

2022 PRO FORMA

STEPPING STONE THEATER

BRINGING **COLOR** TO COMEDY
AND COMEDY INTO THE **COMMUNITY**

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WELCOME TO STEPPING STONE THEATER!

Stepping Stone Theater is a welcoming performance space for the comedy community offering a variety of comedy classes for interested students. In addition, it will house a bar and coffee shop that will partner with local Chicago businesses.

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AS THE FOUNDER of Stepping Stone Theater, I want to thank you for taking the time to get to know us and what we're all about. I'm very excited for you to see what we have in store for the Chicago community.

There is a beautiful variety of people all over the world that we can benefit from listening to and acknowledging their existence. It's my mission that their stories are heard and that we all learn something new from their experiences.

Throughout this proposal, you may come across acronyms or phrases that may have unclear meanings to you. We're also regularly learning these new phrases and meanings ourselves. Trust me, you're not alone.

Here are some expressions that will be repeated throughout our proposal and the meaning behind them:

BIPOC - Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

LGBTQIA - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual

Non-POC allies - people who don't identify as a Person of Color but support equality

and human rights for all people regardless of ethnicity, sexuality, gender, etc.

People of/with disabilities - refers to peoples living with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairment that hinders their daily life.

You'll also see we mention "diversity". I'm sure you already know what this means, but it's important that you know what it means to us. Diversity isn't a quota to complete a corporate statistic. Diversity is something we celebrate and acknowledge all day, every day. It defines who we are and what we represent.

Okay, dive in. There's some good stuff here that I know you'll enjoy.

**And hey, thanks for listening!
Much Appreciated,**



Stepping Stone Theater at a Glance

Since our inception in the summer of 2020, Stepping Stone Theater has grown. We have grown our community, been featured in the media, produced several shows, and held our first fundraiser event. Below is a high-level look at the current state of Stepping Stone Theater.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

Mailing List Subscribers / **1000+**

- Monthly Page views: **500+**
- Monthly Unique Visitors: **300+**

Instagram / @steppingstonecomedy **1.2K+**

Twitter / @bipoccomedy **500+**

Facebook / @steppingstonecomedy **300+**

FUNDRAISING

- \$25K raised via GoFundMe from 314 individual donors

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- The Puerto Rican Cultural Center
- Alternatives, Inc
- Chicago Public Schools
- The Second City
- The Annoyance Theater
- Logan Square Improv
- The Cornservatory
- The Playground Theater
- City Farm Chicago

SHOWS

- The Vibes at The Second City
- It Will Be Okay? with Kenya & Holmes
- That Feeling You're Feeling Is Mutual, A Night of Comedy with Evan Mills
- The Stepping Stone Summer Social

PRESS

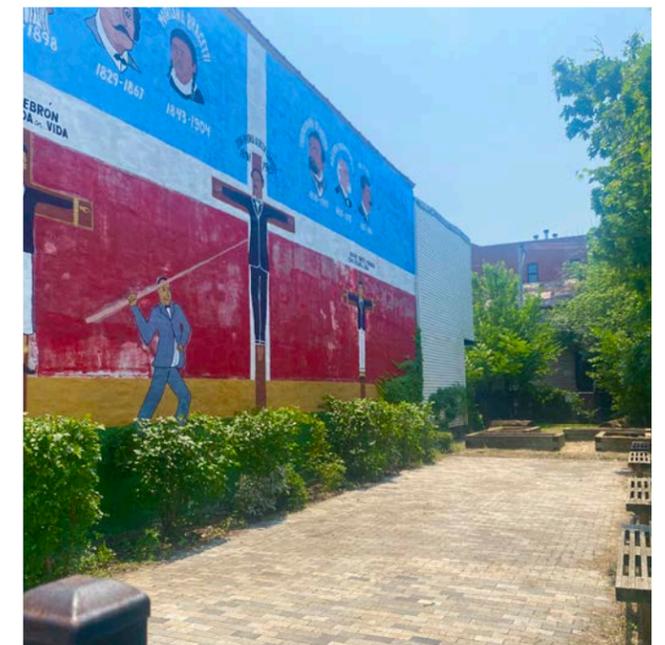
- *Chicago Improv Was Dead. Can New Leaders Revive It?* - **The New York Time**
- *Stepping Stone aims to give diverse comedians a leg up and bring shows to more Chicago neighborhoods.* - **The Chicago Tribune**
- *Everyone Can Improvise: New Theater Envisions a More Inclusive Future for Chicago Improv.* - **WTTW Chicago**
- **Fox Chicago**
- **Headliner Chicago**

See Section 3: Business Plan for our Business Pro-forma.

THE STEPPING STONE SUMMER SOCIAL



THE PUERTO RICAN CULTURAL CENTER MURAL CLEAN UP



SECTION 1

The Concept

We're a new kind of theater.

Currently, we are a small group but we're bringing you a pretty big idea. Our idea is backed up by a proven game plan, a supportive community, substantial experience, and plenty of research. We want to open an inclusive and diverse comedy theater.

Our proposal will shed light on an initiative led by respected leaders in the Chicago comedy community. This is a power-packed and motivated endeavor to bring more laughter to our world through comedy and share the healing gift of our favorite art form. In these trying times, we could all use it.

As a non-profit theater, this entire operation is centered around creating a more resourceful and positive performance space through community outreach and affordable education in the performing arts. Our programs will be accessible for persons of all backgrounds.

The best comedy isn't one-dimensional. The best comedy is innovative, unique, educational, and fun! More people learning means more people discovering their potential. Diverse performers appeal to all audiences. At our theater representation matters. Our curriculum will focus on learning our diverse comedy history, being innovative, and achieving artistic excellence. It's important that everyone involved in this incredible art form is educated in aspects that infrequently receive the recognition it deserves.

We want to include more people. Including more people means a larger, more diverse talent pool. At Stepping Stone Theater everyone will have the opportunity to learn and grow. Especially those historically left out

because they can't afford classes or are reduced to stereotypical roles associated with their race, gender, sexual orientation, and/or disabilities.

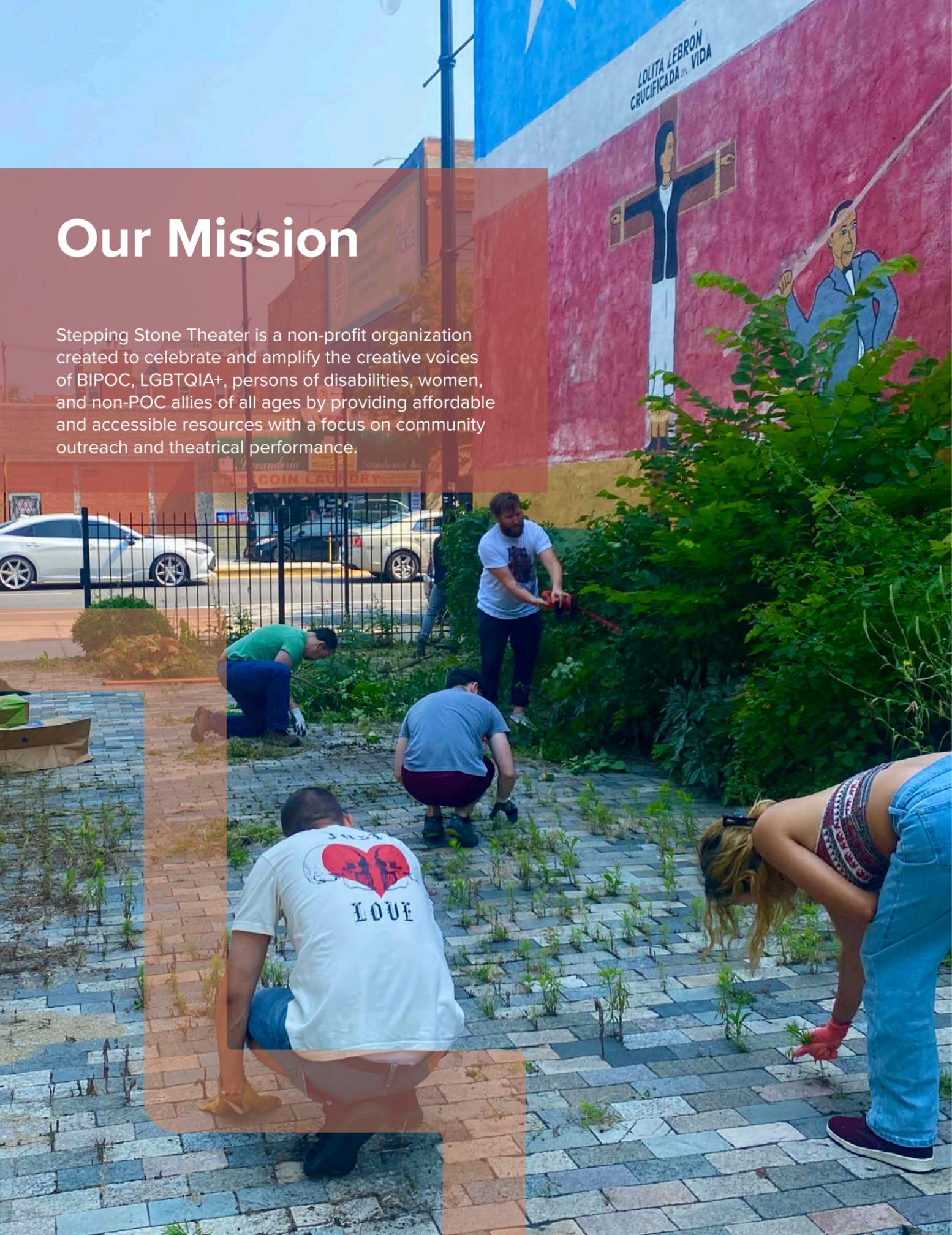
Laughter and artistic expression are proven to be therapeutic. We're not claiming to be doctors but we like to use our talents to heal through the gift of laughter.

