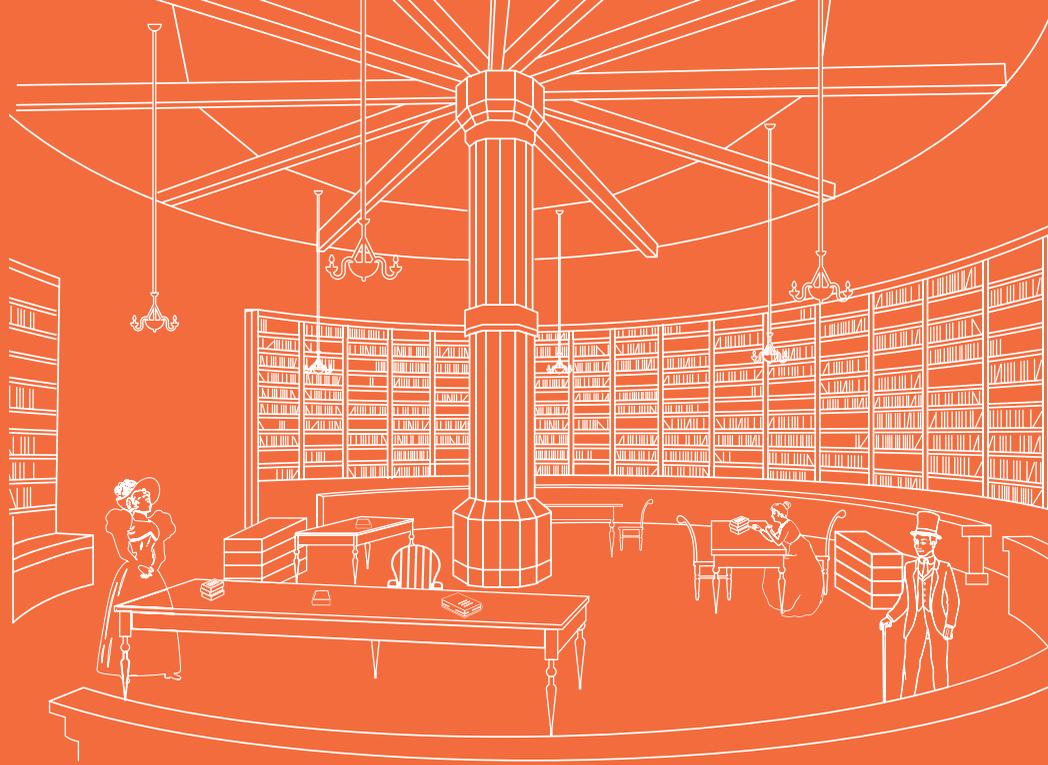


**CHICAGO
PUBLIC
LIBRARY**



**2020
2024
STRATEGY**





CPL's first reading room
inside the water tank, 1873,
corner of LaSalle and Adams

Chicago Public Library opened in 1873 in a water tank that survived the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Begun with a donation of 8,000 books from the people of Great Britain, including Her Majesty Queen Victoria, CPL grew quickly. From these modest beginnings, expansion continued, as it became clear that a single, central location was not enough. Horse-drawn carts delivered books to deposit stations in stores and businesses around the city. Reading rooms were established in park field houses. And a 1916 plan from Chief Librarian Henry Legler sought to build brick-and-mortar branches within walking distance of every Chicagoan's home.

*The library is
an arena of
possibility,
opening both
a window into
the soul
and a door
onto the world.*

Rita Dove
author, poet, professor

Today there are 81 locations and a system to deliver books and other materials with the click of a button on the library's website.

Just as CPL has adapted over a century and a half to effectively connect Chicagoans with materials, the library has also responded to community needs with innovative programs and services. From world language materials purchased since the 1800s to archives documenting Chicago history to YOUmedia and the Summer Learning Challenge, CPL is a leader in library services.

