



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 30, 2014

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

[press@cityofchicago.org](mailto:press@cityofchicago.org)

**MAYOR EMANUEL, CHOOSE CHICAGO AND DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
AND SPECIAL EVENTS UNVEIL FIRST-EVER CULTURAL TOURISM STRATEGY**

*Strategy a Critical Component to Achieving Mayor's Goal to Attract 55 Million Visitors a Year*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Choose Chicago and the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) today unveiled the first-ever cultural tourism strategy to position Chicago as a premier global cultural destination. Based off the findings from an eight-month analysis, the cultural tourism strategy calls for the implementation of a neighborhood tourism plan, promotion of cultural asset infrastructure and enhanced tourism sales efforts to achieve the Mayor's goal of attracting 55 million visitors a year to Chicago by 2020, which will add an additional 30,000 tourism-related jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue into the city of Chicago.

"Tourism is a key driver of our economy and we are committed to bringing a more comprehensive strategy and focus to this area," said Mayor Emanuel. "This cultural tourism strategy will ensure that we can grow and invest by focusing on tactics that will attract more visitors and place Chicago at the center of the global conversation."

The Chicago Cultural Plan, released in 2012, included a number of initiatives designed to position the city as an even more prominent global cultural destination and help differentiate cultural opportunities in Chicago from those in other destinations. Leveraging Chicago's distinctive cultural assets is a critical component of our efforts to attract travelers, support major events and festivals and increase opportunities for economic growth.

"As a strategic partner to help implement the Chicago Cultural Plan, Choose Chicago has taken the lead on this important initiative," said Melissa Cherry, Vice President for Cultural

Tourism and Neighborhoods at Choose Chicago. “We have developed a cultural tourism strategy to promote what is unique only to Chicago and to encourage the world to experience it.”

“We are thrilled that the Cultural Tourism strategy developed by Choose Chicago is advancing Mayor Emanuel’s arts and tourism agendas – and supporting the Chicago Cultural Plan,” said Michelle T. Boone, Commissioner of the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events. “Chicago is one of the world’s greatest arts and culture capitals. This new plan will attract cultural travelers to the city, while also supporting our rich and diverse creative community.”

The cultural tourism strategy was developed in four phases from April through December 2013 by Choose Chicago and Civic Consulting Alliance. During the first phase, an inventory of Chicago’s cultural assets was developed to better understand Chicago’s current cultural tourism landscape. Findings indicated that Chicago has a wealth of assets across 12 cultural disciplines and that Chicago’s top domestic feeder markets had relatively low awareness of these assets. Phase two identified specific markets to which Chicago should be promoted as a cultural tourism destination. In phase three, a cultural tourism positioning strategy and promotional tactics was developed and tested in the markets identified in phase two. Finally, phase four compiled the findings and recommendations to develop the overall cultural tourism strategy for Chicago, which included the discovery that Chicago’s unique cultural assets are not consistently promoted in ways to maximize their impact, and that Chicago’s most distinctive physical and cultural assets tend to surprise tourists *after* they arrive.

From this research, Choose Chicago developed a cultural tourism strategy for Chicago based on the following six objectives:

- Develop and implement market-specific positioning strategies and promotional tactics to attract more cultural travelers to Chicago from regional, national and international markets.
- Promote and support existing cultural asset infrastructure and future cultural tourism product and development.
- Enhance tourism sales efforts to further develop existing and new cultural tourism products to help position Chicago as one of the top five destinations for international inbound travel by 2020.
- Elevate visitor services by promoting unique, authentic and enjoyable experiences.
- Develop and implement a multi-year neighborhood tourism development plan to drive repeat visitation to Chicago and extend the length of stay.

- Establish metrics to track growth and economic impact of cultural tourism and neighborhood tourism development efforts.

The [Chicago Neighborhood website, which was launched late last year](#), encourages visitors and residents to explore Chicago's neighborhoods thematically and geographically to raise awareness of the cultural opportunities present in every Chicago neighborhood.

Choose Chicago is also proud to represent Chicago's technology, music and film industries at South by Southwest (SXSW) in March 2014 along with the DCASE, World Business Chicago and the Illinois Office of Tourism. The city's first-ever presence at SXSW is yet another critical component to showcasing Chicago's cultural and creative industries to further increase the perception of Chicago as a premier cultural destination.

To expand upon these cultural tourism findings, Choose Chicago announced today a 2014 program of cultural events to take place throughout the city, previewed by Second City talent. This Cultural Preview includes the following 11 events:

**Chicago Theatre Week (February 11-16, 2014):** The League of Chicago Theatres, in partnership with Choose Chicago, is proud to present the second annual Chicago Theatre Week. Designed to drive ticket sales to theatres and create visibility around the phenomenal theatre scene in the city, this week-long program will offer discounted tickets (\$15 and \$30) to over 100 productions from participating theatres including Broadway In Chicago, The Second City, Steep Theatre, Goodman Theatre and many more.

**The Joffrey Ballet's *Romeo & Juliet* (April 3 – May 11, 2014):** This performance will be the U.S. Premiere of *Romeo & Juliet*. Set to the classic Prokofiev score, this contemporary version blends organic movement and hand-to-hand combat with classical ballet, minimalist sets and multi-media elements to show though time progresses, the tragedy of love lost due to familial conflict or group think remains the same.

