

ARTS AND CULTURE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

Metropolitan Chicago is home to a rich, robust, and diverse cultural ecosystem, with a varied tapestry of artists, nonprofit cultural organizations, for-profit commercial enterprises, arts service organizations, funders, institutions of higher education, and “unincorporated arts” including street fairs and festivals.

The region’s artistic and cultural community continues to earn national and international acclaim, on both the non-profit and for-profit sides. Its world class museums, dance companies and cultural institutions attract millions of visitors each year. A “musical omnivore’s paradise,” it offers every style of music to every style of fan in every style of venue. Its architecture and public arts have made history. And it is emerging as a key player in creative industries, from advertising to fashion.

In fact, its historical and cultural narrative is imbued with a richness and intensity equaled by only a handful of other metropolitan areas around the world. In the process, it has become one of the leading creative regions in the world.

Chicago’s arts and cultural resources are not only cause for great pride, but they also contribute significantly to the region’s economic health; for example, it is estimated that directly and indirectly, nonprofit arts organizations pump more than \$1 billion into the area’s economy every year. These resources serve as an economic engine for investments, a magnet for cultural tourism, and a key component in improving the quality of life in the region, which helps attract the kind of talent that’s highly prized in the 21st century – creative talent capable of tackling complex problems and helping to envision a brighter future.

As one columnist wrote, “Your ability to act on your imagination is going to be so decisive in driving your future and the standard of living of your country. So the school, the state, the country that empowers, nurtures, enables imagination among its students and citizens, that’s who’s going to be the winner.” Many of the fastest-growing jobs and emerging industries rely on creativity and the ability to think unconventionally, question the herd, imagine new scenarios and produce astonishing work. And that is what arts and culture nurture.

Unfortunately, even given the strength and robustness of the region’s artistic and cultural community, artists and arts organizations in the region face unprecedented challenges and uncertainty as they look forward. A myriad of forces seriously threatens the long-term stability of the creative sector, including:

- Extraordinary funding challenges;
- Erosion of the region’s cultural infrastructure;
- Rapidly changing technology;
- An impending leadership transition to the next generation of arts professionals;
- Inequities and gaps in arts education;

- A decline in participation in arts and cultural activities;
- Shifting demographics;
- Shrinking access to capital;
- Limited availability of affordable space for artists and other creators to live and work;
- Limited access by artists and arts organizations to appropriate health insurance options;
- Declining arts coverage in newspapers.

But perhaps the greatest challenge to the region's creative ecology is the marginalization of the arts – the myth that the arts are an enjoyable “extra” for the well-off, but not a necessity for all people. While the arts in recent years have always been viewed positively, they have been seen – and treated and funded – as less important than the fields of business, finance, development, and even academics.

In fact, study after study has revealed that the arts are an important tool for community development – a stimulus for economic investments, tourism, recruitment of a creative, knowledge-based workforce, improving the quality of life, neighborhood revitalization, building community identity, and promoting cultural diversity.

The arts and cultural sector believes current challenges provide a window of opportunity for the cultural sector to gain respect and position itself as a central economic engine and thus one that deserves great protection. In this moment of transformational change, the leadership and skills of artists and arts professionals can and must be part of the solution to redefining the region, in keeping with this era's evolution to a creative, knowledge-based society.

Therefore, the GO TO 2040 Arts and Culture Advisory Committee offers the following vision and recommendations for action.

VISION STATEMENT

- **Diverse and Open Region:** The Chicago region will rely on collaboration across its rich cultural and ethnic diversity as the foundation for economic, educational, and artistic development.
- **International Reputation and Competitive Edge:** The Chicago region will be nationally and internationally recognized as a center for innovation and cultural ingenuity.
- **Democratization of the Arts:** Residents of all ages and from all walks of life will have access to, and will be engaged in, a wide variety of opportunities for cultural interaction, civic participation and active art making.
- **Sector Strength and Unification:** The region will experience unparalleled public and private support for the arts and culture as seen through increased funding, promotion, and policy.

