THE 2012 CHICAGO CULTURAL PLAN:

LOCAL & INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES for NEIGHBORHOODS and THE CITY

A Research Report by Students of PPHA 39703

Harris School of Public Policy Studies

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Introduction

Culture matters to 21st century cities. The “creative economy” of the combined commercial, nonprofit, and informal arts is now recognized as an important economic driver that can spur the development of cities and regions, not only in downtown areas but within and across diverse local neighborhoods (Florida 2002, Glaeser 2011). A vibrant cultural life within city neighborhoods can also foster social inclusion and neighborhood well-being (Stern & Seifert 2008), increase civic engagement (Goldbard 2006), and create authentic, energetic cultural scenes in which people want to live and work (Silver 2011). In short, cultural vitality is integral to both the economic and the social well-being of cities.

But what makes a city a culturally vital one? Recent research shows that successful creative communities depend on sustainable, localized networks of firms and creative workers and artists, which work together to allow the exchange of ideas and drive creativity and innovation (Scott 2006, Currid 2007). This means that effective cultural planning is increasingly local and decentralized, embracing bottom-up planning at the neighborhood or community level, while at the same time focused on developing multiple connections between the diverse organizations, people and places that make up the for-profit, non-profit and informal cultural sectors (Markusen & Gadwa 2010, Wyszomirski 2008).

In line with these scholarly insights, and as part of Chicago’s 2012 cultural planning process, we have focused our collective research on identifying cultural planning best practices – at the level of principles, initiatives, projects, and events – that will encourage the development of a creative economy in Chicago that is at once place-based, connected, diverse and vital.

Structure of the report

In Section 1, we begin with an examination of urban cultural districts in the US, using these highly-planned urban spaces as a launching pad to outline a broader cultural planning framework. Cultural districts are a valuable starting point because they are well-studied in the U.S., and because the formal and centralized approach often used in their creation allows us to more easily pinpoint successful and unsuccessful practices.

In Section 2, we describe and define a number of best practice principles that are inherent in effective and sustainable cultural district-making, but that can also be broadly applied to cultural planning at all levels of city life outside of a formal cultural districts framework, from informal community initiatives to city-wide events.
In Section 3, we apply the principles defined in Section 2 to identify a number of neighborhood- and community-level initiatives that would be likely to increase cultural vitality in Chicago. We support our findings in this section with case studies of neighborhood-specific cultural projects from around Chicago that have already proven to be effective and sustainable.

In Section 4, we extend our framework further to identify projects and events that could be implemented on a city-wide basis and that can engage the city-wide community. We also extend our outlook to consider examples of high-impact cultural initiatives in cities outside the US that have been proven to work and that could be localized for Chicago communities.

Methodology of the report

Our research encompassed a review of the literature, interviews with cultural leaders and experts in the field, as well as first-hand, on-the-ground experience in a number of Chicago’s neighborhoods and communities. A bibliography is included at the end of this report.

At the outset, our research led us to identify specific parameters that could guide our investigation of effective cultural planning. We defined best-practice initiatives as those that are:

- Scalable
- Cost-effective
- Replicable
- Engaged with the community
- Applicable to the neighborhood
- Implementable

We used the acronym SCREAM as a tool to identify initiatives that were “best” in the sense of fulfilling key principles of inclusivity, connectedness, and localization, and that were “practices” in the sense of representing actually achievable applications of these principles.

We also recognized that even within the SCREAM framework, cultural planning decisions are necessarily shaped by resource constraints. We therefore found it useful to evaluate the specific initiatives and projects identified in Sections 3 and 4 of this report based on (1) cost-effectiveness and (2) likely impact on cultural vitality. As a decision-making tool, we employed the following matrix to describe the possible range of community cultural projects according to these two key criteria:
Considering Cost-effectiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected impact of the initiative</th>
<th>Cost (financial or otherwise) of the initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Slam Dunks**
  - Definitely pursue
  - 1

- **Quick Wins**
  - Maybe pursue
  - 2

- **Aspirational Projects**
  - Maybe pursue
  - 3

- **Expensive Lemons**
  - Do not pursue
  - 4

Finally, interspersed throughout this report are case study examples of good cultural planning taken from neighborhoods around Chicago, as well as from other US and international cities. Because Chicago is a global city that competes for business and for creative talent with cities around the world, there is value in looking beyond Chicago’s borders for model cultural initiatives. In a recent ranking of “global cities” in which Chicago placed sixth overall, 14 of the top 20 cities were outside the US. (A.T. Kearney 2010.) And many of these cities were found to outperform Chicago on measures of cultural vibrancy. In this context, it makes sense to look to cultural planning models from outside Chicago for ideas and inspiration.

Of course, what works in Paris will not necessarily work in Chicago. Indeed, what works in Austin, Texas may be just as unlikely to work here. But the SCREAM framework, and in particular our emphasis on localized, place-based planning, helps us to identify initiatives that have the potential to be made into uniquely Chicago projects. A culturally vibrant Chicago is a Chicago that understands and promotes its unique cultural heritage, but that also encourages the development of evolving and diverse networks of creative workers at the community-level all the way up to the global stage.
Section 1: Cultural Districts

Most neighborhoods have a unique set of assets that make them culturally distinct, viable, and vital, and therefore have the potential to become a designated cultural district. Whether or not a neighborhood’s assets are leveraged to make that potential a reality is another story.

The term “cultural district” has several definitions, along a spectrum of how much or how little government is involved in the district’s development, and whether it appeals primarily to local residents, tourists, or both. Generally speaking, a cultural district is “a well-recognized, labeled, mixed-use area of a city in which a high concentration of cultural facilities serves as the anchor of attraction” (Frost-Kumpf 1998). On one end of the spectrum, a cultural district can be an area that receives significant public investment and intervention from the City for the purpose of development. On the other end of the spectrum, a cultural district may be “naturally occurring,” with no official recognition, but nevertheless have a reputation as being a neighborhood or area with a high density of cultural assets, including arts organizations, arts-related businesses, cultural participants, and artists (Stern & Seifert 2007).

Types of Cultural Districts

Previous studies have identified five major types of cultural districts: cultural compounds, and districts with a major art institution focus, with an arts and entertainment focus, with a downtown focus, and with a cultural production focus (Frost-Kumpf 1998). A sixth type is the naturally occurring district. These six types of districts vary widely both in the kind of cultural assets they have and in the level of intervention by the government, although there is some overlap in their characteristics.

Cultural compounds are districts that have a high concentration of cultural institutions and are often set apart from the main commercial district of the city. Businesses, if they exist in the compound, include restaurants or souvenir shops that generally serve as auxiliaries to the main compound. Examples of the cultural compound district in Chicago are The Museum Campus and the Lincoln Park Zoo.

A district with a major arts institutions focus is similar to a cultural compound, but is often more integrated with other amenities in the city. The Theater District in the Loop is an example of this type. An arts and entertainment district also contains restaurants and retail amenities, but is made up of smaller cultural venues such as small theaters, galleries and nightclubs. A district with a downtown focus encompasses all the cultural institutions in a downtown area, such as the Loop.
A cultural production-focused district is centered on an artisanal industry, such as crafts or artisanal foods. Naturally-occurring districts are discussed further in Section 3 of this report.

Benefits and Risks of Cultural Districts

The creation of designated cultural districts is an opportunity to stimulate neighborhood revitalization not just through direct economic impact, but also by facilitating social interactions between people. Cultural Districts have the potential to enhance a sense of place and identity, and they can create jobs and economic opportunities for new and existing residents. However, there are several disadvantages to intervening in the creation of cultural districts. A specially-designated cultural district may feel artificial to local residents, even as it draws tourists (Garcia 2004). It may lead to gentrification, pricing out existing residents and the very people that helped to build the community in the first place (Scott 2006). Real cities and communities that wish to leverage cultural assets, and attract, incubate, and ultimately support a creative, highly-skilled class of workers will still rely on low-wage workers to support the basic and auxiliary functions of the entire production system (Stern & Seifert 2008). Creative growth that comes from cultural districting, as with any growth, will lead to challenges in dealing with density. New residents who are drawn to the cultural district will in turn necessitate the development of housing, transportation, and social infrastructure. Thus, policies for cultural districting should be seen as part of an entire system that supports human capital and economic development. Good cultural districts need to encourage authentic cultural development, while mitigating issues of inequality and density.

