout groups, participants were asked about their view of cultural Chicago, and how we get from here to there. At the conclusion of the meeting, each group was given three minutes to report back the highlights of their conversations. Reportbacks from all the groups allowed them to hear each other's challenges, priorities, and best practices in sharing their vision for Chicago and its neighborhoods. Participants were also given the opportunity to ask questions of city officials and the consulting team.

Images (opposite and below): Town hall meeting at Columbia College



- **Increase cultural participation by increasing accessibility.** Throughout the city, Chicagoans are looking for greater access to culture. This point addresses many sectors: safety, zoning and policy, physical distribution, and, in some areas far south and west, transportation.
- **Secure K-12 arts education.** At every town hall meeting, arts education was a major topic. Conversation often became more intense when discussing the desire to provide arts education opportunities for school-age children. These include arts in schools of all types -public, charter, private, etc. - as well as opportunities outside of school, such as after school and during the summer, weekend, and breaks.
- **Downtown and beyond - cross-pollinate culture citywide.** Chicago culture is not only downtown or in the loop. Culture thrives throughout the city, and participants came equipped with examples of culture from their communities - we even had poetic and dance performances at some of the meetings.
- **Strengthen capacity within cultural sector.** Participants think the cultural sector in the city is strong when it comes to offering quality cultural experiences; however, the sector is weak in infrastructure development - training, resource development, assistance in navigating public and governmental agencies.
- **Ensure vibrant cultural space for artists, cultural groups, and neighborhoods.** Chicagoans resoundingly requested the exploration of all types of places for culture.
- **Attract and retain artists through priority on sustainability.** Chicago's "artist drain" was acknowledged, with many people pointing out that the universities and colleges in Chicago train some of the greatest cultural practitioners, but these practitioners then leave for the East and West Coasts, where they can make a living as artists.

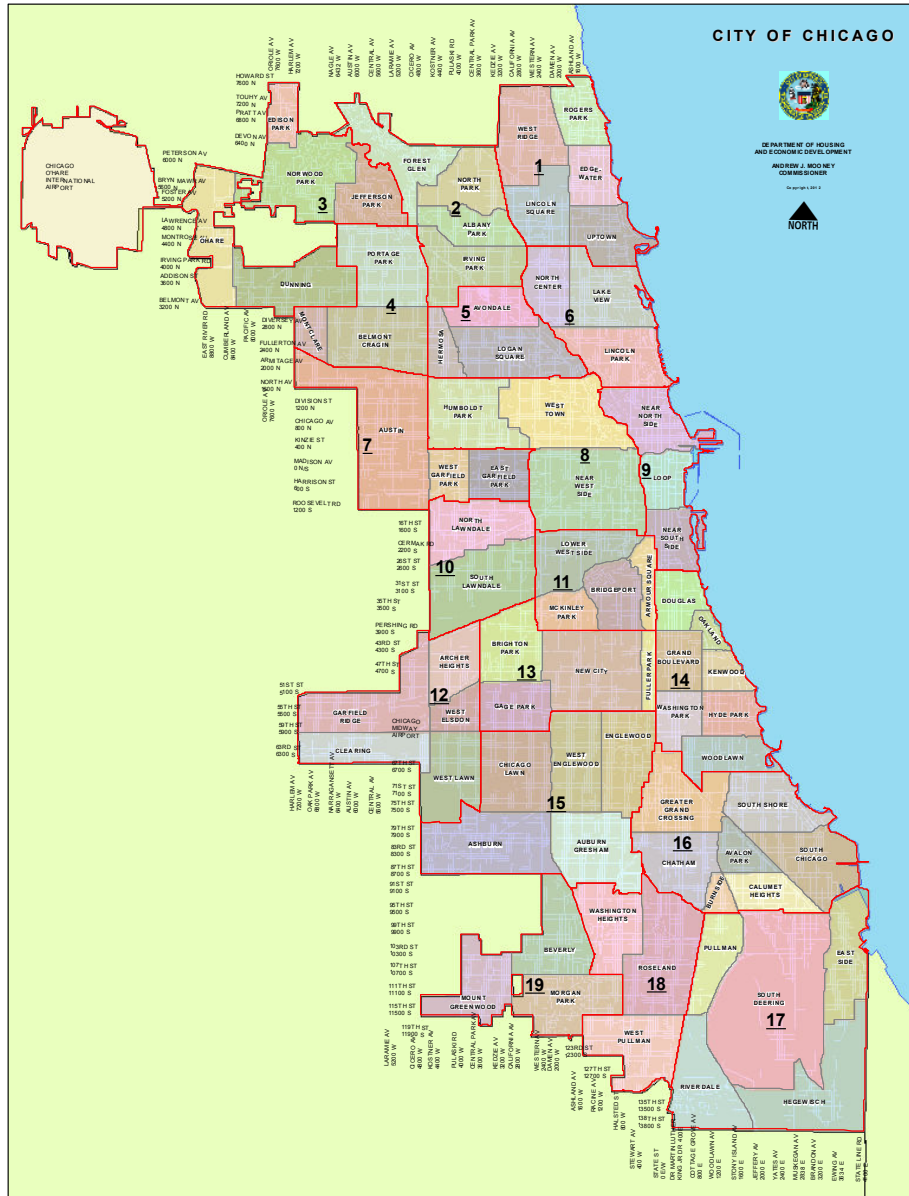
Digging Deeper: Neighborhood Cultural Conversations

"If we could provide people with more information on why where they live is special, people would have more pride in their city and take better care of their neighborhoods."