The name Stepping Stone Theater is intentional. We are meant to be a "stepping stone" for our performers on their way to greatness. We want to provide unique resources to help our community. We want our students and performers to grow, move on to bigger and better things, and keep paying it forward.



Our Mission

Stepping Stone Theater is a non-profit organization created to celebrate and amplify the creative voices of BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, persons of disabilities, women, and non-POC allies of all ages by providing affordable and accessible resources with a focus on community outreach and theatrical performance.



Core Values



ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE

We strive for artistic excellence by cultivating every person's talents and strengths. In order to achieve quality performances, we encourage artists to implement hard work, take risks, and acknowledge the lessons learned through their successes and failures.



COMMUNITY

We believe in giving back to the community by contributing our time and attention to those in need. By supporting the community, we hope that those who benefit from the support of the theater will also give time and attention to others in need.



DIVERSITY

We welcome and celebrate diversity and honor the unique differences of every individual. We recognize that these differences are a valued asset that represents the community of Stepping Stone Theater.



INTEGRITY

We make an active choice to consistently practice what we preach when demonstrating ethical principles, values and doing the right thing.



RESPECT

Respect begins with oneself and extends to others through facilitating trust and mutual admiration. By showing empathy and caring for others, an inclusive and welcoming environment can be provided for all.

The Community Promise



WE'RE ACCESSIBLE.

Let's remove the barriers to learning. Our space will be located where many improvisors already live and will be within close proximity to public transit. Our curriculum is designed to be affordable and give opportunities to those who can't afford classes. Our space is easy to navigate for those with disabilities. We welcome all.



WE'RE DIVERSE.

To welcome all, we must represent all. When our improvisors walk into our space, they will feel included. They will be invited to perform in all roles. They will look around the room and see people like them. Our theater will be diverse and our curriculum will not tolerate racism, sexism, bullying, or bias. Bigotry and hate aren't funny.



WE'RE GOING TO HELP PEOPLE.

Laughter can change lives. Everyone loves to laugh. It's been proven that laughter reduces the level of stress hormones and increases the level of health-enhancing hormones. A lot of people need help right now, which means there are lots of ways we can improve lives through entertainment.



WE SEEK DIVERSE DONORS.

Diversity means everyone involved. They say follow the money. We respect everyone placing their trust in our dream. We also want donors who look like the community we represent. When people follow the money behind this theater, they'll find members of every background.



This theater may be the dream for a small group of people, but it's built around helping an entire community.

Comedy Community Challenges

- Lack of diversity and inclusion.
- Lack of compensation for performers.
- The hierarchy of being able to perform in comedy theaters.
- Unnecessary competitiveness within the art.
- Lack of attention and commitment to community and theater initiatives.
- Financial barriers in paying for classes and workshops.

The Stepping Stone Solution

- Actively establish a performance space that shows the diversity of the improv community.
- Compensate performers
- Create outreach programs that will give access and education to those who are unaware of the art of improvisation.
- Create opportunities for performers and students to practice their skills on a regular basis
- Establish a foundation that demands respect for all individuals
- Administer routines that are consistent when it comes to initiatives

Quick History Lesson

“If you don’t know where you’ve come from, you don’t know where you’re going.” - Maya Angelou

1929

Viola Spolin begins teaching drama with the Works Progress Administration at Hull House in Chicago. She and **Neva Boyd** create the building blocks of improvisation.

1948

Viola Spolin's son—**Paul Sills**—enrolls at the University of Chicago (UC), where he and fellow actors **Mike Nichols, Elaine May, Severn Darden, and Sheldon Patinkin** start UC's first theater department using his mother's theater games.

1955

The UC theater group starts "**The Compass Players**," where they use improv to create political sketch shows and entertain crowds with improv games. **The Players** split to form Chicago and St. Louis groups. **Del Close** joins in St. Louis, where he, **Elaine May and Theodore Flicker** create the "rules" of improv.

1959

The Players dissolve and "The Second City" is born under the guidance of **Paul Sills**. Their first performance is in the back of a laundromat in Old Town. **Elaine May and Mike Nichols** take material created with **The Compass Players** to Broadway in New York with immediate success; putting Chicago comedy on the map.

1975

Saturday Night Live premieres on NBC, which uses the tenets of Chicago comedy to build its show. The Second City cast members **Dan Aykroyd, Gilda Radner, and John Belushi** join the show.

1981

Del Close (also former director for the Second City) collaborates with student **Charna Halpern** to create "Improv Olympic" (iO Theater) using their signature form called "The Harold." iO becomes a world renowned school for learning stage improv.

1987

Mick Napier, Joe Bill and Mark Henderson move to Chicago. They establish a new and irreverent style of comedy, and introduce full length plays and musicals to the scene. They form the company "Metraform."

ComedySportz opens in Chicago and specializes in short form improvisation.

1989

Metraform changes their name to "The Annoyance" and premieres "Coed Prison Sluts," a full-length musical, written through improv. It was the longest running musical in Chicago history.

1994

Charna Halpern publishes the book *Truth in Comedy*. It solidifies many of the tenets of long-form improv and forms the philosophy of iO.

1996

A Harold team out of iO called "The Upright Citizens Brigade" (UCB)—featuring **Matt Besser, Ian Roberts, Amy Poehler and Matt Walsh**—relocates to NYC and gets a sketch show on Comedy Central.

UCB New York successfully opens using the stylings of Chicago improv that the founders studied.

2002

Mick Napier solidifies The Annoyance philosophy of "f*ck the rules of improv" in his book *Improvise*. The philosophy teaches improvising from a place of play, and a focus on the individual.

Second City alum **Ali Farahnakian** opens "The Peoples Improv Theater" (PIT) in NY.

2005

UCB Sunset opens in Los Angeles.

2010

Chicago has over 10 improv theaters and thousands of improv comedians. It is regarded as the home of Improv comedy and becomes a destination for those wanting to study the art. The "Big Three" Chicago comedy theaters—The Second City, iO and The Annoyance—double in size within the next 10 years.

2011

The 10,000 Hours program is founded by **Julia Morales** in NYC.

UCB opens a second New York theater and bar in the East Village known as UCB East.

2013

UCB writes their Comedy Improvisation Manual, solidifying the improv philosophy focused on "game."

2018 - 2020

Multiple comedy theaters in the nation close their doors, inspiring others to start their own theaters.

2020

Stepping Stone Theater is founded by **Julia Morales**



SECTION 2

The Team

Our team knows this business. And they are talented.



Chicago is known for its famed and historical comedy scene. Our team has a wide range of comedy theater experience, including performance education, curriculum and show structure, and overall daily theater and business operation. This experience drives our passion to pursue building a theater that celebrates and amplifies diverse voices in our community.

Our team has witnessed comedy theaters succeed. Individually, we have contributed to helping many theaters succeed and grow. The places that really set themselves apart are passionate about having their own unique space and story. Stepping Stone Theater will be become an integral part of the Chicago comedy scene because we know what makes us pioneering. We will bring the art of improvisation and sketch comedy to areas of Chicago with untapped talent that deserve the same chances as many of Chicago's greatest performers.