*Every hour a
library is open
is an hour where
a new reader, a
new resident or
a lifelong learner
can experience
the joy of the
library. This is
the true power
of libraries, and
we are proud
and privileged
to play this role.*

Commissioner Andrea Telli



I am who I am today because I was lucky enough to grow up with a library across the street from my school. Visiting the library and checking out books for me meant being transported to worlds and ideas far from my own. So it was there – amongst those library shelves – where I fell under the spell of books, history and storytelling.

Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot

WELCOME
MAYOR

Dear Chicagoans,

The City of Chicago thrives because of the richness of its culture, the vibrancy of its neighborhoods and the diversity of its residents. No organization enables and celebrates this more than Chicago Public Library. Each of our communities is anchored by a library that is truly welcoming to all, inviting us not only to read, but to find resources, to discuss issues that matter to our communities, to experiment with new technologies, and to participate in events and programs that enable us to learn and grow.

My belief in the essential role of the library is both personal and profound. From my first day as mayor, I have worked to ensure expanded access to library services. We eliminated fine barriers that once prevented so many patrons from accessing the vast resources and opportunities the library offers for learning, skills development and fun. We are committed to expanding library hours in locations across the city to provide more people with more opportunities to use the resources and services the library provides.

Each person's future is greatly influenced by the quality of resources in their community, and their access to opportunity. We are working hard to create a city that respects the experiences of all Chicagoans, removes unnecessary barriers, and paves the way for everyone to have equal access and opportunity to achieve their goals. Chicago Public Library plays an essential role in ensuring that every Chicagoan has an opportunity to learn, enjoy and contribute to the success of our great city.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lori E. Lightfoot".

Lori E. Lightfoot
Mayor
City of Chicago



Dear Friends,

The deep sense of pride we feel in Chicago Public Library has roots dating back two centuries. This rich history of service continues to shape how we interact with patrons and communities every day. Today's library thrives because library staff listen to and partner with our communities to design services and programs that resonate with individuals and families.

Our strategy development process gave us the opportunity to reflect on and celebrate our past accomplishments as we laid the foundation for a strategy that builds on our success and shapes the future of CPL. We gathered feedback from hundreds of staff and partners and from thousands of patrons about what they were proud of, what they wanted to improve and most importantly, what matters most for the future of our library.

The strategy that emerged reflects the hard work and dedication of our staff, partners and patrons, and the pride we feel in serving our communities in a unique and important way. We are proud of all we've accomplished and look forward to the next phase of our journey as we build on what we do well and thoughtfully explore new ways to serve our city and its residents.

Sincerely,



Andrea Telli
Commissioner
Chicago Public Library



Linda Johnson Rice
Board President
Chicago Public Library

A photograph of two young children sitting on a blue bench in a library. The child on the left is a young girl with dark hair, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. The child on the right is a young boy with dark curly hair, wearing a white button-down shirt and blue jeans. They are both looking down at a book held by the boy. The background shows bookshelves filled with books. The text 'WE ARE CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY' is overlaid on the left side of the image in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

WE ARE CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY

For nearly 150 years, Chicago Public Library has been at the heart of our city. A place of wonder, exploration and community, CPL welcomes more than 9 million people every year. Our national and international leadership in the library field stems from our deep commitment to supporting and serving patrons as they learn, play, develop skills and strengthen their communities.



Our Mission

We welcome and support all people in their enjoyment of reading and pursuit of lifelong learning. Working together, we strive to provide equal access to information, ideas and knowledge through books, programs and other resources. We believe in the freedom to read, to learn, to discover.



Our Vision

A city where people are equipped, engaged and inspired to learn and explore, and rely on Chicago Public Library as a trusted source of information, enrichment and opportunity.

Our Strategic Direction 2020-2024



What

We provide free and open access to information and experiences.

We encourage exploration and nurture learning.

We create respectful, safe and welcoming spaces.

How

We share pride and purpose.

We value creativity and resourcefulness.

We broaden the perception of what a library can be.

Why

We envision a city where people are equipped, engaged and inspired to learn and explore.

We invite Chicagoans to rely on CPL as a trusted source of information, enrichment and opportunity.