- **Arts Education:** Arts education will serve as a powerful catalyst for creativity and a key component of our region's robust cultural landscape.
- **Advocacy and Positioning of the Arts:** Arts and creativity will be widely recognized as central to all conversations where development, quality of life and the allocation of resources are involved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This vision can be achieved if the following recommendations are implemented:

DIVERSE AND OPEN REGION

1. Ensure that all individuals, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, income, gender, religion, sexual orientation or ability, have access to the region's cultural life and to opportunities for meaningful arts engagement.
2. Ensure that the Chicago region's creative sector serves, represents and is led by all who live and work in the region.

INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION AND COMPETITIVE EDGE

3. Expand employment and financial opportunities in the cultural sector and increase the percentage of the region's workforce that is employed in the creative industries.

INCREASE THE CAPACITY AND RESILIENCY OF NONPROFIT, PUBLIC, AND COMMERCIAL ARTS-RELATED ENTERPRISES

4. Strengthen and increase the presence of non-arts venues with arts and cultural programming – parks, libraries, ethnic associations, societies, and centers.
5. Strengthen and increase the presence of post-secondary institutions preparing individuals for success in the creative sector.

DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE ARTS

6. Increase attendance and engagement at the region's nonprofit, public, and commercial arts-related organizations.
7. Increase the region's participation in collective, community, and amateur art making and festivals.
8. Increase discourse about the arts, culture and creativity in both traditional and new media.
9. Increase the number of young people participating in after-school arts programs.
10. Increase cultural tourism and reinforce the Chicago region's reputation as one of the world's top travel destinations.

SECTOR STRENGTH AND UNIFICATION

11. Increase public and private funding for the arts and cultural sector.

12. Increase collaboration of arts and culture with other policy areas and promote a corresponding allocation of resources (e.g., Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Illinois Commission on Volunteerism, education, parks and recreation, etc.)
13. Enact policies that support the widespread availability of the arts and culture in public venues including parks, libraries, and other public places.
14. Enact municipal policy levers and incentives (such as percent for art legislation, zoning ordinances and entertainment districts) to sustain and grow arts-centric enterprises.
15. Strategically market and promote the Chicago region as a cultural destination of national and international standing.

ARTS EDUCATION

16. Significantly increase opportunities for every preschool through post-secondary student in the region – particularly those who are currently underserved – to participate in, learn from, and enjoy the arts.
17. Develop a strategic plan for comprehensive arts education in every school district in the region and measure the effectiveness of each district's arts education programs, identify areas for improvement and establish a realistic timeline for improving arts education programs in each district.
18. Adequately fund arts education at the district and state level.
19. Collaboratively develop with key stakeholders meaningful ways to measure student and school performance in arts education (such as assessment tools and arts report cards) and empower the Illinois State Board of Education to require schools to report certain arts education measurements annually.

ADVOCACY AND POSITIONING OF THE ARTS

20. Empower policy makers and the media with solid and reliable data about the presence, value and impact of the arts and arts education in the Chicago region.
21. Build a strong network of thousands of arts advocates in the Chicago region to ensure that elected and appointed leaders support policies and funding for the arts and culture.
22. Foster more powerful alliances between non-profit and for profit commercial arts-centric enterprises in the Chicago region.
23. Include arts advocates and leaders on key boards, authorities, and commissions in the Chicago region and statewide.

Arts and Culture

LEAD AGENCY

Illinois Arts Alliance

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- Jennifer Armstrong, Illinois Arts Council
- Andrew Williams Clark, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
- Suzanne Connor, The Chicago Community Trust
- Greg D. Didomenico, Hinsdale Center for the Arts
- Bau Graves, Old Town School of Folk Music
- Bruce Ives, MCIC
- Carol Fox, Audience Architects
- Carolina O. Jayaram, Illinois Arts Alliance
- Ra Joy, Illinois Arts Alliance
- Peter Kuntz, Arts and Business Council of Chicago
- Nick Rabkin, NORC at the University of Chicago
- Amy Rasmussen, Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE)
- Anne Romans, The Art Institute of Chicago
- Janet Carl Smith, Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs
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- Alaka Wali, The Field Museum
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