District Designation in the City of Chicago

The City of Chicago does not have an official “Cultural District” designation, but it does use the “Landmark” designation to identify, protect, and enhance historically and culturally significant buildings and sites. The Chicago Landmark Commission, within the Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Housing and Economic Development, makes this designation. This designation may not be the most efficient vehicle for the development of cultural districts. Buildings within a declared landmark district receive tax incentives and rebates for development, as well as a permit fee waiver. However, landmark designation can also stifle development, as any proposed renovations must be reviewed and approved by the Landmark Commission. This poses potential bottlenecks and may increase the costs of development.
Cultural District Framework

As of 1998, more than 90 U.S. cities across the country had created cultural districts in an effort to revitalize their communities (Frost-Kumpf 1998). That number has continued to grow (for recent examples see ArtistLink: Examples of City Initiatives, Markusen & Gadwa 2010). Although there is not one standard model for implementing cultural districts, successful districts take advantage of their unique identity and natural amenities to create a thriving environment for urban development. Several preliminary steps may help in the process of designating an area as a cultural district.

One effective starting point is to conduct a thorough inventory of the cultural assets of the area, including existing anchor institutions, community organizations, creative businesses, and non-profit arts organizations. Anchor institutions may include museums, music venues, or galleries. Community organizations may be those committed to community development, those that expand business opportunities, or those that promote heritage. Creative businesses may be record labels or design firms. Non-profit arts organizations include music groups, theaters, dance troupes, and cultural centers. This inventory can help provide a more clearly defined view of the competitive advantages and unique characteristics of the community.

Several other key issues should be considered when developing cultural districts: 1) quality of local assets; 2) development of human and capital resources; 3) attraction to the area; and 4) social connectivity (Sacco et al. 2009). First, policy makers and community leaders should determine not only the quality of their cultural assets, but the quality of demand for them. Quantitative measures such as attendance and revenues may be useful and relatively easy to obtain. More subjective issues also need to be considered, such as the experience and capabilities of arts organization leaders and community leaders. When considering the quality of demand, it is important to consider how people in the community utilize and value local cultural assets.

Second, the development of a cultural district involves the development of local entrepreneurship and talent. A key asset of a cultural district is its human capital, and the capacity of local residents to contribute to the sustainable development of a district. Third, attraction to the area – that is, the area’s ability to draw external talent and demand for both development and consumption – should also be prioritized and developed. The ability to accommodate visitors and outside expertise is often a key distinguishing feature of cultural districts from other neighborhoods. Fourth, effective cultural districts will be able to enhance social connectivity by bringing a diversity of key stakeholders together to create creative networks and develop the district. These stakeholders include business leaders who can invest capital, community leaders who will monitor and be the voice of the residents in the process, artists and arts organizations whose talents and organizations will be leveraged, city government leaders and policy makers who are responsible for approving permits and zoning laws, and even state lawmakers (see
The U Street Corridor in Washington, D.C. is a successful planned cultural district that shows how a city can leverage a particular area’s cultural history and existing cultural assets to attract and support human and capital resources, and promote social connectivity among business, artistic and cultural stakeholders.

### Case Study: U Street, Washington, D.C.

The U Street Corridor is a commercial and residential neighborhood located in Northwest Washington D.C. It boasts boutiques, restaurants, nightclubs, art galleries, theatres, and music venues. Situated between the Shaw and Howard University communities, the U Street Corridor served as an epicenter for Black life, politics, business, art, music and culture until the 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In the immediate aftermath of the riots that followed King’s death, the area quickly declined, businesses closed, residents moved, and the area became mired in crime and drugs (Ault 2006).

Revitalization efforts starting in the 1990s focused on linking private and public investment with the neighborhood’s cultural heritage in order to maximize the power of those investments. Cultural Tourism DC used its convening power to bring together community, cultural and business leaders as part of a steering committee that would link cultural and social assets in the U Street area to private and public funds. A citywide survey of cultural assets helped identify resources in U Street that were “almost ready” for visitors with minimal additional investment. The steering committee also backed tourism initiatives, which included prominent signage, maps, walking tours, and a visitors’ center to improve access and visibility (Smith 2008).

In 2005, the D.C. City Council approved “DUKE: Development Framework for a Cultural Destination District Within Washington, DC’s Greater Shaw U Street,” a comprehensive plan to develop city-owned buildings, promote private investment, revitalize existing cultural assets and maintain accessibility through increased affordable housing (DC Office of Planning 2005). The creation of the plan depended on significant participation from 500 different community stakeholders. Progress toward key goals is publicly tracked online (DC Office of Planning 2011). Cultural vibrancy was further enhanced through the District of Columbia’s investment in the Shaw-Howard University and U Street/African American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo Metro stations, which have helped to increase access between the metropolitan Washington D.C. region and the historic U Street district. As a result of these city-level initiatives, U Street has become a “city within a city,” in which a concentration of cultural facilities and linked private and public investment has created a culturally vibrant, diverse and connected district, one that is accessible to people of all backgrounds while still retaining its identity and appeal to African-Americans.
Application of Framework to Chicago

Chicago has a rich variety of cultural assets throughout the city. If Chicago were to champion the explicit development of cultural districts, both arts and entertainment-focused districts and cultural production districts would be likely candidates. Arts and entertainment districts could take advantage of the city’s rich homegrown musical heritage, and its status as a major venue for musical groups large and small, and be an opportunity to restore concert halls, theaters, auditoriums and other venues of historic and aesthetic significance. Two areas of interest, each with its own rich musical heritage and collection of significant cultural assets, are Bronzeville and Uptown. In both of these cases, development and revitalization has been discussed publicly for years (Friends of Uptown 2012, Black Metropolis NHAC 2012). Community groups are mobilized, and some city officials and aldermen have been pushing for formal development plans. However, progress has been slow (Uptown Update 2011, Uptown Update 2008, Olivio 2009). New and sustained development will require that all relevant stakeholders be engaged, and that the city work closely with owners of cultural venues and with community residents, many of whom may have strong commitments to restoration and development.

A cultural production district is another way to highlight the cultural assets of the city. The City of Chicago officially promotes three creative industries: fashion, printing, and culinary (City of Chicago website 2012A). Although these particular industries have strong footholds in Chicago, many Chicagoans might not be aware of them or even consider them to be intricately linked with the city. If the City wishes to promote and develop other industries, it might consider microbrewing. Chicago has several microbreweries and brew pubs throughout the city, including Goose Island, Half Acre, Revolution Brewing, Haymarket, and Piece. These microbreweries are part of an industry with a strong sense of identity and pride (Carroll et al. 2004).

Cultural districts represent a very special type of case: one that involves bringing together different assets, community leaders, community capital, and government resources as part of a comprehensive long-term plan. But even with limited resources, all neighborhoods can benefit from cultural development that is inclusive and sustainable. The following sections of this report address how such development might be achieved in Chicago outside of a cultural districts framework.
Section 2: Principles of Effective Cultural Planning and Programming

Cultural districting is one extreme of the cultural planning process: a comprehensive attempt to enhance and publicize the cultural life of a given area. In looking at cultural districts it is important to see them as composite efforts. The districting process is composed of dozens of smaller programs and ideas which can often prove useful on their own. Because not every neighborhood is suitable for districting, and because smaller, more targeted programs can often do a great deal of good in their own right, it is useful to lay out a series of core principles which can be widely applied to all levels of cultural planning.