As you review our credentials, please note that we bring with us all our best connections from the teams and theaters that we've been a part of building over 15 years. This eclectic group brings a hefty dose of purpose, comedy and theater experience, integrity, and of course a bandwagon of some of the most supportive talent from all over the nation.

Julia Morales



“Improv and sketch comedy expanded my knowledge of the limitless possibilities as a performer and I’m determined to help others like myself experience the same joy.”

Founder and Artistic Director

Guilty Pleasure: Devouring bags of candy corn while onlookers cringe.

Known for Saying: “nuh-uh”

● jmorales@steppingstonechicago.com

● callmejules.com

PROFILE

Julia Morales is a Black and Puerto Rican actor, writer, teacher, director, and an all-around good person to know from Houston, TX with a drive to create artistic opportunities for people like herself in the improv comedy community in Chicago, IL where she currently resides.

She graduated from the American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA) in hopes to fulfill her passion to become a working actor. After realizing that she was regularly being typecast, she became intrigued with the art form of improvisation because it allowed her more options to perform various characters.

She won the 2008 NBC Diversity Scholarship and moved to New York to study improv comedy further. Like Michelle and Barack, Julia and improv became the perfect match.

She turned her involvement with performing and teaching improv and sketch comedy into a career. She has performed at comedy festivals all over the nation including on the Norwegian Cruise Lines while traveling around the world. In 2018, she was a recipient of the Second City Bob Curry Fellowship and was later cast as a member of the Second City Touring Company.

She has written and performed three successful solo shows as well as created a community program called, 10,000 Hours, to help other improvisers get more practice without breaking their budget.

Her passion for improv and sketch comedy has guided her to working on owning her non-profit organization, Stepping Stone Theater, which will celebrate the creative voices of the Black and Brown communities.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Second City	2018 Bob Curry Fellowship	Matt Hovde
iO Theater	SNL Sketch Packet	Michael McCarthy
David E Talbert Acting Workshop	Scene Study/Monologues	David E Talbert
Annoyance Theater	Long Form Improvisation	Jimmy Pennington
iO Theater	Long Form Improvisation	Susan Messing
The People Improv Theater (PIT)	Long Form Improvisation	Chris Grace
Upright Citizens Brigade (UCB)	Long Form Improvisation	Jordan Klepper
The Magnet Theater	Musical Improvisation	Michael Lutton
American Musical Dramatic Academy	Studio Acting Program	David Martin

FILM/TELEVISION

The Chi	Nosey Woman/Co-star	Samantha Bailey
The Red Line	Yvette/Co-star	Kevin Hooks
NickMoms	Hand Washing Mom	Viacom International
MTV Made	Improv Comedy Student	MTV Studios

STAGE

Don't Tell Me To Shut Up	Solo Show Performance	The Public House Theatre
#ShipLife	Solo Show Performance	People Improv Theatre
Closed Doors	Solo Show Performance	People Improv Theatre
Ma Rainey's Black Bottom	Ma Rainey	Ivar Theatre

IMPROVISATION/SKETCH

Green Co	Second City National Touring	Jonald Reyes
Second City After Hours	Short Form Improv Ensemble	Frank Caeti
Dysfunctional Family Affair	Second City Revue	Matt Hovde
Duchess	Harold Team Ensemble	iO Theater
Second City Theatricals	Sketch/Improv Ensemble	Norwegian Gem (NCL)
Second City Theatricals	Sketch/Improv Ensemble	Norwegian Dawn (NCL)
Second City Theatricals	Sketch/Improv Ensemble	Norwegian Star (NCL)
The Magnet Theater	Musical Improvisation	Michael Lutton
Story Pirates	Performer/ Teaching Artist	Arts Education

WORK EXPERIENCE

2013 - Current
The Second City,
Performer

Rehearse and perform improv and sketch comedy for scheduled shows and national tours. Write sketches and songs for specialized sketch comedy shows and/or write and record comedy videos.

2019 - 2020
The Annoyance Theatre
Director of Diversity and Outreach

Build a network of diverse students seeking to take classes and create shows, implement and create workshops and programs, engage with students and performers to identify areas with a lack of diversity and inclusiveness to make positive changes

2018 - 2020
Flywheel Sports
Administrative Support

Check in and assist Flywheel patrons, assist with setting up bikes for new patrons, update information about sales and promotions, assist with cleaning studios and bike maintenance

2017 - 2019
The Annoyance Theatre
Night Theatre and Bar
Manager

Open and close the theater and bar in a timely manner, manage interns, house and bar staff, data entry, bookkeeping, provide a safe and enjoyable environment for all students, performers, and patrons, communicate with theater staff regarding shows starting and ending on time, assisting with taking tickets and directing patrons to their shows, attend to any and all unexpected issues or concerns

2016 - 2018
The Shirley Ryan Ability
Lab Administrative
Coordinator,
Human Resources

Prepare and assist with new hire pre-employments, manage new hire orientation duties, assist with front desk coverage, perform a variety of administrative tasks for the Human Resources department as needed

Jonald Reyes



“Improvisation helped me find the confidence in myself and helping to build Stepping Stone Theater gives me the opportunity to inspire more BIPOC artists to strengthen their voices.”

Secretary

Superpowers: Ability to binge 2 seasons of The Office in one day.

Guilty Pleasure: I wear 2 pairs of socks for more comfort.

● jreyes@steppingstonechicago.com

● jonaldjude.com

PROFILE

Jonald Reyes has been involved with theater arts and administration for over 10 years. In that time, he has worn many hats including Actor, Writer, Director, Producer, Teacher, and Administrator. He is currently a Stage Director at The Second City and The Annoyance Theatre. Other directorial works have been performed as part of Steppenwolf Theatre’s Lookout Series, Chicago Sketchfest, The Out of Bounds Comedy Festival (Austin, TX), and the United Solo Theatre Festival (NYC). He has taught improvisation and sketch writing at The Second City, The Annoyance Theatre, and The Revival Theater for the past 5 years. Working as a Stage Director, Jonald has also helped to augment underrepresented performers and will now be able to elevate their voices through an environment they can relate to.

Reyes is an alumnus of Directors Lab Lincoln Center Theater 2017 and DirectorsLabChicago 2016. Prior to going full-time into the arts, Jonald worked at the engineering firm, Sargent & Lundy, L.L.C. for 18 years. As a Procurement Contract Specialist, he focused on subcontract services, legal negotiations, and assisting in accounts payable. He was able to apply these business skills to organizations such as Chicago Improv Productions, DirectorsLabChicago, and as the Associate Artistic Director at The Revival Theater. By combining his plethora of theater production experience with this background in procurement contract administration, he will be an asset to the foundation of Stepping Stone Theater.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Second City

The NeoFuturists

The Annoyance Theatre

Chicago Dramatists Theater

iO Theater

Rutgers University

FILM/TELEVISION/WEB

The Hanleys	Director, Co-Producer	Fake Quotes Comedy
Friends with 401(k) Benefits	Creative Consultant	Team Us Comedy
You Are Not Alone	Executive Producer	You Are Not Alone Productions
“I’m Sorry, Not Sorry” (MV)	Director, Editor	The Fruit Flies
The Slant	Executive Producer	KBC-TV, WOCH-CA
That Asian Thing	Director, Producer	Groovy Ghost Films

STAGE

The Second City National Touring Company	Director	The Second City
Devin Sanclemente’s Show Your Flames	Director	Steppenwolf Theatre LookOut Series
The Hanleys	Director	Annoyance Theatre
Welcome to the NRA: A Musical ‘Bout Guns	Director	Annoyance Theater
Break Out Comedy Festival	Director	NBCUniversal / The Second City
Improv Brunch	Director	The Second City / UP Comedy Club
Urban Twist: Public Empathy #1	Director	The Second City Diversity & Inclusion
Sonal Aggarwal’s The Alchemy of Bliss	Director, Co-Producer	Steppenwolf Theatre LookOut Series
Wake Up Hyde Park	Director, Co-Producer	The Revival

WORK EXPERIENCE

2019 - Current
 The Second City and
 The Second City
 Training Center
 Teacher, National Touring
 Company Director

Instruct students within the advanced improvisation Conservatory program. Operates with Producers and Stage Management on the upkeep of actors for one of the national touring companies. Provide Directing and sketch comedy writing notes during rehearsals and performances.

2018 - Current
 The Annoyance Theatre
 Teacher
 Resident Director

Collaborates with theater management and class administrators in supporting the mission of the theater to students and actors. Directing the theater’s prominent shows & communicating with management on process.