Our Strategy Reflects Broad Perspectives

Throughout CPL's strategic planning process, we engaged staff, patrons, leaders and partners across the city to ensure that our strategy truly reflects the communities and people we serve. This candid feedback served to guide and frame the direction of the next phase of our work. We also evaluated trends in technology and education to better understand the broader landscape in which we operate. Through this initial phase, we captured, reviewed and distilled all of the input from these sources into a set of central themes, which we shared with our staff, leadership and Mayor Lightfoot.

As we refined the strategy, we worked to align our strategic direction with Mayor Lightfoot's vision for Chicago. We established critical priorities for the library's next chapter, continuing to engage staff and other stakeholders to get further insights, hone language and build enthusiasm about the library's future. The final strategy articulates a clear direction and a shared vision built upon Chicago Public Library's ongoing commitment to service and excellence.

80%

Of CPL's staff were engaged in designing this strategy

16,000+

Patrons responded to surveys

25

In-depth interviews with CPL senior leadership and industry leaders

20+

Stakeholder and key partner discussions

Our Six Objectives

We provide free and open access to information and experiences that reflect and engage Chicago's diverse neighborhoods and people equitably and inclusively.

This is our commitment.

We develop collections, design programs and enable staff to encourage exploration and nurture learning.

This is our defining value.

We create respectful, safe and welcoming spaces that invite personal growth and create stronger, more connected communities.

This is our responsibility.

We share pride and purpose to improve the lives of Chicagoans and strengthen communities.

This is what drives us.

We value creativity and resourcefulness in serving patrons effectively and responsively.

This is what challenges us.

We broaden the perception of what a library can be.

This is what distinguishes us.



Objective

1

We provide free and open access to information and experiences that reflect and engage Chicago's diverse neighborhoods and people equitably and inclusively.

CPL provides every Chicagoan with access to knowledge, information and experiences to help them reach their potential as individuals and as active members of their communities. Each year we serve more than 9 million visitors, circulating more than 11 million items in 21 languages.

We have built an inclusive library system for all ages, with universal access, world-class programs and design excellence. This focus, and our responsiveness to evolving patron needs, have resulted in demonstrable impact—increasing literacy, bridging the digital divide and creating spaces for people of all ages to learn and discover.



ENSURE LIBRARY MATERIALS, PROGRAMS, TECHNOLOGY AND SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE, RELEVANT AND WELCOMING TO ALL.

Success means more patron participation and engagement as we continue to collect feedback from the public about their satisfaction with library services, and committing to use these insights to inform our work to diversify our collections, reduce barriers to access and make the library more reflective of Chicago.



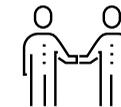
ENHANCE PATRON AND STAFF CAPACITY TO USE TECHNOLOGY AND OTHER RESOURCES WITH GREATER CONFIDENCE AND SKILL.

Success means continuing to engage patrons in technology initiatives, partnering with industry leaders to deliver innovative services and programs, and creating a technology competency framework to ensure staff can fully support patrons' evolving technology needs.



CREATE AND MAINTAIN DIGITAL RESOURCES THAT ENABLE PATRONS TO BETTER ACCESS LIBRARY RESOURCES.

Success means increasing evidence of engagement with CPL's online content, continuing emphasis on digitizing collections, and expanding available resources and materials in multiple languages and formats.



HIRE AND SUPPORT STAFF WHO ARE INVESTED IN AND REPRESENT THE DIVERSITY OF THE UNIQUE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE.

Success means ensuring CPL's workforce represents the communities we work in, and launching a staff-led committee to provide guidance on how accessibility, diversity, equity and inclusion principles can be better embedded in all aspects of the library.

Objective

2

We develop collections, design programs and enable staff to encourage exploration and nurture learning.

We all seek to read, learn and discover for different reasons, and CPL is proud to enable these diverse motivations. Many come for the pure joy of reading and exploration of new ideas found in books, magazines and newspapers. Some look for fellowship or support as they embark on a new professional or educational journey. Others find a comfortable chair or reading nook in which to read quietly or to be read to. Patrons also visit us online, whether to read eBooks from the comfort of their own homes, find recommendations for what to check out next or search online resources for topics of interest to them.



