

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

City Council Budget Hearing – October 30, 2017

Remarks – Commissioner Mark Kelly

Thank you, Chairman Austin and Council members for the opportunity to discuss the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE). Your support throughout the years is appreciated.

It has been a true pleasure working with all of you in my first year as Commissioner—on a wide range of initiatives that advance the City and its vibrant neighborhoods including the Year of Public Art, Chicago City Markets, neighborhood festivals, block clubs and positioning Chicago as a hub for film and TV production.

In 2017, the Year of Public Art has captured the imagination of our city and unleashed new forces for public art. As you know, Mayor Emanuel and DCASE launched a new 50x50 Neighborhood Arts Project, revealed Chicago's first Public Art Plan, and worked with the Chicago Park District, the Chicago Transit Authority and others to support new public artworks in neighborhoods, parks, municipal buildings, transit stations, on the Chicago Riverwalk and more. DCASE and many other City departments managed artist-led community projects that represented a \$4 million investment this year.

Our work together is critically important. Chicago's arts sector contributes \$2.2 billion annually to our economy, provides 60,000 jobs and \$1.3 billion in household income every year.

At DCASE, with a small-but-mighty staff of just 57 people, we accomplish big things. Our large-scale summer festivals and events contribute more than \$246 million in total business activity to the Chicago economy and generate well over \$5.6 million in tax revenues. And by the end of this year, DCASE will present more than 2,000 programs, services and events for well over 25 million residents and visitors alike. DCASE has an international audience, a social media reach of nearly 500,000 people and a quarter of the web traffic to cityofchicago.org.

I'd like to share just a few more facts and figures—a snapshot of DCASE, by the numbers:

- In 2017, dozens of local artists were commissioned for public art projects in all 50 wards.
- An estimated 1.6 million people attended the 37th Annual Taste of Chicago, the highest on record since the Taste moved to a five day format in 2012.
- This fall, DCASE helped to realize Mayor Emanuel's vision for the second edition of the Chicago Architecture Biennial, showcasing 140 leading architects and artists from over 20 countries. In the first week, Chicago welcomed more than 100,000 visitors for the Chicago Architecture Biennial and other architecture, art and design with exhibitions and programs at venues in neighborhoods across the City.
- Our rebranded Chicago City Markets program brings 70 markets to wards across the City.
- An unprecedented nine TV series and studio features have filmed in the city in 2017. From 2011 to 2015, film, TV and commercial production generated \$1.3 billion locally, with filming in Chicago comprising the vast majority of that spending.
- Chicago is a city of festivals, with more than 700 neighborhood festivals and athletic events this year.
- In 2017, our Cultural Grants Program will award more than 300 grants totaling \$1.7 million to nonprofit organizations and individual artists in neighborhoods throughout the city.

- We moved Chicago Blues Festival to Millennium Park and the programming focus was expanded, resulting in rave reviews and a dramatic increase in attendance—500,000 guests over three days.

Mayor Emanuel's Chicago Riverwalk has emerged as a top destination for residents and visitors alike, buzzing with free cultural events. Chicago's town square, Millennium Park, is now the #1 attraction in the Midwest and the anchor of an urban cultural campus that includes the Chicago Cultural Center, Maggie Daley Park and The Art Institute of Chicago.

Our renewed focus on Latino programming has re-energized Maxwell Street Market, kick-started the funding for the very first Chicago International Latino Theater Festival, brought Café Tacvba to Taste of Chicago and welcomed Chicago's Latino community to Millennium Park for performances by Chicago Mariachi Festival and The Ballet Folklórico of Guadalajara, among others.

Looking forward to next year, Mayor Emanuel and DCASE have designated 2018 the “Year of Creative Youth” with a new Creative Youth Festival across the Millennium Park Campus on September 22, performance opportunities for teens, cultural grants for youth arts organizations and much more—representing a \$2 million investment by the City of Chicago. The initiative will shine a spotlight on Chicago's creative youth and the incredible organizations and educators inspiring the next generation through the arts. We'll work alongside Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Public Library, the Chicago Park District and others—and Chicago's youth will be involved every step of the way.

In addition:

- We will continue our relentless focus on public art in 2018, guided by the new Public Art Plan.
- We will expand our popular Chicago SummerDance series—featuring House, steppin', footwork and more at Grant Park, embedded in our festivals and throughout the city in even more neighborhoods.
- We will strengthen our Blues Festival, Jazz Festival and the Taste of Chicago.
- We will promote the many free cultural activities that happen across the city—including museum free days, Park and Library events—via social media, email marketing and our Free, Free, Free! website.
- And we will be a fierce advocate for “Art Design Chicago,” an ambitious citywide initiative of the Terra Foundation with over 25 exhibitions and hundreds of public programs in 2018.

At DCASE, we believe that artistry and creativity are as fundamental as the air we breathe. Creativity is neither a luxury nor a recreation; it is how we become more human.

Our world often dismisses the arts as a frill, an extra, an add-on. But I want to remind them—and all of us gathered here today—that it is the arts and culture that define the character of great cities, great states, great civilizations. And that's true for this great city. We are the birthplace of storefront theater, modern architecture, footwork, improv, Gospel music, House music, the urban Blues and more. Chicago is an arts powerhouse and a global cultural destination.

We at DCASE believe in the power of the arts to build community and to bring fresh perspective to difficult and complex issues—and we believe that citizens benefit from free and open access to the arts and civic celebrations. It is our responsibility to make those forces stronger, so that our city feels the impact, the weight, the joy of the arts—and people from around the world will flock to Chicago.

We all look forward to working closely with you and your constituents in 2018.

Thank you. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.