2002 - 2019
 Sargent & Lundy LLC
 Procurement Contract
 Specialist

Issuance and negotiations of legal Purchase Order contracts in the acquisition of professional services to support the design of power plants. Liaison between Project Team to outside vendors during Request for Proposal bids.

2013 - 2017
 Stage 773
 Associate Producer,
 Chicago Sketch Comedy
 Festival & Chicago
 Women’s Funny Festival

Lead in the solicitation of talent submissions and assists groups on application issues. Marketing of the Festival and support of press to the event. Contribute to event planning and provide creative feedback on Festival themes. Lead House Manager.

2015 - 2017
 Stage 773
 Program Manager, The
 Artist’s Lab

Overall management of 5 creative pods each comprising of 1 Director, 6 Actors and 6 Writers with obligation to produce 4 new shows within a 6 month period. New pods are created twice a year. Main liaison between pods and venue.

2014- 2015
 Chicago Improv
 Productions
 Producer, Chicago Improv
 Festival

Collaborated with the Executive Producer and Artistic Director in planning, preparing and executing a week-long Festival featuring over 150 Acts on more than 20 stages in and around the Chicago, IL area.

Jonathan Lee-Rey

Community Outreach Manager

Guilty Pleasure: Quietly crying to the newest episode of NBC's This Is Us.

● jlee.rey@steppingstonechicago.com

Superpower: Ability to stay up **way** past any normal bedtime.

● jonathanleerey.com

PROFILE

Jonathan Lee-Rey is an actor, writer, and filmmaker from Yonkers, NY with a splash of the Bronx. Currently, he is based in Chicago where he is a member of Stir Friday Night, a producer of the Chicago iteration of Kaleidoscope, and a teaching artist with Playmakers Laboratory. He has worked on Second City digital productions such as Gab & Tonic as well as UCB Comedy, Seriously.TV, and the New Yorker.

Formerly he was on the iO Harold team Velvet and iO Network team Free Trial Run, as well as the indie film studio, Make it Up Media. He has trained at UCB, iO, Second City, The Magnet and is a graduate of The Harold Ramis Film School and Skidmore College.

He was immediately drawn to Stepping Stone Theater as a space that uplifts and amplifies BIPOC voices and hopes to use all of his experience to do exactly that!

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Harold Ramis Film School at Second City Skidmore College

The Second City Comedy Studies Program

“By studying improv in both New York and Chicago, I’ve been extremely fortunate to experience how some of the best performers in the world approach improv. I’m excited to pass that knowledge down and be a familiar and approachable face to more people that look like myself.”

WORK EXPERIENCE

2020 - Present

Playmakers Lab
Teaching Associate

Have a six-week residency in public schools across Chicago teaching students from first to six grade creative writing. Culminates in a performance where we adapt stories they have written.

2017-2020

The Second City
Box Office Associate

Sold tickets, merch, table reservations for the theater, while serving as customer service representative liaison in person and online. Greeter for patrons and navigation of theater

2017-2020

iO Theater
Stage Manager, Host

Assist with maintenance of theater, seating patrons, bussing, ushering. Operate light and sound board for various performance in the theater,

2015 - 2017

Upright Citizens Brigade
Theatre
Box Office, Intern, DCM
Volunteer

Registered and sold tickets for the theater, while serving as customer service representative. Assisted with maintenance of day to day operations at UCB Chelsea & UCB East

2016 - 2017

Don't Think Productions
Producer, Production
Assistant

Produced shoots, mixed sound, assisted camera, crew set up, talent driver, talent wrangler for UCB Comedy

2017-2017

Success Academy
Charter Schools
Training Support Actor

Assisted administration with mock performance interviews as a teacher. Gave feedback to administration in training to improve meeting effectiveness

2015-2017

Fordham Preparatory
School
Head Coach - Speech
and Debate

Oversaw daily practices for team based on categories of competitors. Facilitated home tournament of over 400 competitors, in addition to coordinating away tournaments. Organized team budget of \$15,000 for dues, hotels, and food. Taught a course on Speech and Debate to a class of 27 middle schoolers.



SECTION 3

The Business Plan

Outreach is a top priority for our theater, allowing us access to more people and businesses in Chicago

Outreach is a top priority for our theater, allowing us access to more people and businesses in Chicago. We prioritize finding the most talent of any theater in the city by allowing everyone, regardless of background, access to exceptional training and performing experiences. This priority allows our theater to produce the most impressive and diverse alumni of performers in Chicago.

Our plan is focused on the long-run. With our knowledge of associated costs and valuable strategies our team has pulled together a creative business plan and pro-forma. It is focused on connecting businesses, improvisers, and the community together for entertainment and training everyone can afford.

The business plan includes our curriculum, business programs, community training opportunities, and business pro-formas.



Classes and Curriculum

Stepping Stone Theater will provide comedy classes for all skill levels.

CORE PROGRAM

Each student will be required to complete our Core Program which not only teaches the foundation of improvisation comedy but also the diverse history of comedy. Within our Core Program, students will also learn basic acting skills.

Level 1: Fundamentals of Improvisation

Level 2: Beginning Scene Work

Level 3: Acting in Improv

ADVANCED PROGRAM

The Advanced Program will consist of specialized courses that students can take after they've completed the Core Program; Long form which focuses on building scenes for longer improv sets from one audience suggestion, Short form with interactive games and scenes from several audience suggestions, Musical Improv which focuses on adding a variety of musical elements to long form or short form scenes and Sketch Comedy that will begin the process of short comedic written work.

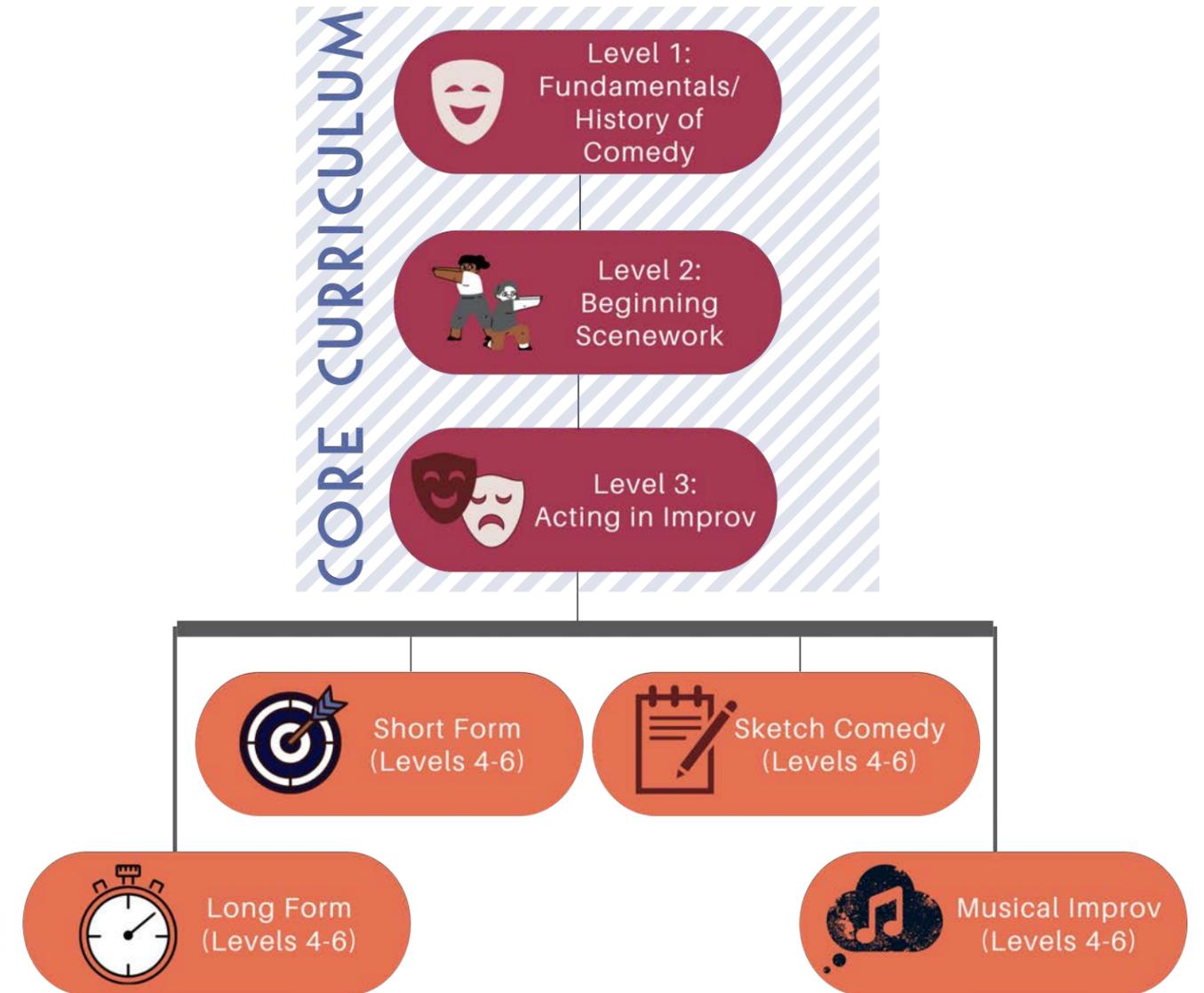
Level 4-6: Long Form

Level 4-6: Short Form

Level 4-6: Sketch Comedy

Level 4-6: Musical Improv

Once a student has completed the Core Program, they are welcome to take as many Advanced Program courses without having to return to Levels 1-3. The structure for this curriculum allows students to receive an affordable and accessible education in the art of comedy.