**Second City's *102<sup>nd</sup> Revue* (April 2014):** The Second City's *102<sup>nd</sup> Revue* is written and performed by an all-star cast including Chelsea Devantez, John Hartman, Mike Kosinski (Jeff Award Nominee - Actor), Tawny Newsome (Jeff Award Winner – Best Revue), Emily Walker and Steve Waltien with Jeff Award-Winning Director, Mick Napier. Jesse Case will be at the keys as Music Director and Craig Taylor returns for his 34th Revue as Stage Manager for The Second City Mainstage.

**Wrigley Field 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (April-September 2014):** Few places in Chicago have been as meaningful to the fabric of the city as [Wrigley Field](#) and its iconic ivy-covered walls. And to honor it, Wrigley Field's 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday will be celebrated all year long throughout

the Chicago Cubs' 2014 season. These celebrations will give fans a look and feel of the last 100 years of baseball and other events played within these historic, ivy-clad walls. With 10 decade-themed home stands throughout the year, complete with throwback player uniforms, specialty food offerings, historic bobble heads and game-day entertainment, this once-in-a-lifetime season-long celebration is not to be missed by baseball and history fans alike.

**Art Institute of Chicago's *Magritte: The Mystery of the Ordinary* (June 24, 2014):**

Opening June 24 of this year, *Magritte: The Mystery of the Ordinary, 1926-1938*, is a collection of over 80 paintings, collages, drawings, photographs, periodicals and early commercial work that showcases the breakthrough years of René Magritte, creator of some of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most extraordinary images. The exhibition follows the artists from his time in Brussels, where he gained recognition as a Surrealist and aimed to, in his words, "challenge the real world," to Paris where he met Surrealists Salvador Dalí and Joan Miró. The exhibition will also showcase pivotal research done in Chicago that found "lost Magritte" under the Art Institute's iconic *Time Transfixed*.

**Chicago Blues, Gospel Music and Jazz Festivals (Summer 2014):**

- 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Chicago Blues Festival (June 13-15): Taking over Grant Park for the weekend, the Chicago Blues Festival is the world's largest free blues festival, showcasing performers who play to more than half a million blues fans at the beginning of every summer.
- 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Chicago Gospel Music Festival (June 27-29): Renowned gospel music artists perform throughout the city including the Chicago Cultural Center, Ellis Park and the historic Bronzeville neighborhood.
- 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Chicago Jazz Festival (August 28-31): Known for its artistic creativity, this free event is a favorite Labor Day Weekend tradition in Millennium Park.

**Taste of Chicago (July 9-13, 2014):** This summer, Taste of Chicago returns for its 34<sup>th</sup> year. Chicago restaurants have been setting up booths at this massive foodie fair since 1980. Taste of Chicago is the largest food festival in the world. The festival also features cooking demonstrations and live music.

**The 606 Park (Opening Fall 2014):** Chicago is known for its dedication to lake side parks and reserved green spaces amidst its towering architecture, and this year will take this legacy to new heights. Named for the 606 zip code prefix all Chicagoans share, the 606 park and trail system on Chicago's Northwest side is transforming nearly three miles of unused rail line into the elevated Bloomingdale Trail - its centerpiece. The trail will connect to five

ground-level parks, an observatory, a wheel friendly event plaza and art installations. This urban oasis will serve as a new way to explore Chicago on trails for bikers, runners and walkers. The project is the signature of Mayor Emanuel's push to create 800 new parks, recreation areas and green spaces throughout the city over the next five years.

**Museum of Contemporary Art's (MCA) *David Bowie Is* exhibition (September 23, 2014 - January 4, 2015):** This September, the MCA will be the only U.S. venue to present the first international retrospective of the extraordinary career of David Bowie. The exhibition demonstrates how Bowie's work has both influenced and been inspired by wider movements in art, design, theater, and contemporary culture. The exhibition's multimedia design creates an immersive journey through Bowie's artistic life. *David Bowie Is* showcases how his constant reinvention and strategic image management help us understand the popular culture of today, and is expected to be the most attended show in the MCA's history.

**The Great Chicago Fire Festival (October 3 - 4, 2014):** This fall, the first Great Chicago Fire Festival produced by Redmoon in partnership with City of Chicago will celebrate the city's resilience and spirit through a massive urban ritual culminating in a spectacular fire show on the downtown riverfront on October 3 and 4, 2014. Throughout the summertime there will be community residencies in various neighborhoods where community members of all ages will work with a local artist to create large-scale sculptures in public parks throughout the city. The dynamic public art created in these neighborhoods will be presented on October 4, 2014, during a grand procession and fire spectacle on the main branch of the Chicago River, showcasing the work of over 10,000 community members and over 200 professional artists.

**Auditorium Theatre's 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (December 9, 2014):** The Auditorium Theatre, a National Historic Landmark, celebrates its 125<sup>th</sup> birthday on December 9, 2014 with a Gala Celebration. First Lady, Mrs. Michelle Obama, will serve as Honorary Chair for the 2014-15 Anniversary Season, which will include performances by such names as Patti LuPone, The Apollo Chorus and members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Lyric Opera.

###