

**The Chicago Community Trust
STATE OF COMMUNITY ADDRESS
Terry Mazany
November 15, 2016**

Linda, thank you for your leadership.

And thank you to all members of the Executive Committee who continue the tradition of exemplary volunteer service on behalf of residents of our region.

Key to our impact is the staff of the Trust, who are dedicated to: serving the philanthropic goals of Chicagoans; making smart use of endowed resources entrusted to the Trust, and broadly engaging our community in a unifying vision of our shared humanity and common good.

Thank you for your outstanding work.

A year ago we celebrated the 100th anniversary of The Chicago Community Trust and shared with you our plans and commitments to continue the record of contribution that is the hallmark of this great institution.

In our centennial research I came across a bit of history worth noting. It was almost exactly 100 years ago, on December 15th, 1916, that the Trust hosted a luncheon at the Union League Club for the public introduction of the Chicago Community Trust. The luncheon featured Frederick Goff, who founded the first community foundation in 1914, in Cleveland.

Although I cannot verify this as fact, I have it on good authority that at least one attendee at that luncheon bemoaned the fact that, and I quote, "I bet the Trust will turn 100 before the Cubs win the World Series."

So there you have it. 100 years ago we gained from Cleveland the idea of a community foundation – and now, a historic World Series Championship!

I cite this historical example to remind us that the Trust exists within the context of the times, sometimes wildly exuberant, and other times turbulent and troubled.

Let's be mindful that it was just six months after the 1916 public launch of the Trust that the United States entered World War I.

Equally noteworthy, this "war to end all wars" ended on November 11th, 1918. A commemoration recognized just a few days ago.

Why are these facts worth remembering?

The end of World War I brought with it a flood of more than 6 million refugees – and a very public backlash against immigrants.

After the war, Chicago swelled to about 2.5 million people, of which only 44% were English speaking. This prompted the Trust’s Americanization Survey and the formation of an Americanization Council that would operate until, quote, “the furor of prejudice had subsided and we were operating again on a higher level of mutual respect and good citizenship.”

In subsequent years the Trust tackled issues of prenatal care with Jane Addams and Hull House. It also looked at the deplorable conditions of the Cook County Jail so that, quote, “youthful delinquents and first offenders ... might be saved from becoming hardened criminals.”

And there was also a Trust study of the care of children with disabilities – back then referred to as “crippled children.”

In each of these are the antecedents of contemporary problems – for which the Trust continues to work with donors and other stakeholders to find innovative solutions to alleviate suffering, protect the most vulnerable, and increase opportunity.

We are able to do this because generations of donors have expressed their trust in this institution to do the right things to help make our community a better place for **all**.

Thanks to their generosity and belief in a better future, we are able to bring their philanthropic resources to bear on the challenges facing each generation.

Each of us has our own stories of family dealing with these challenges and uncertainties. In my case, my parents, children of immigrants, grew up in the Great Depression in the shadows of shuttered steel mills on the banks of the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland. My father fought in World War II, and my mother raised a victory garden.

I grew up during the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, and experienced the devastating shock of the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy within the span of months. And yet in each era we emerged stronger, better.

Today we face new challenges and uncertainties. And what matters more now than ever is that we come together as one Chicago – a city that’s unafraid of addressing the most challenging and complex problems, and respectful of the humanity of each of our neighbors.

The Trust is uniquely positioned to bring all stakeholders—nonprofits, donors, civic leadership, residents—together, in the interest of doing what’s best for the collective good of Chicago.

With that said, our purpose today is to celebrate the beautiful diversity of our communities, our city, and our region.

Every year, we invite to you to gather together with us for what we call the Trust's "state of community" address.

Why do we do this?

Our mission calls us to honestly reflect on the reality of our fellow residents. Are we thriving, or not? Is opportunity abundant and fair, or not?

The Trust's mission also compels us to reflect on the work of philanthropy—individuals and organizations making good things happen.

Our ultimate goal today is for each of you to walk out of this room inspired to do more together to fulfill the promise of this City and the people who live here.

We cannot pretend that our great city does not face challenges. Our economy was dealt a staggering blow, first by the foreclosure crisis in 2006, followed immediately by the Great Recession. A decade into recovery, we have yet to perform at the level we know Chicago is capable of.

As our colleagues at the Voorhees Center have shared with us, the gap between our most privileged and our most vulnerable residents continues to widen. Some neighborhoods flourish while others are being hollowed out.

Tragically, the ongoing loss of human life has made this year the city's deadliest in decades; and our community is still struggling with issues of public faith and trust in government.

But Chicago did not earn the title of the Great American City by folding in the face of adversity. This is a city that gains its strength from the challenges it faces and has the track record to prove it.

What is becoming more and more evident is that residents and community organizations are stepping in and stepping up to take back responsibility for their lives and their communities.

That's what we heard, overwhelmingly, at this year's *On the Table*. I know that many of you took part in the day's conversations, and I thank you for making your voice heard.