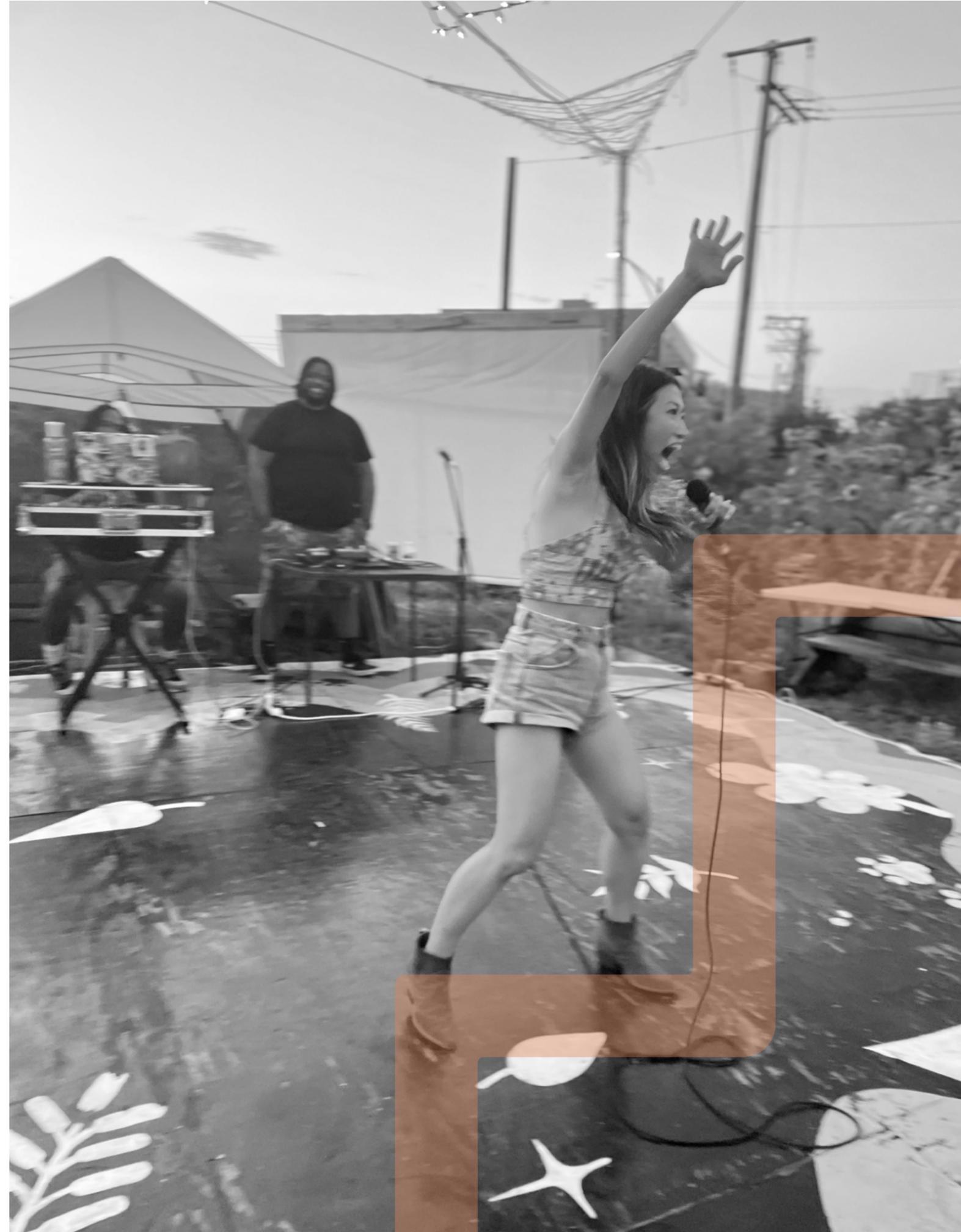
Shows and Entertainment

Each week we will feature shows and improv jams (a practice session with a host) created and produced by Stepping Stone Theater. In addition, performers may apply to produce their own shows. Our weekly shows will consist of improv, sketch, musical, solo, performance art, and more.

Here is a sample of what our weekly show calendar might look like:

SUNDAYS	Family Friendly Short Form Improv Show Solo/Sketch/Improv Shows
MONDAYS	Improvised Character Jam Solo/Sketch/Improv Shows
TUESDAYS	Sketch Premise Lab
WEDNESDAYS	Improv Show hosted by The Crowd Theater Musical Improv Jam
THURSDAYS	SST Musical Improv Shows Improv Jam
FRIDAYS	SST House Team Nite Standup Open Mic
SATURDAYS	SST Standup Show Nite Family Friendly Short Form Improv Show Solo/Sketch/Improv Shows

We are seeking to create a variety of entertainment opportunities. We intend for shows to also be affordable and accessible to our audience members.



Bar and Coffee Shop

The bar and coffee shop is an opportunity for our theater to generate revenue and the space will provide other diverse businesses a unique opportunity to promote and sell their products.



The bar and coffee shop will provide the opportunity to generate revenue for the Theater and partnering businesses. The coffee shop will have regular operating daytime hours. With strong Wifi, good coffee, and affordable menu items, our coffee shop will be the perfect spot for our artists and customers to work comfortably and efficiently. In the evening, the coffee shop will turn into a bar space for all guests attending shows and social gatherings.

There will be a kitchen for meal preparation and we will rotate partnerships with other diverse businesses, giving them the unique opportunity to promote and sell their products to support our community.

The bar and coffee shop will have its own separate pro-forma, as this venue will be functioning as an LLC, subleasing the space from Stepping Stone Theater. This structure allows all partnerships involved with operating the bar and coffee shop an opportunity to make a profit.

Here are just a few of the minority-owned restaurants and bakeries we'd like to create a partnership with:

- Brown Sugar Bakery - www.brownsugarbakerychicago.com
- Ain't She Sweet Cafe - www.aintshesweetcafe.com
- B'Gabs Vegan Kitchen - www.bgabsgoodies.com
- Intoxicakes - www.intoxicakeschicago.com
- And many more.

The bar and coffee shop space is a big part of supporting our performers and artists. It will serve as a space for freelancers or creatives to work during all operating hours, outside of their commitment to the theater's programs. This space will go beyond refreshments and will be a place to build community.



Outreach

The North Side of Chicago is known for having some of the most successful comedy institutions. However, those same opportunities aren't available to students on the South and West Side.

The backbone of Stepping Stone Theater will be our outreach programs. We will create learning and growth opportunities for students all over Chicago with comedy classes, workshops, jams, and shows. The North side of Chicago is known for having some of the most successful comedy institutions. However, those same opportunities aren't available to students of the South and West side. Through our outreach programs, we intend to build partnerships with Chicago Public Schools, colleges, universities, and community centers in areas with untapped talent and provide a positive outlet for students. Students will have the chance to not only visit Stepping Stone Theater, but we will also conduct workshops, classes, and performances in other parts of the Chicago. Overall, the outreach programs will make comedy accessible to everyone.

Our intentions to administer outreach in areas all over the Chicago area will include:

- Chicago Public Schools
- After School Programs
- Volunteer Organizations
- Colleges/Universities
- Other Comedy/Theater Institutions
- Virtual Outreach
- Community Based Organizations
- Social Media Initiatives



Corporate Programs

The tenets of improv have been proven to be assets in the business world.