The following principles are drawn from both case study work and the academic literature. While the application of each will vary depending on the project being developed, they should all be carefully considered in any cultural planning or programming effort, from full-on districting to small community arts programs.

The cultural planning principles we have identified are as follows:

- Cost Effectiveness
- Community Engagement
- Connectivity
- Accessibility
- Visibility
- Transparency

Each is discussed in turn below.

Cost Effectiveness

With limited resources, it is often best to focus on areas where the infrastructure and amenities required to create sustained public engagement already exist. Getting the most out of a cultural program also requires strong knowledge of the neighborhood, its residents and its cultural background.

Programs that focus on large, expensive buildings, whether renovations or entirely new projects, can be problematic. The success of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is a striking illustration of the positive impact that such a tactic can have, but applying this lesson to any neighborhood
can have serious consequences (Garcia 2004). The problems of community buy-in and stakeholder alignment are amplified by the resource outlay required by large building projects. Arts centers and museums that are not embedded within their communities can sit underused or even empty, adding nothing to the cultural vibrancy of the surrounding area, at enormous cost. While the benefits of a centrally-located institution can be great, the pitfalls of the process require that it be undertaken with care.

**Community Engagement**

Arts and cultural activities often require broad participation through small-scale creative experiments and endeavors before they can become self-sustaining. A vital grassroots scene of small arts and community organizations is crucial for the healthy development of arts and culture. Small organizations and community involvement promote social connections between artists, cultural workers, and other residents while also allowing for flexibility and freedom in the creative process. As such, community engagement is crucial to the success of cultural development projects.

Heavy public investment in infrastructure, zoning and parks can create the bones of a thriving creative community, but without the support of community organizations these efforts can fail spectacularly. Community-based groups are best equipped to deal with the specific issues facing a given area. Their members will have first-hand knowledge of the community’s most urgent needs, the local political situation, and the major commercial stakeholders who could serve as sources of funding. Properly leveraged community support can result in a strong home-grown cultural infrastructure that can oversee and expand cultural initiatives long after the initial investment phase has passed (Grodach 2011, Markusen & Gadwa 2010). Good community engagement also helps ensure that all stakeholders – including neighborhood residents, cultural workers, city officials, and funders – will be aligned toward the same program goals.

**Connectivity**

Well-planned cultural programs will serve as opportunities to strengthen connectivity within communities. This can mean making sure that individual artists, non-profit arts organizations and commercial cultural firms are given opportunities to come together and exchange ideas. It can also mean acknowledging the contributions of organizations not commonly associated with the creative industries, such as carpentry shops and architecture firms. Groups not typically associated with the fine arts can be an integral part of the cultural identity of a community. By encouraging groups from different ends of the cultural spectrum to communicate and collaborate, planners can not only enhance community cohesion but add diverse new voices to their projects.
Creating networks of artists and cultural workers from the neighborhood-level on up is an integral part of enhancing the cultural vibrancy and creativity of the city as a whole (Currid 2007; Scott 2006; Stern & Seifert 2008). Cultural programs can act as a bridge between the neighborhood sphere of public life and the personal social networks of community members, thus fostering a sense of identity with the community that is solidly based on authentic social ties. They can also provide a flexible path into a cultural industry with lower barriers than large commercial firms. Connectivity suggests not only that individual programs encourage spaces for diverse groups to connect, but also that neighborhoods be encouraged to host a diverse range of cultural events.

**Accessibility**

No cultural program will succeed if no one participates. This means ensuring that any area slated for cultural programming be physically accessible to a diverse array of residents. It should have links to multiple types of public transportation and be easy to reach by car or bike. The simpler it is for visitors and residents to reach the area, the more successful and beneficial the program will be.

Accessibility also applies to financial considerations. Tickets for an event should not be so expensive as to drive away large sections of the prospective audience. It is not only bad business to overprice events, but bad publicity as well. If local community members cannot afford to attend their own cultural events, it reflects poorly on the entire planning process and inhibits community engagement.

**Visibility**

Visibility of both cultural programs and of specific cultural assets is necessary in order for cultural vibrancy to be maximized. Active participation in cultural programs and initiatives is difficult if not impossible to achieve without steps in place to promote both visibility in the local and larger community and long-term audience development. If cultural events and programs are not properly promoted, they will fail to connect residents, artists, and cultural workers. If the cultural heritage of a neighborhood is not recognized and identified, it cannot be leveraged to encourage cultural participation, development, and investment. Thus, visibility is an integral part of effective cultural programming and planning.

Visibility can mean promotion through traditional advertising channels as well as through social media. It can also mean ensuring that culturally significant places have consistent and comprehensive signage. Whether in the physical form of posters on buses and street signs or in the form of social media promotion through Facebook, Twitter or blogging, the consistent use of
logos and other visual aids for identification and direction is an essential factor in the sustained success of cultural activities.

**Transparency**

Finally, transparency in terms of goals and implementation is vital to the development, exposure, and monitoring of cultural plans and programs. Clearly articulated goals and aims frame the context of the project, increase exposure, and help ensure that all stakeholders, including planners, funders and residents, are aligned. Making available information on project progress, including the metrics used to measure that progress, makes it easier for stakeholders to continue to support the project throughout its implementation. Transparency of goals and implementation can also help cultural plans and programs to be accountable and responsive to local needs along the way. This may be particularly important in Chicago, where governmental transparency has historically been a concern.

A helpful example of putting transparency in cultural planning front and center stage is the UK’s Department for Culture, Media, and Sports, which not only publicizes its aims and goals on an accessible website, but breaks down the costs and funds devoted to individual cultural projects and departments, and tracks project progress and measuring metrics, in an online “transparency data repository” ([http://www.transparency.culture.gov.uk/](http://www.transparency.culture.gov.uk/)).

These above core principles are an integral part of effective cultural planning, whether such planning involves the formation of formal large-scale cultural districts or the development of a mix of community-specific cultural initiatives. In the two sections that follow, we consider specific best-practice initiatives at the neighborhood and citywide level, inspired by successes in Chicago and internationally. These initiatives put the above principles into practice and, if implemented or expanded, would be likely to increase Chicago’s cultural vibrancy in a meaningful way.
Section 3: “Natural Cultural Districts” and Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives

The principles identified above are often at work in communities with a strong sense of place and cultural vibrancy. Often these types of communities can be considered naturally occurring cultural districts. One example of such a naturally-occurring district in Chicago is the Lincoln Square area.

Case Study: Lincoln Square/Ravenswood

The Lincoln Square area thrives because of a rich mix of accessible and connected cultural assets. A key cultural institution, the Old Town School of Folk Music, is a well-integrated anchor institution for arts and culture in the area without being a dominating force over smaller institutions. Lincoln Square is home to many other arts businesses and organizations, including the Chicago Printmakers Collaborative and several small galleries. The area also has a strong identity still connected to its history as a center for the German-American community in Chicago.

A crucial key to Lincoln Square’s development as a naturally occurring cultural district is the Ravenswood Industrial Corridor on the east side of Lincoln Square. Starting in the 1970s, this corridor began to slowly evolve from its industrial history into a center for cultural production. Empty factory spaces have allowed small businesses and creative industries to thrive within large and affordable open spaces. For example, the Lillstreet Arts Center occupies 40,000 square feet and Architectural Artifacts occupies 80,000 square feet. The area has benefitted from low rents often half the cost of those in Loop, flexible leases, free parking, and plentiful transportation options (Anderson 2008, Guy 2011, Day 2010). These conditions were crucial to the initial development of small businesses and creative organizations along the corridor.

Ravenswood residents are extremely proud of the neighborhood’s history of successful production, both industrial and cultural, and identify themselves as part of the “Ravenswood neighborhood,” even though the Ravenswood Industrial Corridor is actually a part of the Lincoln Square community area (Seligman 2005, Anderson 2008). This neighborhood pride and identity is exemplified by the annual "Ravenswood Artwalk: Tour of Arts and Industry." (Ravenswood Artwalk website 2012).

