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**Urban Juncture Foundation Wins \$1 Million Grant from  
the Mellon Foundation for New Arts Spaces in The Forum**

*Creative Complex at The Forum will establish locally-owned hospitality, entertainment and cultural spaces in Chicago's historic Bronzeville neighborhood*



*Credit: Adrian Walker*

**CHICAGO (March 28, 2022)** - Urban Juncture Foundation (UJF) announced today it was recently awarded \$1,000,000 of capital grant funding by the Mellon Foundation Humanities in Place program to support the development of new arts and cultural heritage spaces within The Forum, one of the last landmarks of Chicago's golden Black Metropolis era. The grant will significantly advance a portion of The Forum's multi-million dollar rehabilitation and Urban Juncture's mission to restore it as a hub of culture, creativity and community by establishing The Creative Complex at The Forum.

"We are delighted to partner with the Mellon Foundation to move our iconic structure and historic community forward," said UJF President Bernard Loyd. "This grant lets us take the next big step towards fully revitalizing The Forum, as it enters its 125th year, and celebrating Bronzeville stories."

Built in 1897, The Forum anchored Chicago's vibrant Bronzeville neighborhood as the epicenter of civic, social, commercial and cultural Black life for over 75 years.

Since its closing in the 1970s, the 32,000 sq. ft. complex has stood equally resilient and defiant at the 43rd Street Green Line train station as both a past and hopeful future home to some of the city's - and the nation's - richest stories of Black life as told through music, cuisine, art, film and photography, dance and the infinite imagination that is Black culture.

Given the space and opportunity today, what amazing stories would The Forum's neighbors tell or create? The Creative Complex at The Forum marks the present-day intersection that bridges The Forum's legacy and future, and helps the community to live, tell, enjoy and preserve those stories.

The Creative Complex at The Forum will occupy the three double-level storefront spaces at 318 - 322 East 43rd Street comprising The Forum's "West Annex" and includes the buildout of four arts-based spaces:

- Creative Incubator (318 E. 43rd): The organizational and hospitality heart of the Creative Complex, featuring a ground floor cafe, and shared office and multi-media production space in the basement, among an array of support services designed to help local creatives "eat off their art"
- Metropolis Gallery (320 E. 43rd): Will celebrate the Black experience in Bronzeville through an ever-changing set of art and historical exhibitions highlighting the work of local artists, historians, archivists, and other storytellers
- Hansberry Studio (322 E. 43rd): A unique community theater (first floor) and multi-use wellness lab (basement level) celebrating Lorraine Hansberry by providing high quality learning, performance, and wellness opportunities to Black girls and women
- West Facade: The expansive rooftop covering the storefront spaces will feature "Train of Thoughts," a year round video storytelling initiative utilizing a 15 x 20 ft. screen on the facade

Urban Juncture is excited to collaborate with mission-aligned partners and local entrepreneurs like Gumbo Media, a Chicago-based media, community, and storytelling enterprise, to fully activate each space, bring community together and support storytelling across mediums.

"We're invigorated by the opportunity to establish a physical community presence through our new and first headquarters in The Forum's Metropolis Gallery. As community builders and storytellers, particularly for Black people and communities, nothing feels more fitting than having an office that functions as a narrative bridge between Chicago's vibrant past and a bold, revitalized future," said Matthew Manning, Gumbo Media's Co-Founder and Creative Director.

"But this won't just be our office," added Manning. "We're calling this space the "Metropolis Gallery," making it a home for community, expression, and storytelling that honors the past, catalyzes the present and reimagines the future of Black Chicago, doing our part to rebuild what once stood here as a Black Metropolis."

Urban Juncture Foundation is honored to have the support of the Mellon Foundation, the nation's largest supporter of the arts and humanities, for this project.

"By centering Chicago's Black heritage and culture, the Creative Complex at The Forum will bring the presence and power of the African American community's rich history, experiences, and creativity to help shape a more just community today and in the future," said Mellon Foundation Humanities in Place program officer Justin Garrett Moore. "This investment on Chicago's South Side joins other public, private, community, and philanthropic support and has the potential to elevate the essential work of local artists, historians, archivists, storytellers, and entrepreneurs in conserving and enhancing their communities."

To learn more about The Forum, participate in upcoming small group tours, or volunteer, please visit [theforumbronzeville.com](http://theforumbronzeville.com).

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#### **About Urban Juncture Foundation**

Urban Juncture advances the sustainable development of economically challenged urban neighborhoods. By bringing together community assets, particularly people, culture, and history, with like-minded external partners in a collaborative effort, Urban Juncture fosters local entrepreneurship, delivers needed products and services, beautifies the community, builds social capital and facilitates economic mobility. Learn more at [urbanjuncture.org](http://urbanjuncture.org).