One of Chicago's strengths is the big city blend of creative and corporate. We want our facility to bridge the two — giving members exposure to business and business exposure to theater.

The tenets of improv have been proven to be assets in the business world. Public speaking, thinking fast on your feet, keeping meetings fun and productive, active listening, collaboration — all of these are skills used by any successful employee. Whether a company is looking to address a specific need or just looking for a great time, improv lends itself to

providing an experience everyone can participate in and enjoy. Each company is different, and we create a unique experience customized for them.



Marketing Plan

Here is a snapshot of how Stepping Stone Theater will be marketing at various phases throughout the development and construction process.

PHASE 1: PROPOSAL AND SOLICITATION

Phase 1 marketing and awareness efforts will focus on a number of audiences: donors, community partners, prospective students, and future theater patrons. Our goal in Phase 1 is to create awareness, generate excitement, and build our contact list.

Website Launch — steppingstonechicago.com
 Email Marketing and Newsletters
 Social Media (Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook)
 Press Releases
 Partnerships with Local Arts Initiatives
 Radio and Podcast Interviews

Resources:

Mail Chimp
 Wix Website Builder

PHASE 2: FUNDRAISING

Phase 2 marketing efforts will center around raising funds from donors and community partners. In addition to the ongoing goal of building awareness and community support, this phase is heavily focused on securing project funding.

Solicitation to Building Partners
 Solicitation to Donor Channels
 Tracking Donor Demographics
 Design Campaign
 Program Campaign
 Annual Fundraiser Management
 T-shirt/Swag/Donor Gift Design Contest
 Local News/Publication Outreach

Resources:

RoundUp App
 Teespring
 Wix Website Builder, Donation Tools

PHASE 3: PRECONSTRUCTION AND PLANNING

Phase 3 marketing efforts will focus on donors, community partners, prospective students, and future theater patrons. Our goal in Phase 3 is to create awareness, generate excitement, and build our contact list during the preconstruction and construction process.

Design Campaign
 Program Campaign
 Ground Breaking Event
 Theater Site Signage

PHASE 4: LAUNCH AND OPERATION

Phase 4 marketing and awareness efforts will focus on donors, community partners, prospective students, and future theater patrons. Our goal in Phase 4 is to create awareness, generate excitement, and enroll students.

Solicitation to Donor Channels
 Launch and Ribbon Cutting Events
 Advertise Shows (ticket sales)
 General Stepping Stone Theater Campaigns
 Social Media
 Advertise Classes (build student base)
 Opening Night Events
 Local News/Publication Outreach
 Press Releases

COFFEE SHOP

Coffee Shop marketing and awareness efforts will focus on theater and community patrons. Our goal is to create awareness, generate excitement, and generate revenue for the theater and local restaurant partners.

Advertise Specials and Deals
 Rewards Program
 Social Media
 Solicitation to Potential Vendors and Partners
 Solicitation to the Freelance Community
 Launch and Ribbon Cutting Events

Marketing Plan Continued

SAMPLE MARKETING TIMELINE

A high level example of what a marketing schedule for Stepping Stone Theater may look like.

Item	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow social media channels Monthly Newsletter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow social media channels Monthly Newsletter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow social media channels Monthly Newsletter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow social media channels Monthly Newsletter
Digital Marketing				
Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create Brand Standards Book Launch Services and Resources Page on Website- 			
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events & Show Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events & Show Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events & Show Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events & Show Planning
Public Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pitch Stories Press Releases (as needed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pitch Stories Press Releases (as needed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pitch Stories Press Releases (as needed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pitch Stories Press Releases (as needed)
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tracking Donor Demographics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tracking Donor Demographics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tracking Donor Demographics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tracking Donor Demographics

MARKET SEGMENTS

Instinctively, our general target audience consists of people pursuing a career path in improv and sketch comedy. Through our classes and programs, they will be trained and have opportunities to practice and perform as well as create their own shows.

We also strive to reach out to people interested in trying out improv comedy as an extracurricular activity, to network, improve social skills, or just try something new.

In addition we will target middle, high school, and college students with little to no knowledge of improv. Through outreach programs and self discovery they can discover their artistic potential.

We are seeking grants and donations to assist low-income communities seeking a positive outlet for young people. By bringing comedy into the communities, we will provide performance education as well as produce shows regularly put on shows within those neighborhoods.

We're also targeting patrons who may not take classes but will attend our performances. We want everyone to have fun and positive experiences at Stepping Stone.

Pro-forma

This high-level pro-forma showcases our due diligence and strategy.

Our pro-forma is built around critical, but high-level, assumptions. The team went through multiple steps to arrive at these line items and numbers.

Step 1:

What are the different phases for this project? We discussed the entire timeline from today to the first few years of operation. We reviewed the projected path for money coming in and money going out. After a thorough discussion, we came to 5 phases as listed below.

Step 2:

We built the pro-forma around general costs we could research. We realized phase 4 and 5 would have to be completed with more knowns.

Step 3:

We brought in the experts to verify our work and our numbers.

PHASES

Phase 1: Awareness and Fundraising	Phase 2: Planning and Design	Phase 3: Construction	Phase 4: Year 1	Phase 5: Year 2-5
Raise Awareness	Design	Permitting	Shows	Shows
Attract Donors and Investors	Remote Programming	Sitework	Programming	Programming
Solicit the Proposal		Construction	Retail	Retail
Solicit Online Programming		Remote Programming	Food and Beverage	Food and Beverage
			Hiring and Training	Hiring and Training
			Trial and Error Contingency	
			Launch Event(s)	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

	One Floor 10000	Two Floors 20000
<i>Potential Costs</i>	\$ 1,230,971.00	\$ 2,441,396.00
Phase 1: Awareness and Fundraising		
<i>Revenues</i>		
Donors / Grants / Loans	\$ 700,000.00	\$ 1,125,000.00
	\$ 700,000.00	\$ 1,125,000.00
<i>Costs</i>		
Management & Overhead	\$ 80,000.00	\$ 85,000.00
Site Selection	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 12,000.00
Marketing	\$ 18,000.00	\$ 18,000.00
	\$ 108,000.00	\$ 115,000.00
Phase 1 Totals	\$ 592,000.00	\$ 1,010,000.00
Phase 2: Planning and Design		
<i>Revenues</i>		
Remote Programs	\$ 28,000.00	\$ 56,000.00
Design Fundraising	\$ 225,000.00	\$ 675,000.00
	\$ 253,000.00	\$ 731,000.00
<i>Costs</i>		
Remote Program Management & Overhead	\$ 11,200.00	\$ 22,400.00
Lease Costs / Deposit	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 40,000.00
Planning, Design & Approvals	\$ 95,000.00	\$ 190,000.00
	\$ 126,200.00	\$ 252,400.00
Phase 2 Totals	\$ 126,800.00	\$ 478,600.00
Phase 3: Construction		
<i>Revenues</i>		
Online / Remote Programs	\$ 215,000.00	\$ 440,000.00
	\$ 215,000.00	\$ 440,000.00
<i>Costs</i>		
Total Construction Costs	\$ 996,771.00	\$ 2,073,996.00
Construction (cost PSF)	\$ 99.68	\$ 103.70
Phase 3 Totals	\$ (781,771.00)	\$ (1,633,996.00)
Total Building and Program Revenues / Fundraising	\$ 1,168,000.00	\$ 2,296,000.00
Total Building and Program Costs	\$ 1,230,971.00	\$ 2,441,396.00
	1.05 \$ (62,971.00)	1.06 \$ (145,396.00)

PHASE 1-2

	One Floor			Two Floors		
Phase 1: Awareness and Fundraising	QTY	\$	Total	QTY	\$	Total
Revenues						
Large Donors	10	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 200,000.00	14	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 280,000.00
Small Donors	50	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	70	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 70,000.00
GoFundMe Donors	3000	\$ 50.00	\$ 150,000.00	3500	\$ 50.00	\$ 175,000.00
Grants / Loans	2	\$ 150,000.00	\$ 300,000.00	4	\$ 150,000.00	\$ 600,000.00
			\$ 700,000.00			\$ 1,125,000.00
Costs						
Management & Overhead						
Basic Stipend for work (per person)	3	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	3	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 60,000.00
Consultants	4	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	5	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 25,000.00
			\$ 80,000.00			\$ 85,000.00
Site Selection						
Analysis	1	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	1	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 6,000.00
Inspection	1	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	1	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 6,000.00
			\$ 10,000.00			\$ 12,000.00
Marketing						
Website	1	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	1	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
Advertising	1	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	1	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Management	3	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	3	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 3,000.00
			\$ 18,000.00			\$ 18,000.00
Phase 1 Totals			\$ 592,000.00	Phase 1 Totals		
Program Totals			\$ 592,000.00	Program Totals		
			\$ 1,010,000.00			
			\$ 1,010,000.00			