City intervention has assisted cultural development in Lincoln Square and Ravenswood. The southern section of the Ravenswood Corridor is a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) zone with an active Small Business Improvement Fund (SBIF) program, and several areas in Lincoln Square are also Special Service Areas (SSAs), which provide “expanded services and programs funded through a localized property tax levy within contiguous industrial, commercial, and residential areas” (47th Ward website 2012). These city-supported programs are supported by the local alderman, as well as the North Center Chamber of Commerce, the Lincoln Square Chamber of Commerce, and the Ravenswood Community Council. Due to favorable logistical conditions, as well as city and community support, the newly transformed Ravenswood Creative Corridor is able to proudly occupy the cornerstone of the Lincoln Square cultural district.
Lincoln Square, with its homegrown institutions, strong sense of place, and rich mix of economic and cultural assets, showcases the strengths of naturally-occurring cultural districts. However, these strengths are not unique to Lincoln Square; rather, they can be found in all of Chicago’s neighborhoods. Each neighborhood, from Rogers Park to Hegewisch, possesses valuable cultural assets that shape the City’s larger cultural landscape and character. The challenge lies in building on these resources in ways that foster civic participation, innovation and creativity, and contribute to the local economy.

Below, we describe a number of neighborhood-level initiatives that, if implemented or expanded, are likely to increase cultural vibrancy in the city. These initiatives were inspired by existing successful practices we identified in communities across Chicago. Our evaluation of these initiatives was supplemented by literature reviews and interviews with key stakeholders. We have grouped the initiatives into four broad categories: Fostering Collaborative Networks; Broadening Participation through Signage and Marketing; Creating Shared and Mixed-Use Spaces; and Building Neighborhood Pride.

Fostering Collaborative Networks

INITIATIVE: ASSISTING IN FORMING AND MAINTAINING NEIGHBORHOOD CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS, INCLUDING PROVIDING FUNDING FOR AT LEAST ONE FULL TIME EMPLOYEE PER NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Neighborhood cultural associations can leverage the convening power of the city to promote and encourage the development of events and spaces where neighborhood cultural workers and artists can network and interact. They may also serve as a space for community members to engage in dialogue and address community issues through arts projects and performances, and they can provide a platform for outside groups to gain contact with the neighborhood and learn about its cultural resources and needs. In this way, they can support commercial cultural development and social cohesion. The Englewood Community Cultural Planning Council (EC3) provides a telling example of the benefits and challenges of local arts associations.
The Englewood Community Cultural Planning Council (EC3) was formed as a gathering platform for locally-based organizations eight years ago. It still holds monthly meetings in the Hamilton Park Cultural Center with the attendance of local arts groups, churches, schools, and many outside groups or foundations that are engaged in community work in Englewood. Current EC3 chair John Zeigler describes the council as a “safe space” in which thoughts on the community can be addressed without being judged. “This is the critical information center, it’s the space where we talk about actionable steps.”

Zeigler describes arts and culture as a way to encourage people to express their thoughts on things that matter to the community. One recent event the Council worked on was an arts project called “What Does Peace Looks Like”. By collaborating with local schools, children engage in collective art pieces, such as large mixed-media posters. Zeigler emphasizes the importance of building connections between already-existing informal groups, ranging from a writer’s circle to “big mama’s kitchen on the street corner.” The arts act as a common platform for people to connect, thereby building up strong social ties, or “social capital,” in the community.

Another project EC3 is engaged in is the compilation of the community’s current assets. Through mapping with GIS tools and detailed documentation, the Council wishes to document the numerous formal and informal community groups that have engaged in community-based projects in Englewood. By surveying already-existing programs and groups, EC3 can assist in assessing further needs, while also learning from what works and what has failed in the past. Zeigler describes EC3 as a “largely informal” group, without any funds, office space, or full-time personnel. This structure has the advantages of being zero-cost, while also protecting the Council as an open democratic space for dialogue. “We won’t have arts groups lining up at our meetings to secure funds, because we don’t provide any.” However, Zeigler also thinks that the Council would benefit from a dedicated full-time coordinator, and that other neighborhood groups in the city could equally benefit from city assistance in building organizational capacity.

In addition to sponsoring cultural projects, neighborhood associations can also pass along valuable knowledge to small arts organizations and connect them to the public support programs that they might need. For example, in Logan Square, the non-profit group “I Am Logan Square” provides connections and cooperation between the neighborhood’s various groups, while it also bridges the community’s diverse groups, including Hispanic artists and heritage groups. The Southside Arts & Humanities Network (SAHN), which is supported by the Civic Knowledge Project of the Division of the Humanities at the University of Chicago, also encourages collaborations among arts groups and connects them to educational, technical and space resources. SAHN Program Coordinator Joanie Friedman describes her role as a “connector,” and
emphasizes that an important aspect of SAHN’s work is fostering collaboration among arts groups, local churches, and businesses.

An effort to assist collaboration between local businesses and artists is also being made in the South Shore neighborhood, although there is no neighborhood arts association there. The South Shore Chamber Inc., has recently hosted a pop-up art festival in which the work of local artists is displayed in store fronts on the main business corridor of 71st street, both occupied and vacant. Because the South Shore has no neighborhood arts association of its own, South Shore Chamber executive director Teyonda Wertz hired local artist Benyamin Maccabee of “Studio 71” to contact local artists and to organize a panel to evaluate the work, eventually displaying the work of 22 local artists.

As with the case of EC3, many neighborhood associations that pursue cultural programs are informal, and their success hinges on the personal enthusiasm of their members. Existing neighborhood associations could benefit from having a full time employee to ensure sustainability. With city support, these groups could also be accountable through a reporting mechanism back to the city. By encouraging the creation of neighborhood arts associations, including through funding for just one full-time employee for each neighborhood association, the city could do much to strengthen existing enthusiasm within neighborhoods and communities for networking and collaboration. If funding for neighborhood cultural associations is not feasible, the city could encourage existing Special Service Areas (SSAs) to consider including cultural resources and needs in their annual service plans.

INITIATIVE: EXTENDING OUTREACH OF “COACHING” PROGRAMS THROUGH NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

Small arts organizations often require assistance, whether in the basic operations of running an organization, the promotion and marketing of their artwork, or in the process of writing grants and securing funds. They often need “coaching” to get on track. The city currently provides such assistance through the Community Arts Assistance Program (CAAP); yet its outreach could be improved to reach more artists and neighborhoods. As Susan Fox of Elastic Arts Foundation in Logan Square pointed out, organizations that are just starting out are often unaware of the help available to them through various public and private channels.

Having dedicated arts associations in each neighborhood would greatly improve the ability of CAAP to reach out to community-level groups. CAAP could collaborate with neighborhood associations in a number of ways. One would be to use neighborhood associations to improve its publicity and outreach towards community arts groups. Another would be to pass along methods of “coaching” and organizational training to the neighborhood associations themselves, which could in turn provide basic assistance to various community organizations.
INITIATIVE: ESTABLISHING REGIONAL CULTURAL CENTERS ACROSS THE CITY (SUCH AS NORTH SIDE, SOUTH SIDE, WEST SIDE) TO BRIDGE AND INTEGRATE LOCAL ASSETS

Neighborhoods often need help integrating and bridging local cultural assets to encourage their full development. In the case of the South Shore neighborhood, the South Shore Cultural Center is a large local anchor institution that has intrinsic historical value in its architecture, while also having visibility and publicity. However, the South Shore Cultural Center is currently under the jurisdiction of the Chicago Park District, and neighborhood groups often need assistance in bridging the administrative divides and regulations in using its space to host events.

