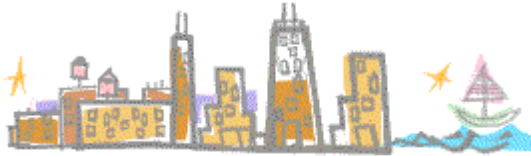


## **Chicago Arts & Commerce - A Dynamic 21st Century Economy**

*With an economy larger than that of Russia or Switzerland, Chicago has become a global hub of business and culture*

By Tom Tresser

Did you know that Chicago is a global player in the economy and creative workers are a major part of keeping her there?



If you ranked major cities along with countries, Chicago's metro region stands as #19 in Gross Domestic Product at \$303.6 billion!

### **Gross Product (1999, US\$ BILLIONS) - Rank Country or Metro Area Gross Product**

1	United States	9,256.150
2	Japan	4,370.184
3	Germany	2,107.572
4	United Kingdom	1,459.964
5	France	1,433.627
7	China	997.329
10	Brazil	525.345
12	India	426.017
15	Australia	397.013
16	New York, NY PMSA	391.562
17	Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA PMSA	333.942
18	Argentina	308.747
<b>19</b>	<b>Chicago, IL PMSA</b>	<b>303.559</b>
20	Taiwan	283.764
21	Switzerland	261.436

- 4,176,200 jobs in the Chicago Metro area (about half in the city of Chicago)
- 203,000 businesses in Chicago
- 25% growth in jobs since 1985
- 65% growth (535,900 new jobs) in Service sector alone

(Source: World Business Chicago website:

<http://www.worldbusinesschicago.com/index.asp?A=1&LK=1&DIV=overviewDiv00>

The interesting news here for creative workers is that innovation and creativity figures prominently in the city's plans for staying competitive in the world economy.

No less a leader than Mayor Daley places innovation at the top of a short list of priorities in keeping Chicago a world-class player. In a headline article, "No More Second City" from the October 7, 2003 edition of *The Red Streak*, Daley said "We have a wealth of home-grown talent and technology, and we must be in the forefront to apply it."

World Business Chicago (WBC) is a public-private economic development corporation co-chaired by Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley and is dedicated to expanding the Chicago regional economy through the growth of the private sector, and to build the world's best metropolitan area in which to live, work, and play. Carl Wasielewski, Assistant Director of Research at WBC, has emerged as one of the City's ablest champions of the Creative Economy.



In a phone interview with Newtopia, Wasielewski said, "Creativity and innovation are fundamental parts of our economy. We are focusing on innovation as a key driver of the economy. We want to make the point that creativity is not a frill or fringe element of our economy."

He has written thoughtfully on the place creativity holds in the fabric of Chicago's life and future.

"Creativity doesn't appear out of thin air...It must be nurtured, cherished, and provided resources in terms of time and money. More and more businesses are realizing this. Just as history of corporate America includes the creation of new divisions like 'human resources' in the 1940s and 'marketing' after that, so too are corporations now creating 'creativity departments' headed by CCOs (Chief Creative Officers). Creativity is being recognized as one of the fundamental resources of the modern economy, and the market is responding accordingly...Chicago is home to some of the most famous brands the world has ever experienced, from the litany of consumer goods Kraft produces, to McDonald's, to Motorola, to Sara Lee to Rubbermaid. Each of these have reinvented themselves time and time again. They have used their tremendous human and monetary resources to leverage well-known products into brand new revolutionary products. The practice of turning the common into the extraordinary, and the average into the cutting-edge is the hallmark of deliberate creativity and it's the hallmark of Chicago...Chicago is uniquely positioned with the historical know-how to make money from the genius of practicality. In the global economy, we are applying creativity not only to ourselves, but also to the corporations of the world." (World Business Chicago, September 2003 newsletter)




Wasielewski, who is an economist, was a financial analyst at Northern Trust and worked at an employment research think tank, knows how to mix creativity and humor with his research. He produced a dynamite CD, "Make It Big in Chicago," full of images, music and information on living and working in Chicago, aimed at young people considering where to locate and begin or advance their careers.

Learn more about the work of the World Business Council at <http://www.worldbusinesschicago.com>.

Another exciting development in the arena of the Creative Economy in Chicago is a major initiative from the City's Department of Planning the Department of Cultural Affairs. "Advancing Chicago's Civic Agenda Through the Arts" is an ambitious two-year project aimed at integrating the arts into the city's community development agenda.