	QTY	\$	Total	QTY	\$	Total
Phase 2: Planning and Design						
Revenues						
Programs						
Individual Classes / Workshops	100	\$ 50.00	\$ 5,000.00	200	\$ 50.00	\$ 10,000.00
Program Attendees	50	\$ 200.00	\$ 10,000.00	100	\$ 200.00	\$ 20,000.00
College Honorary	1	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	2	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Corporate Programs	4	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 12,000.00	7	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 21,000.00
			\$ 28,000.00			\$ 56,000.00
Design Fundraising						
Sponsor a Theater	1	\$ 150,000.00	\$ 150,000.00	3	\$ 150,000.00	\$ 450,000.00
Sponsor a Classroom	1	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 75,000.00	3	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 225,000.00
			\$ 225,000.00			\$ 675,000.00
Costs						
Program Management & Overhead						
Teachers	4	\$ 600.00	\$ 2,400.00	8	\$ 600.00	\$ 4,800.00
			\$ 2,400.00			\$ 4,800.00
Lease Costs / Deposit						
Temp space (per month)	12	\$ 500.00	\$ 6,000.00	12	\$ 500.00	\$ 6,000.00
			\$ 6,000.00			\$ 6,000.00
Planning, Design & Approvals						
Estimating and Planning (SF X Cost per SF)	10000	\$ 1.00	\$ 10,000.00	20000	\$ 1.00	\$ 20,000.00
Design (% of total project cost)	3.00%	\$1,230,971.00	\$ 36,929.13	3.00%	\$2,441,396.00	\$ 73,241.88
City Approvals (SF X Cost per SF)	10000	\$ 1.00	\$ 10,000.00	20000	\$ 1.00	\$ 20,000.00
			\$ 56,929.13			\$ 113,241.88
Phase 2 Totals			\$ 187,670.87	Phase 2 Totals		
Program Totals			\$ 779,670.87	Program Totals		
			\$ 606,958.12			
			\$ 1,616,958.12			

PHASE 3: CONSTRUCTION

STEPPING STONE THEATER 2022 PRO FORMA

Phase 3: Construction	QTY	Unit Cost	Total	QTY	Unit Cost	Total	Notes
Income							
Remote Programs							
Individual Classes / Workshops	150	\$ 100.00	\$ 15,000.00	400	\$ 100.00	\$ 40,000.00	
Program Attendees	100	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 200,000.00	200	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 400,000.00	
			\$ 215,000.00			\$ 440,000.00	
Costs							
General Conditions							
Preconstruction Fee (hours)	400	\$ 65.00	\$ 26,000.00	400	\$ 65.00	\$ 26,000.00	
Field Superintendent (hours)	1200	\$ 65.00	\$ 78,000.00	2000	\$ 65.00	\$ 130,000.00	
Project Manager (part-time hours)	600	\$ 65.00	\$ 39,000.00	1000	\$ 65.00	\$ 65,000.00	
Field Engineer (hours)	1200	\$ 35.00	\$ 42,000.00	2000	\$ 35.00	\$ 70,000.00	
Safety (per SF)	10000	\$ 1.00	\$ 10,000.00	20000	\$ 1.00	\$ 20,000.00	
Temp Barricading and Fence (LF)	400	\$ 7.00	\$ 2,800.00	400	\$ 7.00	\$ 2,800.00	
Cleaning (hours)	50	\$ 50.00	\$ 2,500.00	100	\$ 50.00	\$ 5,000.00	
			\$ 197,800.00			\$ 313,800.00	
Demo							
General Demo (per SF)	10000	\$ 6.00	\$ 60,000.00	20000	\$ 6.00	\$ 120,000.00	
Abatement Contingency (Asbestos / Lead) (per SF)	10000	\$ 0.50	\$ 5,000.00	20000	\$ 0.50	\$ 10,000.00	
Floors							
General Spaces (per SF)	10000	\$ 6.00	\$ 60,000.00	20000	\$ 6.00	\$ 120,000.00	
Acoustical / between Floors (theater SF)	3000	\$ 15.00	\$ 45,000.00	4000	\$ 15.00	\$ 60,000.00	
Walls							
Drywall (per panel with acoustical upgrade) (per SF)	10000	\$ 11.00	\$ 110,000.00	20000	\$ 11.00	\$ 220,000.00	
Decorative Walls	1000	\$ 20.00	\$ 20,000.00	2000	\$ 20.00	\$ 40,000.00	
Mechanical							
HVAC (upgrade)	10000	\$ 9.00	\$ 90,000.00	20000	\$ 9.00	\$ 180,000.00	
Electrical							
Rough-in	10000	\$ 1.00	\$ 10,000.00	20000	\$ 1.00	\$ 20,000.00	
Low Voltage (A/V) & Theater System (SF of theater space)	3000	\$ 50.00	\$ 150,000.00	8000	\$ 50.00	\$ 400,000.00	
General Lighting (per fixture)	15	\$ 200.00	\$ 3,000.00	30	\$ 200.00	\$ 6,000.00	
Kitchen Appliances	1	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	1	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	
Plumbing							
Rough-in	10000	\$ 1.00	\$ 10,000.00	20000	\$ 1.00	\$ 20,000.00	
Toilets	5	\$ 350.00	\$ 1,750.00	8	\$ 350.00	\$ 2,800.00	
Shower	1	\$ 800.00	\$ 800.00	2	\$ 800.00	\$ 1,600.00	
Sinks	5	\$ 400.00	\$ 2,000.00	8	\$ 400.00	\$ 3,200.00	
Special Construction							
Stage	1	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 75,000.00	2	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 150,000.00	
Stairs	0	\$ -	\$ -	1	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	
Finishes							
Cabinetry (Per LF)	100	\$ 60.00	\$ 6,000.00	200	\$ 60.00	\$ 12,000.00	
Restaurant Bar Appliances	1	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 75,000.00	2	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 150,000.00	
Furniture							
Restaurant Seating (per table)	6	\$ 400.00	\$ 2,400.00	10	\$ 400.00	\$ 4,000.00	
Theater Seating (per seat)	200	\$ 50.00	\$ 10,000.00	400	\$ 50.00	\$ 20,000.00	
Lockers (per unit)	4	\$ 400.00	\$ 1,600.00	8	\$ 400.00	\$ 3,200.00	
Equipment							
Elevator	0	\$ -	\$ -	1	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 45,000.00	
Construction Contingency (percent)	1%		\$ 9,403.50	1%		\$ 19,566.00	
Minority and Union Labor Allowance	5%		\$ 47,017.50	5%		\$ 97,830.00	
Phase 3 Totals			\$ -	Phase 3 Totals		\$ -	#####

ASSUMPTIONS	#	Unit	(months)
1 Floor Schedule	30	Weeks	6.4
2 Floor Schedule	50	Weeks	10.7

SECTION 4

Members and Community



This is the “why” people join Stepping Stone.

Our training programs and curriculum are top-notch. Our facility will be located in a great area. Even our coffee shop will have the best stuff in town. But these aren't the things that will bring people to our theater. People will come to Stepping Stone for the community.

Michael Douglas once said: I'm impressed with the people from Chicago. Hollywood is hype, New York is talk, Chicago is work.

People come to Chicago to work. This is the place where top talent moves to train and grow. This is where, in a city of options, performers pick out the best community for learning their trade. In bringing Color to comedy, students will have one of the best opportunities to work with talent from diverse backgrounds. The best environment for a performer to sharpen their craft is one rich in diverse players.

Our space will foster community. It's in the details: from the colorful walls to the open space to mingle in the theater, and the various benches and seats that allow congregation. The space will bring people together.

Supporting our Members and Improvisers

These are the most important players in the show.

Our plans and programming have been crafted from experience. We know what members want because we've spent most of our lives as members of a comedy theater. We know what aspects of a curriculum works because we've gone through them. We know what makes a member feel included and happy because we remember the moments we felt included and happy. We want to support our members in so many ways, including:

Work and Home:

We are here to make sure everyone feels at home in both our theater and Chicago. Our support expands outside of training. We will supply message boards in the theater and online for members to find work opportunities or housing with other members. Knowing many of our members are trained and skilled in various creative fields, we will partner with agencies to help people find jobs or gigs. Our team will also hire within the community for roles in the theater.