The establishment of regional cultural centers across the city (such as North Side, South Side, and West Side) could provide focal points to promote smooth integration and collaboration among different arts and cultural institutions that span the public and private sectors. They could also train personnel to have a more detailed and nuanced understanding of local cultural assets and organizations. In addition to assisting arts groups within their communities, city-based regional centers could provide connections among arts groups across different neighborhoods, and could spearhead regionally-based marketing initiatives, while providing valuable office space and working space for arts organizations.

Broadening Participation through Signage and Marketing

INITIATIVE: DEVELOPING STREET SIGNS TO “HIDDEN” CULTURAL ASSETS

The primary purpose of physical signage is to guide residents and visitors alike to their intended cultural destinations along the most appropriate route at various stages of their journey, particularly where destinations may be difficult to find. Due to the diversity, geographic spread, and sheer number of Chicago neighborhoods, many cultural assets remain mostly unknown and under-visited. Assets located in the Loop and along the lakefront are exceptions. Navy Pier, located just north of the Loop and on the lake, provides an excellent case study of an asset that the City of Chicago has aggressively and successfully promoted through signage.
Case Study: All signs point to Navy Pier

The City of Chicago spent many years and a significant amount of private as well as public money to redevelop Navy Pier into its current form as a Loop-centric festival marketplace. It is estimated that annual visits to the Pier peaked in 2000 with 9.1 million visitors (Smith 2005). Although the Pier has inherent attractions, including the Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, concessions, and numerous chain restaurants, there is no doubt that the City’s full-force effort to market this asset is greatly responsible for its visibility and tourism statistics. Throughout the City, there are street signs that direct visitors to Navy Pier. The Chicago Transit Authority’s Blue Line Grand Station depicts a Ferris wheel and advertises Navy Pier within the station, even though the Pier is over two miles to the east. The City also provides free trolleys that take visitors and residents from the Loop to Navy Pier. Apart from street signage, a visitor to one of Chicago’s many hotels can find Navy Pier mentioned in a visitor’s magazine as many as 34 times in 88 pages (Smith 2005).

It is difficult to miss Navy Pier, even at the Grand Blue Line station almost two miles away. The city’s aggressive signage serves a dual purpose of alerting visitors and residents alike to what is in store if they continue towards the lakefront and of serving as a signifier of its prominence as a city asset.

Similarly, individuals are alerted to head east to get to Promontory Point and other points along the lake front trail from all over Chicago. These signs serve a practical purpose of guiding bikers, runners, and walkers to their intended destination; and they serve as a reminder to the community at large that while these assets might not be visible from one’s current location, they exist to enrich and enliven the area.

**INITIATIVE: LAUNCHING A MEDIA CAMPAIGN TO RE-BRAND THE CITY’S BUSES AS NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTORS**

In cooperation with Chicago Area Transit Authority, the City could leverage its existing assets through a media campaign to encourage individuals to take buses to cultural programs and amenities, promote inter-neighborhood travel, and also increase CTA ridership. For example, the CTA currently promotes the Red Line as a connector between the White Sox and the Cubs. Yet the underlying connection between Bridgeport and Wrigleyville is not advertised. Marketing that neighborhood connection would help champion the physical links between Chicago’s diverse neighborhoods and also bring attention to neighborhoods that receive a smaller share of visitors.
The CTA has 1,781 buses that operate over 140 routes and 1,959 route miles. Buses make about 19,709 trips at 11,493 posted bus stops, and the entire bus system serves just under 1 million people on a typical weekday (CTA 2011). Although many Chicagoans might be aware of the National Museum of Mexican Art, many fewer know how to get there on public transportation. The #9 is a CTA bus that stops near the museum. It is also a route that will take one from Uptown to Beverly through Lakeview, Noble Square, and Little Italy. Increased promotion of bus routes like this one as a means to navigate to and through neighborhoods is a low-cost, high-impact way of increasing knowledge about neighborhood and cultural diversity and access to neighborhood assets.

Re-branding the city’s bus routes is also a way to decentralize foot traffic and activities from the Loop into the neighborhoods. Through a new emphasis on neighborhood accessibility and connectedness via bus routes, media attention and publicity might also be diverted into the neighborhoods. Neighborhood cultural venues have often complained about the difficulties in competing with the Loop, while others have mentioned that public promotion of the arts is biased in favor of the north side. A re-branding of bus routes could help emphasize activities within areas of the cities that may be currently overlooked in the city’s publicity efforts.

INITIATIVE: CREATING A SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLICITY TOOLKIT

Not all cultural organizations or initiatives have or will have someone knowledgeable about marketing and media. This is manifest each time an otherwise well-planned and innovative activity suffers from low attendance rates. Visibility and audience development are essential for the continued success of cultural projects and amenities. Many neighborhood associations (including South Shore and EC3) have mentioned that they could benefit from assistance in developing basic skills to set up web sites and run social media platforms.

Leveraging existing assets, DCASE, in conjunction with other qualified cultural organizations, could create a social media and publicity toolkit in an online format that could be reused or easily updated for ongoing use by those organizations and groups that lack expertise in this area. Simple, easy-to-follow directions on how to start a Facebook page or set up a Twitter account for would give burgeoning cultural organizations the ability to self-promote and save precious capital for other start-up costs.
Creating Shared and Mixed-Use Cultural Spaces

INITIATIVE: USING ADVERTISING TO ASSESS THE SPACE NEEDS OF CREATIVE WORKERS AND ORGANIZATIONS

A commonly mentioned need in interviews with residents and community stakeholders is the need for space that will fit their specialized uses. Although the idea of providing subsidized or low-cost artist work/live space is not new – in fact, the recommendation for making live/work space more accessible was made in the 1986 Chicago Cultural Plan – today’s creative workers and organizations still need flexible space that will vary in its type (i.e., live/work space or office space), tenure (ranging from a few weeks or month to a permanent arrangement), and size (ranging from a one-room office to a large performance hall).

For example, a small theatre troupe may need office space to perform administrative functions and hold meetings as well as larger spaces for performances or large gatherings. In some neighborhoods, artists often gather in private venues such as Filter, a coffee shop in Wicker Park; in other areas, churches may function as a central gathering point. Although the City has conducted a survey of existing spaces, and space listings are found on websites such as Chicago Artists Resource (CAR), organizations and creative workers that the research team interviewed were either not aware of the City’s resources or were dismayed to find spaces underrepresented or unknown in their area. One way to bolster awareness of the City’s resources would be to advertise these resources in local media such as local papers and aldermanic ward reports and at town hall meetings. The feedback gained from this kind of promotional effort would be a useful way to assess what spaces artists and organizations require for their work, as well as whether these spaces are available from current city resource lists.

INITIATIVE: EXPANDING THE AVAILABILITY OF SUBSIDIZED OR LOW-COST SHARED OFFICE SPACE TO NEIGHBORHOODS

Many arts and culture organizations need office space to ensure growth and sustainability but lack access to such space. The city can help organizations fully realize their capacity to run their organizations and serve city residents by expanding the availability of subsidized or low-cost office space. If these spaces are shared by many different organizations, they can also promote idea exchange and collaboration. Although such spaces already exist to a limited extent downtown – for example, TechNexus’s clubhouse or the newly built space named 1871 in Merchandise Mart (see case study below) – expanding the stock of these spaces in local neighborhoods specifically for creative and cultural work would enable community artists, arts organizations, and other cultural workers to do better work and make new cultural connections.
Case Study: A Profile of 1871 at Merchandise Mart

1871 is a 50,000 sq. foot flexible working space on the 12th floor of the Merchandise Mart designated for entrepreneurs and start-up organizations. The organizers of 1871 designed the space to “satisfy the unmet need for flexible, collaborative spaces.” In addition to providing space, the organizers will hold up to 40 seminars per month to teach entrepreneurs useful skills to build their businesses.

