INTRODUCTION

Choose Chicago is the official sales and marketing organization charged with bringing regional, national
and international business and leisure visitors to Chicago for the economic benefit of the city, the community
and our partners.

Choose Chicago is charged with three key goals:

• Increase annual visitation to 55 million visitors as set forth by Mayor Rahm Emanuel
• Book 2.3 million hotel room nights and 50 new groups annually
• Elevate Chicago to among the top five US cities for inbound international travel by 2020

With the launch of Choose Chicago in July 2012, the Cultural Tourism department was formed to be responsible
for increasing awareness and visitation to Chicago’s cultural attractions, events and neighborhoods by promoting
the city as a premier cultural destination. The Cultural Tourism department’s expertise combines extensive
knowledge of Chicago’s arts and cultural community, the city’s 77 community areas, and direct access to the
hospitality community.

Cultural travelers present a significant opportunity for Chicago to meet and potentially exceed its goal of 55
million visitors by 2020. In fact, 76% of leisure travelers participate in cultural and/or heritage activities, while
cultural travelers spend 61% more per trip than non-cultural leisure travelers, and take one more trip per year
on average.

In October 2012, the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events presented a Cultural Plan
for Chicago. Even though Chicago has been on the world stage for many years, the opportunity the Cultural Plan
presents is a chance to grow and position the city as an even more prominent global cultural destination. Chicago’s
cultural assets serve as unique attributes to support the brand of Chicago, and help differentiate Chicago from
other destinations -- a component of the overall Choose Chicago brand strategy work currently underway.

As a strategic partner to help implement the Cultural Plan, Choose Chicago has taken the lead on this priority,
and has developed a Cultural Tourism strategy to promote what is unique only to Chicago and to encourage the
world to experience it.
For the purposes of this strategy, cultural travelers are defined as tourists (regional, domestic, or international) who participate in at least one cultural activity or event or visit at least one cultural institution or location while on a trip. Therefore, Choose Chicago considers cultural travelers to be any traveling adult for whom any of the following are “Important” or “Very important” destination attributes:

- Aquariums and zoos
- Architecture or historical buildings
- Art museums
- Churches or attractions of religious significance
- Cultural events or festivals
- Gardens or parks
- Historic sites and attractions
- Live music
- Natural history or science-related museums and attractions
- Theater or the performing arts
- Unique, off-the-beaten-path arts or cultural activities or attractions

The primary purpose of a cultural traveler's trip can either be leisure or business. The main focus of this strategy is on the leisure traveler, since they comprise a greater percentage of cultural travelers. However, the business traveler will also be considered as positioning and promotional strategies are developed.

**Cultural Travelers vs. Non-Cultural Travelers**

Cultural and non-cultural travelers are statistically similar in gender and ethnicity, however there are other variables:

- Cultural travelers travel more for leisure
- Cultural travelers tend to be somewhat younger
- Cultural travelers are more affluent
- Education is a key differentiator
- Cultural travelers are slightly more likely to be married or in a relationship
DEVELOPING A CULTURAL TOURISM STRATEGY FOR CHICAGO

From April through December 2013, Choose Chicago and Civic Consulting Alliance partnered to understand the cultural landscape and identify opportunities to develop a Cultural Tourism strategy for Chicago. This project was comprised of four phases.

Phase One

Develop an inventory of Chicago’s cultural assets and an understanding of the cultural tourism landscape

Choose Chicago conducted multiple analyses to understand the cultural landscape of Chicago. This included desk research on Chicago's cultural assets to compile an inventory; interviews with local cultural leaders; research on cultural tourism efforts in 11 competitive cities globally, including interviews with four cultural tourism leaders at competing Convention and Visitor Bureaus; an online survey to Chicago's cultural institutions examining current tourism initiatives and future opportunities; and a benchmark study of cultural travelers from Chicago's top 10 feeder markets to understand barriers, motivations and perceptions of Chicago as a cultural destination.

Key findings from phase one, revealed that Chicago has a wealth of assets across 12 cultural disciplines; that among Chicago’s top domestic feeder markets, there is relatively low awareness of the cultural assets the city has to offer, especially those markets where distance from Chicago increased; physical beauty and scenery, dining, and shopping impact destination selection for a large number of cultural travelers; and competitor markets have had both successes and failures in driving visitation through cultural tourism.