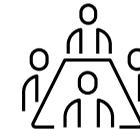
REFINE AND EXPAND LIBRARY COLLECTIONS TO REFLECT THE VARIED NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF PATRONS.

Success means completing an annual collection development plan and ensuring that collection maintenance standards are fully activated to increase access to relevant resources and reduce the number of outdated materials.



PROMOTE A BALANCED EDUCATION AND LEARNING AGENDA, WITH ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS AND EVENTS THAT SUPPORT THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF ALL AGE GROUPS, AND AUTHENTICALLY EMBED EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PRINCIPLES.

Success means aligning our learning and education objectives for patrons of all age groups and abilities with citywide priorities.



ADVANCE RELEVANT SKILLS OF ALL LIBRARY STAFF AND BUILD CAPACITY IN ORDER TO SUPPORT AND INSPIRE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT.

Success means refining the onboarding curriculum for new CPL staff, with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion principles, and creating professional development pathways for all staff to succeed in their roles.

Objective

3

We create respectful, safe and welcoming spaces that invite personal growth and create stronger, more connected communities.

Libraries offer much more than books and resources that support personal and professional growth. They provide places to gather with neighbors, collaborate with colleagues and find friendly faces. We are proud of our recent ambitious capital projects, drawing on the long history of designing and establishing libraries as unique, engaging community anchors. Beyond the walls of our libraries, we serve patrons in laundromats, at childcare centers and WIC sites, at street festivals, and in partnership with schools, parks and other city agencies.



WORK COLLABORATIVELY TO MAINTAIN INVITING, FLEXIBLE, RESPONSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE FACILITIES IN EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD.

Success means establishing and maintaining consistent standards in our spaces, with a focus on accessibility. It means routinely monitoring our spaces to reduce outdated items, regularly assessing and prioritizing needed improvements, and exploring the conditions for a long-range CPL capital plan and capital budget.



PROVIDE SPACE AND SUPPORT IN OUR LOCATIONS TO ENGAGE PATRONS, ADDRESS COMMUNITY NEEDS AND CONTRIBUTE TO CIVIC PRIORITIES ACROSS THE CITY.

Success means developing annual priorities for convening civic and community initiatives in the library.



IMPLEMENT CONSISTENT SAFETY AND SECURITY PROTOCOLS IN COLLABORATION WITH CITY PARTNERS.

Success means developing a comprehensive security and safety plan, and having all CPL staff complete trauma-informed, collective care training.



PRIORITIZE AND PRACTICE A PATRON-FOCUSED CUSTOMER SERVICE APPROACH, REFLECTING OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION.

Success means updating our branch operations manuals and emphasizing the importance of customer service to sustain high levels of patron satisfaction.

Objective

4

We share pride and purpose to improve the lives of Chicagoans and strengthen communities.

Look deeply into the heart of every great library and you will find knowledgeable and talented staff who invite everyone to learn and explore. One of the most enduring characteristics of CPL staff is a desire to be of service—to our patrons, to the library and to our city. Our staff create and deliver high-quality programs and facilitate personalized guidance on the use of our resources and special collections, and serve Chicagoans in dozens of other ways every day.



PROMOTE AND DELIVER POSITIVE PATRON EXPERIENCES THAT REFLECT OUR COMMITMENT TO SERVICE AND THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITIES, WHEREVER LIBRARY SERVICES ARE DELIVERED.

Success means continuing to plan and lead community-based outreach events at all our locations, and collecting patron input in a variety of ways to better understand and respond to community needs.



NURTURE A CULTURE OF ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND PATRON SERVICE, AND CULTIVATE SHARED SATISFACTION IN THE IMPACT OF OUR WORK.

Success means staff are continually learning from their peers through best practices and learning exchanges at locations across the city.



EXPAND THE HIGH LEVEL OF TRUST AND RESPECT WE'VE EARNED FROM THE PUBLIC AND OUR PARTNERS.