While people are dissatisfied with the state of their community they are also hopeful and feel that they can make a difference.

And that is what we see in Chicago's neighborhoods: the seeds of hope and determination taking root and sprouting green shoots of education attainment, community re-investment, and new opportunities.

We see a very real and palpable energy and dynamism in our neighborhoods that seems contagious and inspiring.

That is the headline this year.

We see:

- David Doig leading a remarkable renaissance in Pullman, resulting in massive re-investment and the re-invigoration of historic properties with the National Park designation.
- Theaster Gates leading in the role of artist turned master developer, demonstrating the power of a circular economy that turns liabilities into assets – from reclaiming the Stony Island bank from the wrecking ball, to reclaiming lives from the crisis of mass incarceration.
- Similarly, Joel Hamernick leads Sunshine Gospel Ministries' Sunshine Enterprises to provide business education and coaching for low-income entrepreneurs throughout Chicago's south side, creating jobs and economic opportunity for low-income families and neighborhoods. After 4 years, nearly half of their graduates have started businesses.

We see:

- Doug Low purchasing and repurposing a shuttered school in South Austin. The most violent of Chicago's neighborhoods has now become a haven for youth served by his Kidz Express with the mission to change neighborhoods one child at a time.
- Robbin Carroll launching I Grow Chicago in Englewood and building the Peace House through nothing but sweat equity. For the first time in a long time, children and young adults have a safe place to play and a space to dream.
- And Reverend Otis Monroe with the Monroe Foundation securing investments for these communities.
- Derek Brown, a former Vice Lord, founding Boxing Out Negativity to keep children out of harm's way in North Lawndale – and the work of his close friend, Reverend Robin Hood, who has dedicated his ministry to stopping the violence.
- And, of course, Brenda Palms Barber with the North Lawndale Employment Network providing U-turns for those seeking to turn their lives around.

- Marcenia Richards, founder of Fierce Women of Faith, has created an interfaith coalition of women committed to increasing peace in communities through advocacy, training and partnerships. Her goal next year is to host 77 *On the Table* conversations with women, one in each Chicago community.
- And the WINGS organization, Women In Need Growing Stronger, under the leadership of Rebecca Darr, has built in Englewood Chicago's first domestic violence safe house in decades.

The most touching part of my recent tour at WINGS was a glimpse into the "birthday room" – a large closet stocked floor to ceiling with every type of toy imaginable so that any child who happens to be living there on his or her birthday is able to experience that joy of a birthday party showered with love and affection.

A number of the leaders and organizations I just mentioned are in the room this morning. If you would stand up so we can recognize you...

What do all of their stories have in common? Proximity.

We are successful when we are connected with each other, when we listen and work together. To create more opportunities, we must be proximate to those without opportunity.

To this very point, we see the foundation community leaning in and redoubling our commitment to not just fund solutions, but to be part of the solution.

There is a group of 20 funders working together to help restore trust and legitimacy of law enforcement by ensuring the fair and inclusive implementation of the recommendations from the Police Accountability Task Force. Together we are providing vital funding to 11 community organizations that are hosting conversations this month and next to engage residents, block by block, to shape the policies, culture, and practices of policing in our city.

Most recently, a number of these funders, including the MacArthur Foundation, Joyce, McCormick, Woods Fund, and Polk Bros, responded at record speed to the community call for resources in anticipation of violence over the Labor Day weekend. Together we supplied half-a-million dollars to 72 organizations for community events reclaiming safe spaces for residents. All in the span of 10 days! But the most meaningful benefit was forging new relationships between community groups and our foundations.

Building on these accomplishments, we continue to work in collaboration to make Chicago a fair, equitable, and inclusive city.

For the Trust's part, this has been a year of transformation, beginning with the announcement of general operating grants – we call them GO Grants – to support the anchor organizations that are delivering essential services to residents and communities. In the face of funding uncertainties and escalating demands on front-line

nonprofits, we recognized the need to simplify our grant application process and provide a measure of stability in an otherwise chaotic world.

One year later, we have made 285 general operating grants totaling over \$16 million. Through GO Grants we have also organized subject matter cohorts that create shared methods for measuring impact, and work together to advance policy and systems reform.

We are also focused on creating conditions for a sustainable and inclusive economy.

And in many cases we are doing this by partnering with donors to bring innovative solutions to long-standing challenges.

For example, in partnership with the Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust, we launched the *Food to Market Challenge*, our first-ever prize philanthropy initiative. The challenge: reimagine the supply chain so that more locally sourced food is available at your local grocery store. The winner, Team Leverage, received the half million dollar prize to connect farms to table through the distribution systems of the Chicago Public Schools in a very innovative partnership.

We also launched a partnership with the City and the Metropolitan Planning Council to create the Great Rivers Project, which can be thought of as a metaphor for our times. What was once viewed as a liability for our city, our polluted rivers, is being transformed into a major asset that forms the spine of a livable city.