Phase Two

Determine targeted visitor segments to promote Chicago as cultural tourism destination

With a better understanding of Chicago’s cultural landscape, it was necessary in phase two to understand which visitor segments we needed to target. This phase focused on an assessment of the potential return on investment and ease of capture of driving visitation from a broad set of international and domestic markets. Factors to examine potential return included market size, growth, spend per-trip, and current market share. Factors to examine ease of capture evaluated cost of marketing, consumer purchasing power, consumer sentiment, current Choose Chicago presence, and ease of travel to Chicago. The most promising international and domestic markets were selected for further research and testing.

Phase Three

Develop and test a cultural tourism positioning strategy and promotional tactics

Based on the findings from phases one and two, a positioning strategy was drafted along with input from Chicago’s cultural community and Choose Chicago staff resulting in messaging concepts, and promotional and planning tool options. Further testing was conducted in focus groups in five domestic markets, and internationally with Choose Chicago’s Tourism Sales staff, international offices, and other experts in six countries.
Phase Four

Compile findings and recommendations to develop an overall Cultural Tourism strategy for Chicago

With the completion of phases one through three, key findings revealed that Chicago has not created a specific brand or promotional strategy around cultural tourism; that Chicago’s unique cultural assets are not consistently promoted in ways to maximize their impact; some of Chicago’s most plentiful and distinctive physical and cultural assets tend to surprise tourists after they arrive, rather than being apparent to tourists when selecting a destination; and finally, Chicago has strong neighborhood assets across many cultural disciplines, yet cultural travelers are not aware of nor do they know how to access them.

To leverage this opportunity, Choose Chicago has developed a Cultural Tourism strategy for Chicago based on six strategic objectives:

1. Develop and implement market-specific positioning strategies and promotional tactics to attract more cultural travelers to Chicago from regional, national and international markets.

2. Promote and support existing cultural asset infrastructure and future cultural tourism product development.

3. Enhance tourism sales efforts to further develop existing and new cultural tourism product to help position Chicago as one of the top five destinations for international inbound travel by 2020.

4. Elevate visitor services by promoting unique, authentic and enjoyable experiences.

5. Develop and implement a multi-year neighborhood tourism development plan to drive repeat visitation to Chicago and extend the length of stay.

6. Establish metrics to track growth and economic impact of cultural tourism and neighborhood tourism development efforts.
Cultural assets are critical when working to enhance a destination to attract cultural travelers, support major events and festivals, and increase opportunities for spending to ultimately generate greater economic impact. Chicago has a well-developed, distinctive, and diverse cultural landscape that includes assets downtown and throughout the neighborhoods, that when actively and strategically promoted, present significant opportunities for drawing tourists and helping the city meet its tourism goals.

Effectively promoting the city’s cultural assets can drive tourist activity and generate revenue for Chicago businesses in a variety of ways, including:

- Attracting more cultural travelers
- Encouraging visitors to participate in more activities
- Extending visitor stays
- Encouraging return visits

**Chicago’s Cultural Asset Inventory Summary**

An inventory of cultural assets was created, identified and classified to represent the following 12 sectors. Sectors in the inventory were defined by the institutions, key locations, activities and events with appeal to cultural travelers. The inventory provides insight on the scope and strength of Chicago’s cultural assets.

- Architecture & Historic Sites
- Culinary
- Dance
- Fashion & Neighborhood Shopping
- Film
- Green Space/Blue Space
- History
- Literature
- Music
- Science & Nature
- Theater
- Visual Arts

This inventory provides insight on the scope and strength of Chicago’s cultural assets:

**MAJOR SECTORS**

Well-known downtown & well-developed in neighborhoods

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<tr>
<th>PARKS &amp; RECREATION</th>
<th>DANCE &amp; THEATER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 500+ city parks</td>
<td>• 220+ dance companies</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 26 miles of lakefront</td>
<td>• 200+ theater companies</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 9 historic parks</td>
<td>• 200+ stages present each</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARCHITECTURE &amp; HISTORIC SITES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 369 landmarks</td>
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<tr>
<th>ANCHOR MUSEUMS</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Attract tourists, located in parks, easy to access</td>
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<tr>
<th>MUSIC</th>
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<tr>
<td>• 225+ venues</td>
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<tr>
<th>HISTORICAL</th>
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<tr>
<td>• 10 downtown cultural parades</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 22 neighborhood cultural parades</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 56 neighborhood museums &amp; organizations</td>
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<tr>
<th>SCHEDULED EVENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Downtown &amp; neighborhood</td>
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<tr>
<th>MUSIC</th>
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<tr>
<td>• 15 citywide festivals</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 47 neighborhood festivals</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>CULINARY</th>
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<tr>
<td>• 35 neighborhood food festivals</td>
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A CULTURAL TOURISM STRATEGY FOR CHICAGO