The space can hold up to 400 people at any given time and is mixed use; for example, organizations can rent reserved desks, co-working spaces, conference rooms, classrooms, and cafes. The space, with its focus on “serendipity,” will promote collaboration and networking opportunities among budding entrepreneurs in a creative environment. (Wong 2012)

Building Neighborhood Pride

One of the main concerns among the community leaders that we interviewed was building cohesive neighborhood identities and neighborhood pride. Neighborhood pride promotion builds neighborhood identity from the ground-up through community-managed activities and programs, which, if linked to existing cultural resources, can promote a neighborhood’s cultural vibrancy.

INITIATIVE: CULTIVATING COMMUNITY GARDENS

Chicago has an extremely long history of successful community gardens dating back to the Victory Gardens program during World War II (Library of Congress 2011). Community gardens already exist in many neighborhoods and, although they may not seem like cultural endeavors at first glance, their social and cultural impact is evident in numerous case studies. Community gardens are opportunities for neighborhoods to address multiple issues that are neighborhood-specific, including urban food deserts, unsightly vacant lots, dark and unlit spaces, obesity and health issues, and anonymity and isolation within communities. They also provide opportunities for physical education, social networking, and even economic growth. Community gardens are projects that can be implemented in almost any neighborhood in Chicago.
Research shows that successful community gardens typically embrace the following aims:

1. Target or include lower-income residents.
2. Include neighbors of various ages, races and ethnic backgrounds.
3. Provide an open space for community gatherings and family events.
4. Offer educational opportunities and vocational skills for youths.
5. Enable gardeners to sell their produce through a local farmer's market.
6. Build in a method to encourage the donation of surplus produce to food shelters.

(Local Government Commission 2010)

These criteria highlight the infrastructural requirements for a community garden to effectively acquire community buy-in and involvement. They are also crucial for community gardens to be able to successfully build neighborhood pride and identity.

Because community gardens address such a breadth of issues, they can be adjusted according to the neighborhood’s vision. Community gardens are long-term projects that have relatively little start-up costs and have the potential to involve diverse members of the community.

Case Study: Paradise Garden in Austin

Community leader Mary Peery helped build Austin’s first community garden, Paradise Garden, in 1989 on the site of a vacant lot with the support of a small group of friends in the community. The vacant lot had not only been an eye-sore, but was a danger to the community. After a sexual assault occurred at the site, Mary Peery rallied community members to clean it up and turn it into a garden. The garden was so successful that it in turn inspired the Austin Green Team, a neighborhood organization that has built more than a dozen gardens throughout Austin. According to NeighborSpace, a Chicago community nonprofit that helps support a variety of garden spaces in Chicago neighborhoods, “the Austin Green Team brought pride to their neighborhood...over the years, their gardens have provided beauty as well as a gathering place for Christmas caroling or a moment of contemplation” (Paradise Garden 2012).

Paradise Garden provides a successful example of how to create neighborhood pride through community gardens. Community buy-in was a crucial catalyst for the initial transformation of this space from a dangerous vacant lot into a safe social and educational space for community growth and interaction. The positive results from the Paradise Garden project, along with continued community support and interest in creating a safer, more friendly neighborhood image, continue to inspire more community gardens in Austin each year.
INITIATIVE: ENCOURAGING COLLECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN NEIGHBORHOOD MURALS

Neighborhood murals are another type of initiative meant to build neighborhood pride by growing social and cultural capital from the ground-up within neighborhoods. Very similar to community gardens, murals build neighborhood pride through community involvement and self-identification, as well as neighborhood beautification. Murals do not necessarily require constant care and negotiation, thus they fulfill a different long-term social role than community gardens do. Murals can also be easily marketed as indicators of neighborhood pride to those outside of the community, as was done, for example, in Humboldt Park.

### Case Study: Humboldt Park Mural Arts Program

The Humboldt Park Mural Arts Program (HP MAP) was started in 2009 by the New Communities Project sponsored by LISC Chicago. HP MAP’s mission is to promote “murals as local destinations and use them as a tool to revitalize the health, well-being and vitality of Humboldt Park by developing neighborhood tours for biking and walking” (Humboldt Park Portal 2011). Its main initiatives include surveying and protecting 40-plus murals in the neighborhood, promoting the murals through an interactive online map (with pictures and descriptions of each mural), re-telling the history of the murals through guided tours, and commissioning new murals through a community-involved process. In this way, HP MAP uses existing cultural resources to translate neighborhood pride and identity into visible cultural material and promotes that material to community residents and to visitors. The program has involved several different local groups and organizations, including the Institute of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture, the Latin United Community Housing Association, Division Street Business Development Association, Archi-treasures, Westside Writing Project, and many local schools. The program has had a visible social impact on the neighborhood in its short life-span and continues to gather community support through ongoing outreach (Humboldt Park Portal 2011).
INITIATIVE: ENCOURAGING AND SUPPORTING NEIGHBORHOOD FESTIVALS

With over 400 neighborhood festivals per year in Chicago, most neighborhoods already host their own festivals, whether for music, art, food, or in honor of some other neighborhood cultural resource. Yet neighborhood festivals can be further encouraged and supported in the city as a tool to build neighborhood pride and identity. Successful festivals prioritize community organization and interest; festivals can range anywhere from a small block party to costly showstoppers that attract residents from across the city (e.g. the Puerto Rican Parade in Humboldt Park and the Taste of Lincoln Ave in Lincoln Park). But they need bottom-up community support to flourish. Successful festivals are also marketed to appropriate audiences. Some festivals might be widely advertised in order to bring people outside the community into the neighborhood, building neighborhood pride by displaying a cohesive and strong identity to outsiders. Other festivals or parades might be focused inward on involving the community itself and encouraging community residents to gather and network. Whoever the audience might be, marketing and visibility are crucial to the success of neighborhood festivals.

Case Study: 79th Street Renaissance Festival in Auburn Gresham

The 79th Street Renaissance Festival began in 2006 as a small local festival focused on celebrating the neighborhood’s senior citizens, as well as marketing the local businesses and economic opportunities in the small southwest side neighborhood of Auburn-Gresham. During its first year, the festival attracted less than 2,000 people and provided free food from local restaurants for all of the community’s senior citizens, as well as a variety of musical acts. By 2011, the festival still prioritized the neighborhood’s elderly and provided free food and entertainment for every senior citizen; but it had also more than doubled in overall size, attracting more than 5,000 people (New Communities 2012). According to community organizer Carlos Nelson, the festival is an important tool in building pride in the neighborhood (New Communities 2012). Equally notably, it has garnered attention from visitors and businesses from outside the neighborhood and is attributed with bringing in the neighborhood’s first bank in 2009. But most importantly to the residents of Auburn-Gresham, the festival is an opportunity for the neighborhood to showcase its assets, such as affordable space and a burgeoning culinary scene (New Communities 2012).
Section 4: International Models and Citywide Cultural Initiatives

Building on the assets and resources of individual neighborhoods serves as an important driver in shaping Chicago’s cultural and economic growth. Although each neighborhood can create a positive cultural impact for its own residents, the impact of community-level cultural resources is amplified when neighborhoods are brought together through citywide activities and projects. Such activities not only showcase the city’s diverse offerings for residents and tourists, but they also serve to elevate Chicago as a “global destination for creativity, innovation, and excellence in the arts” (City of Chicago website 2012B).

Clearly, Chicago already offers a sizable range of citywide activities; but the research team also looked to international cities for model cultural initiatives that could broaden Chicago’s activities portfolio and contribute to citywide cultural development. Below are best-practice initiatives that have proven successful in international cities, and that are likely to be cost-effective and high-impact if properly implemented in Chicago. They are organized into two categories: longer-term projects that the city could commission, support or enable; and annual events that the city could organize or facilitate.

