

CHICAGO JAZZ TOWN HALL

August 31, 2009 Final Report

Almost 100 musicians and other members of the Chicago jazz community spent a full day in a conversation about their vision and top priorities for the future of Chicago jazz. They worked together in small groups discussing and developing ideas. Then, using keypad polling and groupware computers, participants identified room-wide themes and collective priorities. This preliminary report contains the ideas and priorities generated at the Town Hall.

The objectives of the town hall were:

1. Bring individuals and organizations that represent the diversity of the Chicago jazz community together for dialogue and bridge building.
2. Better understand the different elements of today's jazz community and develop individual and collective visions for the future of Chicago jazz
3. Identify the opportunities and challenges facing members of the jazz community
4. Begin to identify a roadmap for how individuals and organizations can work together at making jazz stronger in Chicago
5. Identify what resources, in addition to dollars, are needed to support a stronger jazz community.

Throughout the day, participants talked about the strengths and weaknesses of the Chicago jazz community. They identified a collective vision for the future of Chicago jazz and then discussed assets, opportunities and challenges facing the jazz community. In the end, they created a prioritized set of actions for moving forward.

Ben Cameron of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation spoke at the Chicago Jazz Town Hall about some of the changes in the larger world affecting jazz and other performing arts and how arts communities can work together to address the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities these changes present.

Participant reactions to Ben Cameron's remarks:

1. Technology presents both tremendous opportunity and challenges
 - Opportunity: can reach a wider and niche audience
 - Challenge: loss of "live" aspect
2. We must articulate what makes jazz necessary for people's lives – why is it important?
3. Need to understand what we want, what we need, and what we'll do
4. Fear of losing authority and control of professionals...Amateurs will take over
5. Peer to peer teaching is a phenomenon to be reckoned with
6. We need to market jazz so that collaboration occurs while making room for all sub-genres of jazz – from old standards to avant garde
7. Pace of change is overwhelming; leads to information overload
8. This is a time for major change and transition for the jazz community



The Chicago Jazz Town Hall brought together nearly 100 people to talk about their visions for the future of Chicago jazz at the Chicago Cultural Center.

Participant reactions to Ben Cameron's remarks (continued):

9. Many felt that the speaker asked provocative questions but lacked a deep sense of connection to the jazz world in Chicago
10. Need to reach youth through avenues and media that make sense to them

Chicago Jazz Community - Strengths

1. Our rich diversity of performers, genres, skill levels, neighborhoods, generations and venues
2. We have a significant role in jazz history that inspires musicians and attracts talent
3. Large community of world class talent
4. There's great passion and enthusiasm for the music "people don't leave...even in the rain"
5. Many educational opportunities for young talent
6. Strong intergenerational ties – veteran are able to nurture young talent
7. City and institutional support – Millennium Park, Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs, etc.
8. "Great tradition, great variety, open boundaries racially & neighborhood-wise"

Chicago Jazz Community - Weaknesses

1. Venues are limited and are not specifically for jazz
2. Education about jazz is lacking in schools and for general public
3. Money is inadequate – many musicians are underpaid
4. Insufficient resources and lack of cohesive networking leads to infighting and fragmentation, "We're eating our own"
5. Media coverage from print, radio, and TV is lacking. "No jazz radio station"
6. Generations of musicians and listeners are separate – musicians in their 40's and 50's separate from those in their 70's and 80's – and young musicians lack adequate support
7. Identity of Jazz an issue. Definition is often too narrow and limits audience. "The word 'jazz' needs a makeover"
8. Jazz is thought of as historical & archival rather than current and alive – not accessible

Town Hall Participant Demographics

Gender		Race/Ethnicity		Role in jazz community	
Female	37%	Asian American	5%	Musician	38%
Male	63%	Black or African American	27%	Non-profit	57%
		Latino	3%	Program director/presenter	44%
		Native American or Indian	0%	Educator	38%
Age		White or Caucasian	54%	Club/venue	16%
Under 25	3%	More than one	10%	Record label, producer, recording studio	16%
25 – 34	11%	Other	2%	Radio, print, and internet media	16%
35 – 44	18%			Marketing/PR	18%
45 – 54	27%	Live		Other	23%
55 – 64	29%	North Side	40%		
65 and better	11%	West Side	3%		
		South Side	25%		
		Downtown	10%		
		Suburban Cook County	10%		
		Elsewhere in the Chicago region	8%		
		Outside the Chicago region	3%		

How do you feel about the current vibrancy of the Chicago jazz community?

- 19% Very concerned
- 30% Somewhat concerned
- 8% Not sure
- 33% Good
- 10% Excellent

What do you feel is the current level of collaboration within the Chicago jazz community on shared issues and priorities?

- 21% Almost none at all
- 64% Only a little
- 14% Decent amount
- 0% A lot

How do you feel about changes in the Chicago jazz community over the past five years?

- 3% Moving in the complete wrong direction
- 23% Some good, but a lot bad
- 13% Not sure/Don't know
- 15% Don't think it is changing
- 28% Starting to head in the right direction
- 17% Lots of progress down the right path

How confident are you that working together you can make a positive difference for the Chicago jazz community?