Success means publicly sharing our priorities and plans annually, in multiple formats, increasing the quality and frequency of our communications, and sharing CPL innovations and improvements citywide.

Objective



We value creativity and resourcefulness in serving patrons effectively and responsively.

In a city as richly diverse as Chicago, with 77 distinct communities, CPL staff endeavor to find creative ways to meet the varied needs of our neighborhoods. We take seriously our responsibility to serve all library visitors, from community members to local and visiting scholars to learners from around the state and around the world. Being anchored in every Chicago community provides us a unique perspective into the needs and interests of the people we serve, and responding to those evolving needs takes ingenuity, thoughtfulness and care.

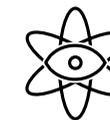


APPLY A DISCIPLINED APPROACH TO STRENGTHENING CORE OPERATIONS, MAKING INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT LIBRARY PRIORITIES AND EVALUATING NEW IDEAS WITH CARE.

Success means identifying and completing new process improvements annually to streamline or strengthen library operations.



EMPOWER LIBRARY STAFF—AND DEMONSTRATE LEADERSHIP WITH PARTNERS ACROSS THE CITY—TO WORK TOGETHER TO SERVE OUR COMMUNITIES THOUGHTFULLY AND CREATIVELY.



CULTIVATE, DESIGN AND STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS TO BROADEN AND ELEVATE THE SERVICES AND PROGRAMS THE LIBRARY OFFERS.

Success means continuing to actively develop intentional and strategic partnerships, identifying annual priorities for shared initiatives and campaigns, and showcasing the power of collaborative relationships across CPL.

Objective

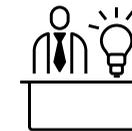
We broaden the perception of what a library can be.

Chicago Public Library has transformed into a 21st century center of learning, leading the field locally, nationally and globally. We have reimagined our approach and increased our impact by thinking differently, working collaboratively and designing responsively. This approach encourages experimentation with new ideas, enabling us to redefine how to best serve patrons and use our physical and online spaces most effectively. Beyond providing the core services and programs our patrons have come to expect and rely on, we strive to respond to people's evolving information needs by testing ideas and investing in the programs, facilities and technologies that have the greatest potential for wide-ranging impact.



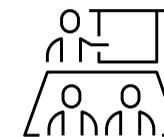
EXCEED PATRONS' EXPECTATIONS BY CONTINUING TO DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY, TRUSTED AND RELIABLE SERVICES BOTH INSIDE AND BEYOND LIBRARY WALLS.

Success means creating a consistent customer service culture, reflecting a visionary, patron-centered approach to collections, programs and experiences.



EXPLORE AND INVEST IN NEW IDEAS THAT EXPAND THE DEFINITION OF LIBRARY SPACES, SERVICES AND PROGRAMS, CELEBRATING SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES EQUALLY FOR THEIR VALUE IN IMPROVING OUR WORK FOR THE FUTURE.

Success means activating new initiatives that promote innovation, including staff-driven experimental projects, and piloting at least one new service in several locations each year.



CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAFF TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER, AND THE BROADER LIBRARY FIELD, AS WE IMPROVE OUR EFFORTS TO SERVE OUR PATRONS.

Success means growing staff involvement in efforts to elevate the field of librarianship through conference participation and contributions to industry publications. It also means enhancing internal communications and using community of practice frameworks more intentionally to inform staff growth and learning.

Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot

Andrea Telli
Commissioner, Chicago Public Library

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our thanks to Mayor Lightfoot and her team for their unwavering leadership and support, and for their belief in the power of our library as an essential resource for all Chicagoans. We are deeply grateful to our dedicated CPL staff for their engagement throughout this process, and to the thousands of patrons who took time to share their feedback. We appreciate InStride Advisors for bringing out the best in us throughout the development process. For their ongoing guidance, we thank the CPL Board of Directors and our partners, as well as the Chicago Public Library Foundation for its support of so many vital initiatives. Finally, this strategy would not have been possible without the generous support of the MacArthur Foundation. We are so very grateful.