And we are working with successful entrepreneur Bob Crawford, in partnership with entrepreneurship training programs hosted by organizations like Bethel New Life and the Resurrection Project, to identify and fund promising business start-ups to revitalize neighborhood economies and to create jobs.

To meet the need for investment capital in our most under-resourced communities, we partnered with the MacArthur and Calvert Foundations to launch Benefit Chicago, our high impact investing initiative.

Thanks to *On the Table*, civic engagement has become core to who we are. And this year, as Mary said earlier, the Trust added a bit of rocket fuel to *On the Table* – we created the Acting Up Awards to fund great ideas pitched in 2-minute videos.

We were deluged by more than 400 applicants and were able to fund 72.

Some of the awards we supported included:

- Honest, Open, Proud—a group seeking to destigmatize mental health;
- Students at North Lawndale High School who organized a youth summit;
- A “couch tour” to engage and serve homeless youth; and
- The printing costs for a coloring book designed by a sixth-grade class to help adults more effectively counsel abused youth

Based on our experience, there is a clear desire from residents to have their voices heard and for their voices to matter.

In response we have started a new practice for civic engagement called Social Labs. Social Labs use human-centered design to tackle complex social challenges.

We have begun this work with three neighborhoods, Grand Boulevard, Oakland, and Douglas Park, to address the very important challenge: How do we create more resilient livelihoods for young people?

Why a new approach?

To make real progress, we must embrace complexity and a long view. And we need every stakeholder at the table working together, building relationships. Social labs were created in response to this idea.

In a recent New York Times OpEd, the Dalai Lama and co-author Arthur Brooks of the American Enterprise Institute define the problem as follows:

“It is the growing number of people who feel they are no longer useful, no longer needed, no longer one with their societies.”

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Their advice for how to respond:

“The first answer is not systematic. It is personal. Everyone has something valuable to share. We should start each day by consciously asking ourselves, “What can I do today to appreciate the gifts that others offer me? ...Each of us has the responsibility to make this a habit. But those in positions of responsibility have a special opportunity to expand inclusion and build societies that truly need everyone.”

What does this mean to the Trust? How do we think about our role and contributions?

We are committed to creating a more inclusive community. At our core, we seek to connect people power with institutional power. Human capital with financial capital. This is not an either or, but a both together.

Our work begins by inviting those typically not at the table to the table.

Our experience is that those who have been excluded have the deep experience, wisdom, and community-validated leadership to make a difference.

When we listen and learn from each other –

When we imagine and create, together –

We connect people with people, and the power of creativity and new ideas is channeled to where it matters most.

The result – we see each other through new eyes and appreciate our shared humanity.

For all of this optimism and evidence of progress, what still lies ahead is the challenge of racism and our quest to bring about conditions for a just, fair, equitable, and inclusive community.

For the third year in a row, we've seen "Racial Equity" emerge as a top issue of concern during *On the Table* conversations.

Last year, on this stage, I stated that, as a community, we could no longer kick the can of racism down the road, leaving it to another generation to confront. If we do, we are complicit and acquiesce to the unfairness of inequity based on racial difference.

While clearly this history is not unique to Chicago, we have the opportunity to set our city apart by making a civic commitment to address this legacy head-on.

The Chicago Community Trust seeks first to lead by example. For more than a decade we have championed diversity and inclusion within our institution and through our actions – but we **must** do more.

Next spring, we will sharpen the focus of *On the Table* by creating space for residents to deepen their exploration of racial equity. And yet, even though this issue is a leading theme every year, the dialogue will not be easy. We have heard from many that deeper conversations about race make them uncomfortable.

Unfortunately, that will not change as long as we shy away from this dialogue.

To be successful, our first step is to commit to being comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Yes, we may say the wrong things, yes we will tap emotions born of bitter experience that well up unexpectedly, but necessarily. But we can work our way through this discomfort and discover that by having honest conversations we actually better understand one another, come to value each other as fellow human beings.

This is a risk worth taking – what do we have to lose, compared to what we have to gain?

We recognize that this is just a first step on a longer journey, but it is the most important step to take.

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We share with you today a gift of our diversity, our humanity, our hopes and our dreams.

Five renowned photographers reflecting back to us who we are; inspiring us to embrace diversity as the wellspring of our strength.

As we approach the holiday season and the giving season, I encourage you to think about the needs of our fellow residents. Most of us in this room have the good fortune to enjoy a measure of comfort in our daily lives.

Many others do not. We have much to give, and I ask that each of us do what we can to help lighten the burdens of others. There is a saying: "If one lights a fire for others, it will also brighten one's own way."

In closing, I am mindful of the approaching 100th anniversary of the birth of poet Gwendolyn Brooks, a Chicago treasure.

I have taken liberties with one of her iconic poems, "We Real Cool," that reflects my sense of optimism:

*We real cool
We ace school*

*We work late
We fight hate*

*We shine sun
We are one*

*We jazz June
We thrive soon*

Thank you for joining with us today – **what you do matters.**