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# Advancing Arts and Culture in Chicago

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*We are fortunate to live in a city that recognizes that artists, and the institutions that support their work, are essential to the quality of life in the city, and to its future. Chicago is a city that recognizes the great human need for beauty, for story, for the respite that the arts provide to engage our imagination. The arts permit us to shift our frame of reference, to see the world through the eyes of another, to see and hear the world anew.*

— MARTHA LAVEY, 2008 CINDY PRITZKER LECTURE ON CIVIC LIFE

**The arts are powerful. Now more than ever, it is essential that we lift up and invest in our unparalleled Chicago artists. A robust Chicago arts community inspires us, engages us, questions the status quo and has the power to bring our diverse city together in conversation around the critical challenges of our day.**

**Arts and culture serve as an economic engine that generate thousands of jobs and spurs diverse business development in the Loop and our neighborhoods. And as we work to revitalize and uplift our neighborhoods, we must include the voices and creativity of artists and arts organizations. But, we cannot have a vibrant and diverse arts community if our neighborhoods are not safe, if there are limited community assets, if housing is not affordable, if access to healthcare is limited, if our neighborhood schools and afterschool organizations are not healthy and include diverse arts education programs.**

**While much work has been accomplished through Chicago’s Cultural Plan in arts education, tourism, jumpstarting cultural districts and supporting creative industries, this momentum cannot stop. We need a mayor who understands that a vibrant city is one that values and invests in its artists and cultural institutions. Chicago’s beating heart is manifested in the creativity, the innovation and the voices of our artists.**

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### **The Economic Impact of the Arts**

Chicago is undeniably a world-class city and its growing tourism industry is the envy of large cities across the globe. According to the “Arts in the Loop” study conducted by the Chicago Loop Alliance, the Loop’s 250 arts and cultural venues generate \$2.25 billion each year. In addition, the Arts Alliance Illinois data indicates that 60,000 full-time-equivalent jobs generates a total of \$1.3 billion in household income to local residents, and delivers more than \$200 million in local and state government revenue. We have seen an explosion of work happening in Chicago’s film industry, commercial theater and music scenes. It is vital that we continue to bring policies and resources to support this continued growth. But also, imagine harnessing this power of the arts to bring even a fraction of that economic impact to our neighborhoods as we focus on uplifting the quality of life for all Chicagoans. To do that, we will:

- Prioritize much needed funding for equitable grantmaking and microfinancing to individual artists, arts organizations and arts corridors throughout Chicago — particularly in communities of need. By making an incremental reallocation in existing revenue generated from the hotel/motel tax we can provide additional funding for the DCASE and Choose Chicago budgets without increasing taxes.
- Audit and streamline city licensing and permitting regulations, including the Public Performance and Amusement license (PPA) which adversely impact the growth and sustainability of the arts. We cannot regulate out of business our small arts venues.
- Eliminate aldermanic prerogative so aldermen cannot stop the development and licensing of artist work spaces, galleries and theaters in their wards.
- Modify the Affordable Requirements Ordinance to require the construction of more affordable housing units so artists can afford to live and work in Chicago’s neighborhoods. Address the shortage of artist gallery, performance and other work spaces.
- Develop a working group to bring together ideas and resources from the city, philanthropy, culture and the arts to develop policies and strategies to keep artists living and working in Chicago.

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## Expanding Opportunities for Enrichment

Data from the Arts Alliance Illinois indicates that artists are more civically engaged, are critical thinkers, are more globally aware and collaborative. According to the Americans for the Arts, a student involved in the arts is four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement. While there have been gains to deepen engagement in the arts in our schools, through district investment and philanthropic dollars, progress must not be slowed. According to the Ingenuity-led arts education study, 66% of Chicago Public Schools (“CPS”) are “strong or excelling” in the arts. This is good progress, but most of the schools categorized as “emerging” and “incomplete” are located in communities of color. We must bring to scale successful in-school and out-of-school programs. These opportunities must be connected so young people can take the skills they are gaining in school and pursue their passions out of school. To achieve this, we will:

- Amplify that the arts are integral to learning as math, science and reading by prioritizing Chicago Public Schools funding to increase and diversify resources for arts programs.
- Build more equitable arts ecosystems by better utilizing and coordinating data and mapping tools such as Ingenuity’s artlook Map and Chicago City of Learning to take a proactive approach to addressing arts and culture deserts in all Chicago zip codes. This would not only identify where public and private dollars need to be invested to bridge arts opportunity gaps, but also make visible where robust in-school and out-of-school ecosystems exist, can be brought to scale and replicated.
- Develop an artist-in-residence program, funded through public/private partnerships, to build job opportunities for artists and mentorship opportunities for young people. Artists can be recruited from the neighborhoods and through new partnerships with art schools and higher education.
- Use partnerships to add more capacity to successful out-of-school programs like Marwen, YOUmedia at the Chicago Public Library, After School Matters and the Chicago Park District.
- Expand opportunities for young people to experience theater, music and art outside of school through field trips and expanded afterschool partnerships.
- Enhance the voices of socially-active artists to encourage civic engagement and support developing creative conversations and solutions to our city’s biggest challenges.

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## Enjoying the Arts Everywhere

The art of our city — whether it be in a neighborhood music venue, a painting on the wall of the Art Institute of Chicago, or a play at one of our hundreds of storefront theaters — speaks to us and enhances our quality of life. Art makes us laugh, cry, argue and contemplate. It brings us joy when we need it most. In an effort to ensure everyone in Chicago can participate in and enjoy the arts, regardless of their zip code or economic status, we will:

- Support DCASE's sector development work, such as the 2019 Year of Chicago Theater, to bring art to new people and reach diverse audiences in Chicago's 77 neighborhoods.
- Build investment in Chicago's public art program by overhauling the Percent for Art ordinance, including the expansion of eligible projects, explore a Public Art Fund
- Bring art installations and initiatives such as Art on the MART outside of the Loop to neighborhoods through additional private philanthropic support.
- Connect local artists and arts organizations to LISC and chambers of commerce to ensure that artists are included in strategies and plans to enhance our neighborhoods.

**A final note:** This election is an opportunity for Chicagoans to vote their values and bring a dynamic new vision of change to Chicago. Working together, we will lift up the diverse voices of our artists, building together the conditions in which they can not only thrive as Chicagoans, but as artists, raising the level of discourse in our great city. We will prioritize grantmaking through DCASE, arts funding at CPS and aggressively pursue new partnerships to make the arts more accessible. We also must continue to support our dynamic tourism industry, promoting, investing in and harnessing not only our global cultural destinations but our community-based arts organizations as well. Let's invite all Chicagoans into the arts, and they in turn will invite the world.

Please send your thoughts and ideas to [info@lightfootforchicago.com](mailto:info@lightfootforchicago.com) and we will build on this plan together.