Projects

CHICAGO’S NEIGHBORHOOD CAPITALS OF CULTURE

Since 1985, the European Union has chosen one European city to serve as the European Capital of Culture for each calendar year. The chosen city in turn organizes a series of cultural events – supported and partially financed by the European Commission – throughout the year, intended both for local residents and to attract visitors from throughout the country and continent. The program emphasizes both the diversity of cultures and ethnicities that live in the European Union and the common humanity and European-ness that binds them together. The program has been a successful catalyst for culture-led urban regeneration (Garcia 2004).

This proposed intervention would adapt that program to the context of Chicago, with one of Chicago’s 77 neighborhoods being chosen as Chicago’s Capital of Culture for each calendar year. Events held throughout the year would showcase the unique cultural heritage of that neighborhood and its residents and would highlight the common experiences and values that unite all of Chicago’s cultures.
**How It Works:** A particular neighborhood each year is designated Chicago’s Capital of Culture, and a series of special cultural events are organized throughout the calendar year in that neighborhood. Events may include one-off events (such as a street festival), engagements lasting several months (such as a series of public art installations in local parks) and year-long projects (such as the renovation of a local theatre or landmark). Specific initiatives would intentionally be highly variable and designed to highlight the unique history and culture of the chosen community. The city would organize additional bus, train and/or shuttle routes to ensure that residents from throughout Chicago have consistent and convenient access to the neighborhood all year.

**Implementation:** In Chicago, neighborhood arts councils and neighborhood-based civic organizations would join together to submit applications to the city, which would establish a non-partisan and diverse panel to select that year’s Capital of Culture. The city would provide a Program Manager to guide and coordinate the management of events in the chosen neighborhood throughout the year, in collaboration with local community leaders, local arts and community organizations, and community members. The city would fund some events – perhaps on a sliding scale, with wealthier neighborhoods required to contribute a larger portion of event financing than less advantaged communities – and would also coordinate the financial support of corporations (through sponsorship) and civic organizations and foundations (through grants).

**Estimating Cost and Impact:** The city would incur costs that are significant but not extreme, some of which it may not be able to fully and directly recoup during the program. Because a series of events will take place throughout the year, and because the city will likely have to provide higher levels of financial support to less wealthy neighborhoods to ensure quality and equity, the city may incur higher costs when economically disadvantaged communities are chosen. At the same time, this project has the potential to generate very high and sustainable benefits. It would dramatically increase visibility and awareness of Chicago’s neighborhood diversity. It would encourage community-level cohesion, pride, and connectivity. And it has the potential to generate significant private investment and sustainable economic development in chosen communities.
CULTURAL RESOURCE MAPPING

Cultural resource mapping has been utilized by cities outside the US as a planning and community engagement tool, especially in Canada (Canadian Urban Institute 2010, Creative City Network of Canada, Silver 2011). These projects use informational databases and mapping software to identify the locations of the people, places, organizations, events and other resources that contribute to a city’s cultural vitality. The maps can be used in economic development and land use planning, and can further be used to engage communities and neighborhoods in promoting and appreciating their cultural resources. Current mapping projects in Chicago do not adequately address the locations where cultural workers live and work, and are not integrated into city-level planning.

How It Works: The city collects cultural resource data and, using mapping software, makes the data accessible online to residents, planners, and politicians. The Chicago Community Trust has already made a number of Chicago cultural indicator maps available on their website (Chicago Community Trust). Although a good starting place, these maps focus almost exclusively on cultural facilities and organizations, and contain little information about Chicago’s cultural workforce — where culture workers live and work in Chicago. Because increasing cultural vibrancy depends in part on creating and promoting cultural networks and scenes, it is useful for cultural mapping to focus on people as well as places and organizations. Additionally, absent a process to incorporate these maps into city planning, or to engage community members in further populating the maps, the maps’ potential as tools to increase cultural vitality is severely limited.

Implementation: The city can use existing data sources – such as Census Bureau statistics – to map Chicago’s cultural workforce and facilities, and can partner with external organizations – such as foundations, centers or policy schools – to gain access to mapping software expertise. The city could also use existing models and toolkits as guides for how to implement the mapping project. The resulting maps could be made available in prominent locations on the city’s website, but could also be formally integrated into other city planning processes, such as economic development and land use planning. For example, Toronto recently engaged in a cultural mapping process by developing a “Cultural Location Index” that brought together data on where the city’s cultural workforce lives, where it works, and where there is a high concentration of cultural facilities (Silver 2011). The index can be incorporated into the city’s economic development planning, for example, by indicating where dense cultural clusters may be threatened and should be preserved, or where such clusters are nascent but could use additional city-level planning and support.
Estimating Cost and Impact: Costs could be held down by partnering with foundations or policy schools in the city for research and software expertise. Existing (and free) data sources could provide enough information to make useful and impactful maps without requiring the expensive compilation of additional data. The city could consider partnering with local arts groups if additional data are sought. The impact of mapping on the government’s and the community’s understanding of the resources and needs of Chicago’s cultural sector, which in turn can improve connectivity, accessibility and transparency, would be high, especially if city planners are required to consult these maps and if community groups are engaged with the mapping process.

WINDY CITY BIKE SHARE

Paris launched the world’s first large-scale, citywide bike sharing program in 2007, with 20,000 bicycles and 1,200 bicycle stations located throughout the French capital. It has been lauded as a success and replicated in other cities throughout Europe and North America, including London, Barcelona, Montreal and Washington, DC. The City of Chicago launched a pilot program – called Chicago B-Cycle – in 2010 that generated considerable enthusiasm but currently includes only 7 bicycle stations. An RFP was issued by the city in September 2011 to dramatically expand the program to 300 stations and 3,000 bikes (City of Chicago website 2012D). Linking bike share to existing cultural resources across the city through signage and the location of stations can improve access to and visibility of cultural programs.

How It Works: RFPs for the expanded program have already been issued. Stations and signage should be placed and designed to maximize the use of bikes to connect to the city’s diverse cultural resources.

Implementation: Public input into the placement of stations should be prioritized. For example, in New York, the city’s new bike share system made use of an online “crowdsourcing” map where residents could suggest the location of stations. Local community and cultural organizations should also be involved in discussions about station placement. DCASE’s involvement in placement decisions might also help ensure that culture is given priority as part of the process. Area maps at each of the bike stations could be used to indicate cultural resources and programs that are within a short bike-riding distance.

Estimating Cost and Impact: The cost of the bike share program itself is likely to be high; however, tailoring the existing proposed expansion to ensure that it supports access to a diverse range of cultural resources and programs throughout the city will require organizational effort but little additional cost. If cultural resources are considered in the program’s implementation, there is the potential for a high impact on access to and
visibility of cultural resources that are currently hidden or less accessible by public transit.

A GALLERY IN EVERY COMMUNITY:
NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED ART MUSEUMS IN CHICAGO

The City of Chicago owns approximately 73 million square feet of vacant land, most of it on the South and West Sides (estimates calculated from City of Chicago’s website 2012C). The city remains unable to sell much of that property on the market, and continually vacant plots invite crime, vandalism and urban decay. Madrid, Spain had a similar problem in the 1990s – abandoned, formerly industrial land dotted the city’s peripheral neighborhoods – and found an innovative solution: it turned a handful of those properties into contemporary art museums.

How It Works: The city would identify several promising plots of land and collaborate with the civic community to convert a few of them into contemporary art museums. To engage local communities and to economize on the cost of commissioning works, one-third of all gallery space would be reserved for artwork created by residents of that neighborhood. When possible, spaces could also offer arts education classes that are free and open to the public, and therefore give residents of Chicago’s most disadvantaged communities an opportunity to participate in artistic creation.

Implementation: The city would identify promising plots of land – ideally plots with an existing building structure that could be converted fairly easily to a gallery or museum – and complete basic reforms necessary to make the property inhabitable (such as ensuring access to running water and electricity). The city would then engage the civic sector – including foundations and other grant-making institutions in the artistic community – and donate the building in return for an agreement to convert the space into a gallery. Corporations would be encouraged to donate funds in return for sponsorship and advertising rights, when appropriate. Community residents and local arts and community organizations would be necessary stakeholders in any development and should be incorporated into the planning process from the start.