- Caroline Stevens,
Town Hall participant



Image: The City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) worked with the Chicago Department of Housing and Economic Development to cluster the areas into 19 zones based on population and geography.



The vitality and diversity of Chicago's neighborhoods are one of its greatest assets and what differentiates it from other cities. Chicago residents were engaged in 21 neighborhood meetings in 19 locations between the end of February and beginning of April 2012. Neighborhood cultural conversations were designed to use topics that dominated town hall meetings to inspire residents to think critically about their own neighborhood, and allow them to articulate the potential for their community's cultural vitality.

During the conversations, participants were encouraged to celebrate their neighborhood, vote on the top three town hall issues that resonated most with their personal and or community desires. This followed facilitated discussions of the top 2 to 3 themes where participants graded the success or failures of their neighborhoods in addressing the issue as well as suggested and prioritized solutions.

Of the six themes, "Secure K-12 art education" and "ensure vibrant cultural spaces" consistently were the top themes most pertinent to their neighborhoods. "Increase cultural participation by increasing accessibility," "cross-pollinate culture citywide," and "attract and retain artist through priority on sustainability" were nearly tied in the second tier but varied by conversation depending on the neighborhood and audience. "Strengthen capacity within the cultural sector" received the least amount of votes of the six themes. To systematically evaluate the information gained through the conversations, the team built a series of charts, like the one below, summarizing the public input on the three key questions by region and topic.

Four themes consistently surfaced in terms of understanding residents' desires to ensure Chicago's future cultural vitality. The themes are:

- **Empower neighborhoods to plan and execute cultural initiatives.**

Residents know their community and feel that they are best able to assess and articulate their needs. In many cases, attendees were looking to these conversations and the city to provide them with direction for improving their own community. Many thought that the city could facilitate the initiative by providing the steps, access, and tools to create cultural opportunities - space, education, and experiences - by leveraging their existing assets and identifying opportunities that can be realized in the future.

- **Coordinate and centralize cultural communication.** Access to information and lack of communication between different parts of the city or sectors of the community were often cited as reasons for neighborhood segregation, ethnic polarity, and lack of exposure to culture. Many neighborhood priorities focused on improved communication.

- **Optimize existing resources citywide.** The Chicago Park District is the largest municipal park manager in the nation and owner of more than 8,100 acres of green space, 580 parks and 260 field houses.¹ Nearly every Chicago neighborhood has a park and field house. Additionally, Chicago is one of the leading municipal library systems with more than 75 locations throughout Chicago. In the minds of many participants these two existing institutions can be the foundation for facilities on which the city can “build” since most neighborhoods have both a library and park that are maintained and staffed. Participants felt that this foundation exists in both public and privately held facilities, green spaces, rooftops, lots and any number of potential cultural places.

- **Distribute citywide resources equitably.** As groups focused on the needs of their communities, residents quickly seized on the opportunity to provide solutions for the issues of real and perceived inequalities in cultural opportunities - be they economic or geographic. First, the distribution of more and equitable arts education was a main theme at every conversation. Many residents felt that the arts education opportunities currently on offer for the majority of school-age children was inadequate and would benefit from augmentation. Many attendees pointed out that creativity sparked by arts education is crucial in innovation development.

Next Steps

This report represents the conclusion of the initial public engagement. Following the approval of this report, the team will share the findings and combine the results of the public engagement with the research, creativity and innovation studies, input from city and sector leaders, to identify and prioritize opportunities and needs. Finally a draft Cultural Plan will be distributed in late Summer.

The Chicago Cultural Plan 2012 plan is an invitation to explore and shape Chicago’s cultural future so participants are encouraged to stay connected to both the process - by continuing to dialogue online at **www.chicagoculturalplan2012.com** and to each other by seeking opportunities for collaborations and partnerships with new contacts made through the public engagement process.

¹www.chicagoculturalplan2012.com

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The City of Chicago has been fortunate to receive so many generous offers from organizations across the city to host its Neighborhood Cultural Conversations and Town Hall Meetings. We are grateful to the leaders, recognized below, of the 30+ sites, to-date, that hosted, or agreed to host these meetings. We cannot begin to thank you for your hospitality and we appreciate your support of the Chicago 2012 Cultural Plan. In addition to these hosts, the city would also like to thank the many facilitators, also recognized below, who volunteered their time and commitment to this process;

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