
The Daily Northwestern

NORTHWESTERN AND EVANSTON'S ONLY DAILY NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1881

Year of Chicago Music to promote artist
community and honor music history



Robert Gauthier/Los Angeles Times/TNS

Kanye West performs at the 57th Annual Grammy Awards at Staples Center in Los Angeles on Sunday, Feb. 8, 2015. West is famously from Chicago, along with other popular artists like Chance the Rapper and Common.

[Sammi Boas](#), Reporter

January 21, 2020

2020 will be the Year of Chicago Music, according to Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and a Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events announcement.

Led by Department Commissioner Mark Kelly, the Year of Chicago Music aims to establish Chicago as one of the music capitals of the world and to connect its musician community.

“This is the first time that leaders in the classical world are connecting with those in hip hop, those in jazz and blues and the list goes on,” Kelly said. “So how do we create a more integrated culture that looks more like a sector and not just an array of individuals doing good work?”

As a part of the initiative, Chicago will hold an 18-day music celebration across the city from May 21 to June 7, incorporating the already existing House Music Festival, Gospel Fest and Blues Fest among other performances.

Kelly said he hopes the music festival will become one of the more popular music festivals over the course of the next five years.

“It’s a festival that’s about both our legacy and how music lives across genres today,” Kelly said. “Everyone’s going to be part of it, everyone’s excited and it’s about to be unleashed.”

The year’s initiative will also provide building grants to the South and West Sides for music industry infrastructure and professional development workshops on topics such as copyright and iTunes music publication.

Joan Hammel, a committee member for the Year of Chicago Music, said people can find performers for bookings or other events on a new online band roster.

“A part of the initiative is to bring together people who otherwise wouldn’t necessarily partner together,” Hammel said. “They’re hoping to put music in places, particularly for young people who might not otherwise be exposed to live performances.”

Kelly said he wants music to define part of the Chicago lifestyle for young people.

The initiative will ensure Chicago’s youth can access instruments, lessons and music experiences in the city.

Jake Trussell, a member of the marketing, professional development and research and policy working groups for the initiative, said throughout the year, the research and policy working group will investigate possible gaps in Chicago’s music industry.

Trussell said musicians often move from Chicago to the coasts in pursuit of better career opportunities. He said the new initiative will sustain Chicago’s vibrant artistic community by building a brand that highlights the city’s history and future.

“One of the cool things about Chicago is that we don’t brag about ourselves,” Trussell said. “It’s this great incubator for incredible talent and even businesses, but it tends to just do the work and not spend too much time bragging about it. And so, I think that the opportunity for the Chicago music brand is to kind of continue that legacy.”

Email: samanthaboas2023@u.northwestern.edu

Twitter: [@BoasSamantha](https://twitter.com/BoasSamantha)