Estimating Cost and Impact: The program would be expensive, involving both investment from the city (to rehab the properties enough to make them inhabitable) and from Chicago’s foundations and corporations. The impact, however, could be transformative – both consumption and creation of contemporary art would increase in every neighborhood and, most importantly, would be accessible to all Chicagoans.
Events

WORLD MUSIC DAY – CHICAGO

World Music Day is an all-night music celebration on June 21 – the moment of the summer solstice and the longest day of the year. It was first implemented in Paris in 1982, and now takes place every year in nearly 40 countries around the world, from Algeria to Thailand, including three American cities – New York City, Pasadena, California, and Cambridge, Massachusetts. New York’s festival last year included over 3,200 musicians performing in nearly 1,000 venues throughout the city.

How It Works: The city encourages both amateur and professional musicians to perform in the streets and organizes free, public concerts in dynamic public spaces – such as Millennium Park or Hyde Park’s Rockefeller Memorial Chapel – in neighborhoods throughout Chicago on June 21 of every year. All performances are free, open to the public, and organized throughout the city to maximize accessibility. Chicago could collaborate with and facilitate the exchange of musicians with Sister Cities – such as Paris and Amman, both of which hold similar events – in order to add global diversity to the event.

Implementation: The city organizes the event, either directly (through DCASE) or indirectly (through a civic commission convened by the city). All musicians donate their time free of charge, but many other sites (such as Paris) have engaged online booking sites, such as TicketMaster, to organize performers. The most significant cost to the City would be the incremental sanitation and public safety labor required during and immediately after the event, which could be largely offset by revenues generated through concessions sold on city-owned land.

Estimating Cost and Impact: The city would incur relatively few costs, and those it does incur should be largely or completely offset by concession revenue. The city would also likely generate considerable revenue through corporate sponsorship of the event and the surge in regional tourism likely to occur because of it. The impact should be significant; last year’s festival in New York was called “the largest music event ever to grace Gotham” and a New Yorker author concluded, “I [will] never hear, see or feel anything like it again” (http://makemusicny.org/press). This kind of festival has the potential to increase connectivity within and among residents from across Chicago’s neighborhoods, as well as regional and international visitors.
La Nuit Blanche is an annual all-night arts festival that takes place in cities around the world, including Paris, Rome, Singapore and Toronto. Museums, private and public art galleries and other cultural institutions are generally open to the public all night and free of charge, with several areas of the city providing space for new, temporary one-night art installations, performances and themed social gatherings. The result is that the city itself becomes a de facto art gallery, enabling citizens from throughout the city to interact in a celebration of public art.

*How It Works:* The city convenes the event and organizes two or three nodes of activity, providing free transportation to and between those neighborhoods, as well as running trains and buses all night and providing bars with a special permit to stay open until dawn. In Chicago, the three nodes of activity could be the Museum Campus, Hyde Park and Bucktown – which would ensure that, in addition to downtown, the event would also benefit both the south and west sides of the city.

*Implementation:* The city organizes the event – either directly (through DCASE) or indirectly (through a civic commission either convened by the city or established through an RFP). The City engages all local art galleries and museums to ensure all-night free access, identifies public spaces (such as Millennium Park and the Midway) that can be used for public art installations, and puts out an RFP that enables all interested artists – famous or unknown, professional or amateur – to submit proposals for those installations. The city provides special permits – at market price – to bars that wish to stay open until dawn in celebration of the festival, and releases an RFP for vendors to provide concessions on city-owned land. Sustained community engagement would be necessary at all proposed sites and at all stages of the planning process.

*Estimating Cost and Impact:* The city would incur a relatively small but not insignificant amount of cost, which should be largely offset by revenue gained from concessions and all-night liquor permits. The city would also likely generate considerable revenue through corporate sponsorship of the event and the surge in regional tourism likely to occur because of it. The impact could be very significant – the size and significance of the event in Europe is generally comparable to that of La Fete de la Musique. Toronto’s Nuit Blanche in 2011 included 500 artists and curators, multiple galleries, museums, cultural and educational institutions and neighborhoods, and attracted one million participants, with over 120,000 out of town visitors (Scotiabank Nuit Blanche). The economic impact was estimated to be $37.2 million for the city. This kind of festival would encourage awareness of Chicago’s diverse visual arts scene and bring together residents and artists in new and unexpected ways.
Conclusion

Chicago is one of the world’s great cities. It is also one of the most dynamic – from Rothko paintings at the Art Institute to the Ferris Wheel at Navy Pier, Chicagoans have access to a wide range of cultural amenities. At the same time, there is some evidence that the city could do more to support cultural vibrancy in its neighborhoods, especially since Chicago trails some peer cities on measures of cultural experiences and engagement (A.T. Kearney 2010).

The 2012 Cultural Plan is therefore an opportunity to take stock of Chicago’s myriad cultural assets and to identify ways to more pro-actively facilitate and enable cultural growth. Towards this end, this report has surveyed best practices in urban cultural policy throughout the world – from Lincoln Square to London – and has identified several initiatives that seem likely to have a positive impact in Chicago. All of these recommended practices fit the SCREAM criteria, in terms of being scalable, cost-effective, replicable, engaged with the community, applicable to local neighborhoods, and implementable. Nevertheless, the expected cost and impact of each initiative varies.

Applying Our Cost-Impact Framework to Some of These Initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Expected Cost of the Initiative</th>
<th>Expected Impact of the Initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slam Dunks</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirational Projects</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windy City Bike Share</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chicago’s Capital of Culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Districts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Modern Museums</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windy City Bike Share</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Media campaigns</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media toolkit</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Night-Chicago</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signage</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comm Arts Councils</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expensive Lemons</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All data are estimated and meant only to be illustrative
As shown in the above matrix, initiatives such as the creation and distribution of a social media toolkit for nonprofit arts organizations and marketing campaigns promoting CTA buses that connect different neighborhoods seem likely to be “quick wins,” with an impact that is likely to be positive and meaningful, although not transformative, and with a cost that is likely to be fairly low. The formation and support of neighborhood arts councils, the use of clear signage throughout the city, and the creation of a “Chicago Neighborhood Capitals of Culture” program are all likely to be “slam dunk” – that is, their impact is likely to be very significant, while the costs should remain relatively low. World Music Day - Chicago and White Night - Chicago also seem likely to have a significant impact at a relatively low cost. The Windy City Bikeshare is a “slam dunk,” assuming that the City is able to secure considerable corporate financing for the program; otherwise it may be an “aspirational project,” with a high impact but correspondingly high cost.

Finally, both the creation of formal cultural districts and the construction of contemporary art museums on underutilized, city-owned land represent aspirational projects. Both could transform the city’s cultural scene, but would require a significant, up-front investment of both political and financial capital. Moreover, because the cost and impact of cultural districts can vary considerably, a particularly high-cost or unsuccessful cultural district in Chicago might even fall into our “expensive lemons” category – and therefore would not merit prioritization in the new Cultural Plan.

All of the initiatives described in this report are the result of preliminary research by ten graduate students working together with Professor Betty Farrell at the University of Chicago over a period of ten weeks. Our list of potential initiatives, projects, and events is not meant to be exhaustive; many other worthy cultural programs could be cited that are not included in this report. What our research effort demonstrates, however, is the rich array of cultural opportunities that animate neighborhoods and foster creative cities. Ultimately, the clearest and most unequivocal finding of this research is that Chicago is one of the world’s most culturally dynamic cities, and that the 2012 Cultural Plan has the potential to chart an even more exciting and vibrant vision for the city’s future.


Friends of the Uptown Theater website, http://www.uptowntheatre.com/Pages/fotu.html


“Paradise Garden”: http://neighbor-space.org/pg_paradise_garden.htm