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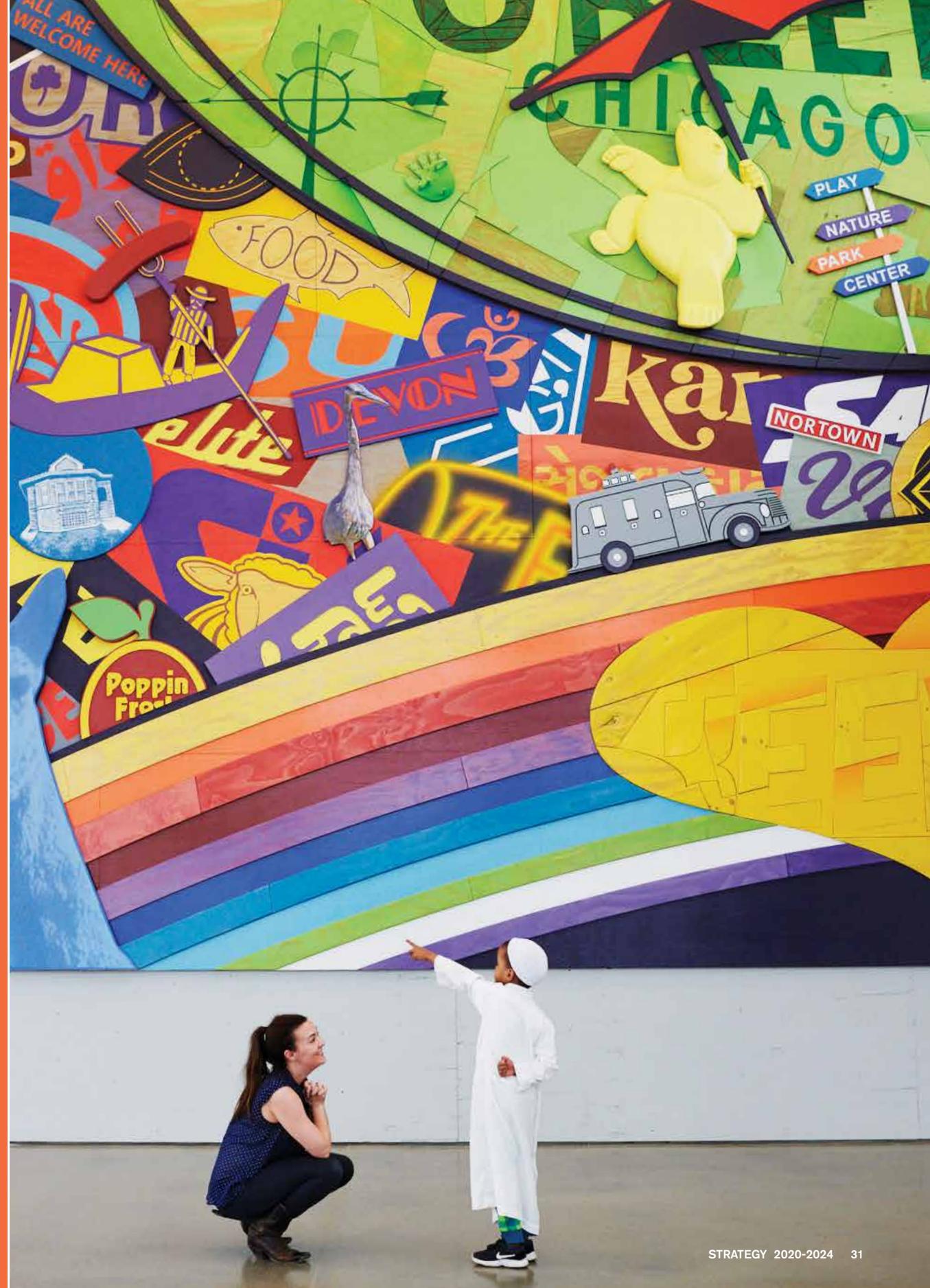
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