- 7% Not at all confident
- 13% A little confident
- 45% Somewhat confident
- 35% Very confident

Visions for Chicago jazz (% ranked as most important)

1. **39%** - Jazz music education is back in schools with jazz artists as teachers – jazz is integrated with the general curriculum
2. **39%** - We have a bricks and mortar hub for jazz including concerts, education, artist development, public awareness and a museum
3. **22%** - On-line hub (website) that brings together all things jazz in Chicago (calendar of club listings, live feeds, links to artist and social networking sites)
4. **26%** - We have a 24-hour jazz radio station driven by a consortium of local colleges
5. **26%** - Jazz is in the air. It permeates our culture and you hear it in the streets, subways, on the radio, etc.
6. **13%** - Jazz is a part of Chicago's identity and "brand" – a center and destination for jazz (create a jazz district, streets named after musicians, jazz train)
7. **6%** - We have an archive for the preservation and recognition of Chicago jazz "keep jazz alive"
8. **17%** - There's a healthy network of jazz clubs throughout the city



Participants spent the day working in small groups to generate ideas on the priorities for the Chicago jazz community.

Community Assets (% ranked as most important)

1. **60%** - We have a historic identity as a city for jazz and a home for many world renowned professional jazz musicians
2. **47%** - Chicago is a national and international hub – a strong center for tourism
3. **21%** - Large city with large untapped audience as well as a dedicated audience
4. **16%** - We have good resources from corporate and foundation groups
5. **14%** - Existing jazz programs, e.g., Jazz Alive, Jazz Education Network, Jazz Institute of Chicago, Jazz Links, etc.
6. **10%** - Good support from the city including Mayor’s Office of Special Events, Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs
7. **9%** - Chicago musicians have exposure to a variety of cultures and types of artistic expression
8. **3%** - Chicago Jazz Festival and other festivals
9. **3%** - Large venues that can support jazz events, e.g. Chicago Theater, Auditorium Theater, Symphony Center
10. **0%** - We have an excellent public transportation system

Community Challenges (% ranked as most important)

1. **48%** - Funding: Need money for musicians to develop their music and venues for regular gigs
2. **42%** - Lack of focused community vision or the political force or voice to advance it
3. **38%** - Winning city policy support to facilitate development of venues, community jazz activities, artist support
4. **18%** - Differing ideas about developing jazz thru community-located efforts vs. central hub
5. **14%** - Navigating the Chicago Public School system to gain resources, train teachers, re-orient focus beyond test results is difficult
6. **12%** - Stakeholders (community, business, artists, etc.) rarely come together
7. **10%** - Tension between focusing solely on jazz community or whether to “cross-pollinate” with other genres, forms and audiences
8. **6%** - Developing and hearing young people as artists and presenters

Community Opportunities (% ranked as most important)

1. **56%** - Use the Internet – for live streaming, pod-casting, musician collaboration, on-line education, promoting concerts, etc.
2. **40%** - Create better public relations for jazz in Chicago, possibly by appointing a marketing/PR czar. Market locally, nationally and internationally
3. **33%** - Use the strengths of jazz community to foster stronger collaboration and better coordination. For example, a central database of who’s doing what in which schools would be useful
4. **23%** - Use the potential for 2016 Olympics as an opportunity to increase support for jazz – funding, infrastructure, tourism
5. **19%** - Take advantage of stimulus funding, cheap real estate and the power of the Jazz Partnership to increase funding
6. **14%** - Provide talented musicians with training for them to become effective teaching artists

Needed Actions (% ranked as most important)

1. **40%** - Convene smaller workgroups, including musicians to focus on: policy, education, outreach & PR, technology, government & public support
2. **38%** - Strengthen existing organizations so they can take the lead in strategic planning process
3. **38%** - Develop a strong recognizable brand for Chicago Jazz
4. **36%** - Create a business model that offers self-sufficiency for musicians and outlines fund raising strategies
5. **32%** - Get the support of the mayor for example create a jazz office at the Dept. of Cultural Affairs and Create a Chicago “Jazz Day”
6. **24%** - Find the right entry point into Chicago public schools and collaborate on curricula and bringing in artists as teachers
7. **22%** - Form a new organization to take the lead in strategic planning process
8. **22%** - Immediately create a website to continue discussion, share information, and collaborate on the actions we identify
9. **14%** - Training for how to use social media and other internet tools eg podcasting, live streaming
10. **12%** - Leverage visibility for Jazz by engaging celebrities, e.g. Oprah Winfrey

About the Chicago Jazz Town Hall

The Chicago Jazz Town Hall was an initiative of the Chicago Jazz Partnership, with the support of the Boeing Company, the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, and the Joyce Foundation. An organizing committee was created to guide the development of the strategy and design of the town hall.

This meeting was made possible by the volunteer hours by committee members, table facilitators, theme team members, and others. Thank you for their generous efforts.

The Town Hall was produced by *AmericaSpeaks*, a nonprofit organization that engages citizens in important public decisions that impact their lives. They are honored to be part of this effort.

Next Steps and Meet Ups

Over 50 participants completed Commitment Forms expressing interest in working together with others on the above actions and staying contact with each other via a variety of means including working groups and online communications

At the conclusion of the Town Hall, over 20 participants participated in brief meet ups with others that were interested in working together on one of the five top actions listed above.

The Chicago Jazz Partnership and the Organizing Committee will review the results from the Town Hall and consider options for supporting next steps.