MISSION

Increase awareness and drive visitation to Chicago’s cultural attractions, events and neighborhoods by promoting the city as a premier cultural destination.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

I. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT MARKET-SPECIFIC POSITIONING STRATEGIES AND PROMOTIONAL TACTICS TO ATTRACT MORE CULTURAL TRAVELERS TO CHICAGO FROM REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETS.

Choose Chicago has identified regional, national and international target markets. Regional cities include: Minneapolis, Detroit, St. Louis, Columbus, Kansas City, Grand Rapids, Indianapolis, and Cincinnati. National cities include: Boston, Denver, San Francisco, and Washington DC. International markets include Brazil, Canada, China, Mexico and the UK.

With these identified markets, Choose Chicago will build market-specific strategies based on defined target personas. Additionally, cultural tourism planning tools and promotional options will be developed and implemented to align with Choose Chicago’s sales and marketing efforts.

II. PROMOTE AND SUPPORT EXISTING CULTURAL ASSET INFRASTRUCTURE AND FUTURE CULTURAL TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT.

Supporting Chicago’s current and future cultural assets will deliver significant impact on Chicago’s tourism product offerings. Cultural tourism initiatives will seek to leverage Chicago’s cultural assets to further increase annual visitation from regional, national and international markets, develop tools to help identify cultural tourism opportunities and weaknesses, leverage Chicago’s cultural asset inventory to consistently promote the city’s cultural tourism product, and cultivate core partnerships with key public and private organizations.
III. ENHANCE TOURISM SALES EFFORTS TO FURTHER DEVELOP EXISTING AND NEW CULTURAL TOURISM PRODUCT TO HELP POSITION CHICAGO AS ONE OF THE TOP FIVE DESTINATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL INBOUND TRAVEL BY 2020.

To promote Chicago’s major cultural assets, and events and neighborhood experiences to international visitors, it is crucial that Choose Chicago’s tourism sales efforts position cultural product to the wholesale travel market. Initiatives will seek to leverage and feature cultural tourism product during national and international sales missions, travel trade training, familiarizations trips, trade shows, media relations, promotional materials and programs.

IV. ELEVATE VISITOR SERVICES BY PROMOTING UNIQUE, AUTHENTIC AND ENJOYABLE EXPERIENCES.

As a key component to Choose Chicago’s Cultural Tourism department, the Visitor Services team operates two Visitor Information Centers (VIC) and serves over a half a million visitors annually. From a visitor-centric approach, innovative technologies, VIC locations and programs, public and private partnerships, and establishing best practices, this team will strive to elevate visitor services offered by presenting a wide range of unique and authentic experiences.

V. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A MULTI-YEAR NEIGHBORHOOD TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN TO DRIVE REPEAT VISITATION TO CHICAGO AND EXTEND THE LENGTH OF STAY.

Chicago’s neighborhoods present an opportunity to further leverage Chicago’s cultural assets, but they also act as a driver for repeat visitation and extending the length of stay. In addition to a cultural asset inventory, Choose Chicago has already completed an audit of Chicago’s 77 designated community areas detailing demographic information, visitor accessibility and amenities, cultural destinations, and core partner institutions. Next steps will seek to identify and collaborate with public and private neighborhood partners to develop and implement neighborhood tourism development plans, develop a communications strategy to promote Chicago neighborhoods to visitors by integrating neighborhood assets across Choose Chicago’s sales and marketing efforts, advocate to support current and future neighborhood cultural asset development, and develop best practices and tool kits for neighborhood tourism partners.

VI. ESTABLISH METRICS TO TRACK GROWTH AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF CULTURAL TOURISM AND NEIGHBORHOOD TOURISM DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS.

In order to measure success, metrics will need to align with current Choose Chicago data collection to measure cultural travel to Chicago, including length of stay, spend per-trip, activities and frequency. Additionally, Choose Chicago will need to coordinate and source available data sources with Chicago cultural organizations to track visitor attendance and trends.