The initiative was launched in 2002 and is spearheaded by Project Director, Alison Zehr, a planning consultant, and Julie Burros, the Director of Cultural Planning for the Department of Cultural Affairs. The project has three major goals: (1) Encourage opportunities to increase access to the arts for Chicago citizens, (2) Make best use of the arts as a tool for community development, and (3) Approach Chicago's arts and culture industry as an economic community and develop supports for that community that will fuel its growth and encourage its use in economic and human development. ("Advancing Chicago's Civic Agenda Through the Arts," planning summary)

 Listen to an informative interview with Alison and Julie with Carol Coletta from Carol's fabulous, SmartCity radio series, at [http://www.smartcityradio.com/smartcityradio/past\\_shows.cfm?showsmartcityID=142&PageNum\\_getsmartshows=1](http://www.smartcityradio.com/smartcityradio/past_shows.cfm?showsmartcityID=142&PageNum_getsmartshows=1).

In a conversation with Newtopia, Burris discussed the complexities of placing creativity on a city's civic agenda.

"What is important to us is trends over time. Is this sector growing or not growing? What's the change over time and how does it compare to other sectors' growth? If you can show there's been growth despite economic downturns, then you can make the case for investment. That's where economic development dollars tend to flow."

In order to capture a picture of Chicago's creative sector, the project has enlisted the aid of the University of Chicago's Harris School of Public Policy. A team there is gathering data on the creative sector and will eventually publish a report that will be a home-grown version of Richard Florida's Creative Class comparisons (see [www.creativeclass.org](http://www.creativeclass.org)).

Preliminary data from this work states that there are 221,770 jobs in the Chicago metro area's creative sector. This data is from the 2001 Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment reports and covers the nine county metro area.

What exactly is the "creative sector"? That's a concept under development, says Burros, and currently consists of a combination of commercial arts firms, non-profit arts and performing arts organizations, for-profit performing entities, artists, and for-profit and non-profit museums. Eventually, this project will look at a larger picture that will include the media, high-tech, the culinary arts, non-sports recreation, organized sports, religious organizations and higher education.

Burros hopes that in the future civic leaders will routinely use the arts and culture in their efforts to improve the life and economy of Chicago. In this unprecedented effort for Chicago, she already sees potential benefits as city department representatives meet and exchange ideas around the creative sector.



For example, there are a number of economic development programs the city already operates that are not available to arts organizations or non-profits. With minor tweaking these programs could benefit the creative sector. Burros also points out the Chicago's zoning regulations are being rewritten for the first time since 1957 and that this process could be a huge benefit for Chicago's creative entities. Zoning dictates "what is allowed to happen where" and "what activities can happen inside places" in Chicago, according to Burros. (See <http://www.cityofchicago.org/Mayor/Zoning>)

So, the live-work regulations might be adjusted to permit a wider development of affordable spaces for working artists. The city has already created a model for this type of project, The Switching Station, with 24 units, and was developed at a cost of \$4.9 million (see [www.artspaceusa.org/neighborhood/switchingstation](http://www.artspaceusa.org/neighborhood/switchingstation))

Taking off my reporter's hat and reflecting as a former arts activist and community development practitioner, I'm thrilled to see the city embrace creativity as major point of economic advantage. We may not have made the World Series in 2003, but Chicago is already a world leader in translating creativity into successful products, services and positive social change.

Newtopia will stay on top of the efforts of World Business Chicago and the Advancing Civic Agenda Project, as well as other Chicago Creative Economy initiatives, and report them here.

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Tom Tresser is a consultant, producer, educator and trainer who can help individuals, companies and communities leverage and amplify their creative assets in order to solve problems, create economic value and trigger civic engagement. Tom has been a long-time advocate for an increased appreciation for the role of creativity in the life of the community. In 1991 he started an organization that organized artists and cultural workers for political activism and taught "Arts and Public Policy" at Roosevelt University, where he organized a center for the study of cultural policy. Tom was Director Cultural Development at Peoples Housing, a nonprofit community development corporation operating in northeast Chicago, where he organized a community arts program that combined culture and economic development. Tom served as lead organizer for the Chicago Park District for two years in a pilot project that transformed a major regional park into a community cultural center. In April 2004, Tom was elected to a two-year term for the Local School Council for the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood. He lectures on "The Politics of Creativity" and conducts leadership training sessions for artists and creative professionals. He teaches classes on arts and civic engagement at DePaul University and Loyola University.



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