The Classroom:

The curriculum will be fleshed out in detail and peer reviewed prior to execution. We will identify gaps and where people need extra support. As students go through our program, we will have an Open Door Policy. If anyone has a question or concern, they can speak with a team member at any time. All conversations will be confidential. At the end of each course, the class will have a debrief with a theater team member to talk through pros and cons.

The Space:

On the right, we've highlighted specific design features that consider our members' needs. In addition to these designed components, the venue will feature artwork from community artists and members and function as a gallery. The walls will feature graffiti artists on rotation. Artists will be featured, and will be able to sell their work. Members will have pride in the space because they'll play a large role in creating it.

Designing to support our members:

Coffee Shop and Lounge

Improvisors who freelance or have remote jobs can come work in our space and coffee shop. Tables double as work spaces and encourage sharing with others looking to spend a few hours on the grind.

Theater Congregation

The theater is open concept with space to practice improv and sketch before and after the show. Benches are provided along with seats, and the space makes it comfortable and easy to maneuver for those with physical limitations.

Lockers

Our community will spend a lot of time in this space. We will provide lockers. Improvisors, members, and students need a safe spot to store their belongings.

Storage

We'll have storage space and lots of it. The design will place storage in every nook and cranny so props aren't running wild through the halls.

Bathrooms

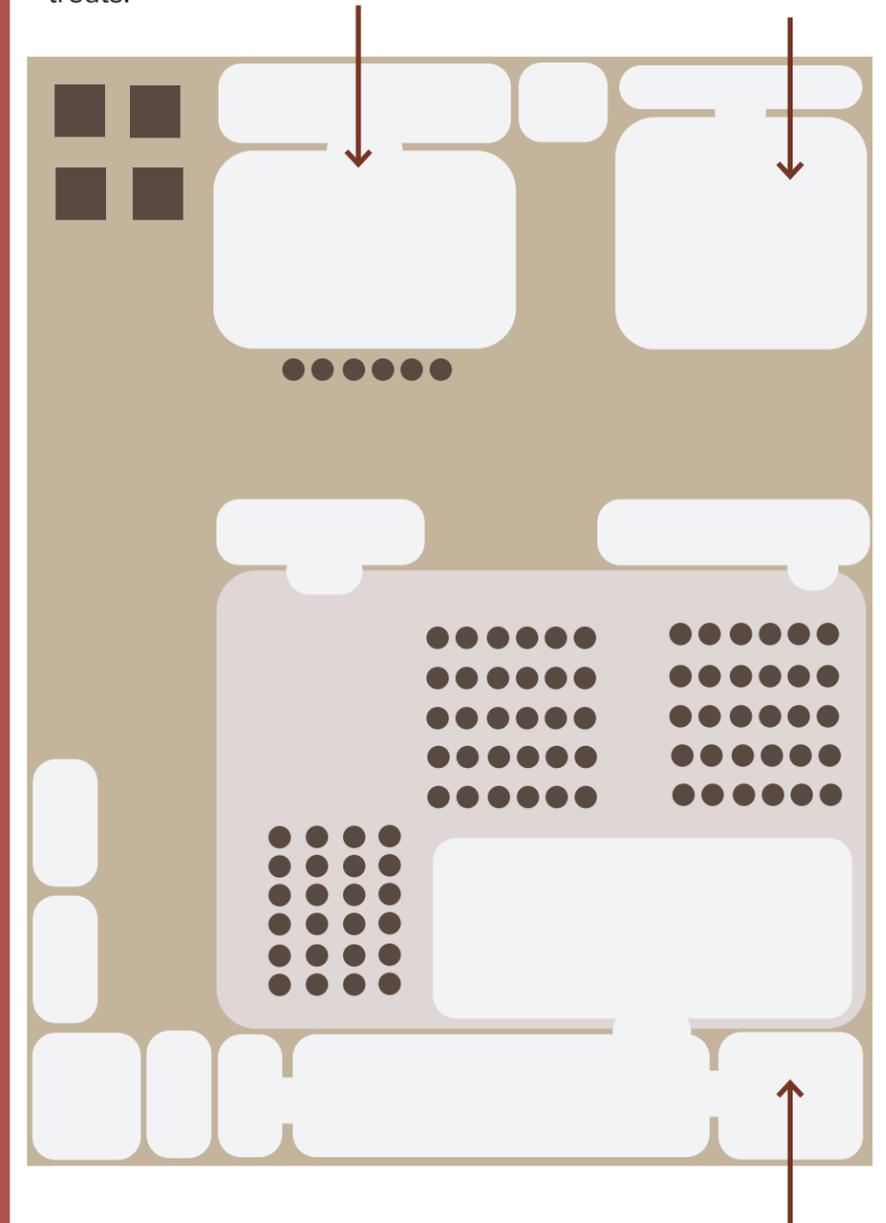
Bathroom will be single stall and gender-neutral. It's the one place we will design for going at it on your own and won't encourage congregation.

Flexible Kitchen

The bar and coffee shop will have appliances and flexible shelves to feature partner food products, so members can enjoy a variety of local treats.

Open Office

Though the office is set up for our personnel, it is designed to welcome in members for questions or concerns. It will be in an easy-to-find location.



Bathrooms Backstage

You have to pee, but it's weird to run into your audience. Awkward run-ins are avoided with a bathroom for performers backstage.

10,000 Hours Chicago

10,000 Hours is a program that was created by Julia Morales in January 2011 in New York City. It is designed for current and former improv students who are looking to build their improvisation skills without breaking their budget while practicing their craft often.



10,000 Hours is a program that was created by Julia Morales in January 2011 in New York City. It is designed for current and former improv students who are looking to build their improvisation skills without breaking their budget while practicing their craft often. Weekly practice sessions are led by coaches who donate two hours of their time in support of building a diverse improv community.

In the simplest form, a practice session consists of a volunteer coach leading a practice session with warm up exercises, making sure the participants are engaging in improv scenes, and providing constructive feedback. Participants can sign up in advance or drop in on the day of.

The program was created in response to fellow improv students having a strong desire to practice regularly but were unable to afford studio space, coaches, and/or last minute practice group dropouts. Since 2011, the program has thrived and helps members of the improv community enrich their craft. With its continued success, the 10,000 Hours program will continue through Stepping Stone Theater.



HOW IT WORKS

Practice sessions are scheduled for two hours on a weekly basis with an assigned volunteer coach who leads the students in warm up and scenic exercises. Students can either sign up in advance or drop in on the day of a scheduled practice session. During the practice session, the coach will offer constructive feedback to students to help with improving their craft. Students are encouraged to participate as often as they'd like. However, it's important they are aware that practice sessions are not classes and are strictly for individuals currently taking classes, in between classes or haven't taken classes in awhile and need a refresher.

PAST SUCCESS

Countless students in the New York City and Chicago area have been a part of 10,000 Hours since it's inception. Because of their regular involvement with the program, students have been placed on house teams at local improv theaters, become instructors, created their own indie improv/sketch teams, built a broader network, and overall gained or improved life skills.



Supporting our Community Internships

Stepping Stone Theater will regularly engage with other non-profit organizations to have members volunteer their time.

Stepping Stone Theater will regularly engage with other non-profit organizations to have members volunteer their time. In fact, we will provide two types of non-paid internships; the first one being a “theater based” internship where persons actively seeking theater experience, whether it be through a school program or through their own interest, will provide a limited number of intern hours each week needed to complete their internship. In this type of internship, duties might include administrative support in the main or box office(s), research for our volunteer programming, theater and backstage maintenance and special event support.

The second type of internship will be specifically for classes. Stepping Stone Theater will offer improv and sketch classes for students at a standard rate. Students who are unable to pay for classes can apply for our class internship. They will be offered to pay a smaller rate in addition to completing volunteer hours or they can opt to complete volunteer hours only.

Here’s a example of what the options might look like for someone seeking to take classes and utilize our internship program:

Student pays \$100 with 8 volunteer hours

Student pays \$50 with 12 volunteer hours

Student pays \$0 with 20 volunteer hours

All students must complete their volunteer hours before the end of their class term. We will have a system in place that will monitor and track volunteer hours.

We will provide students with a variety of organizations for volunteering. Some of the organizations we’re connecting with are:



- **ALIVE Animal Rescue**
- **Chicago Cares**
- **Plant Chicago**
- **100 Black Men of Chicago**
- **Ronald McDonald House**
- **PAWS**
- **Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly**
- **Greater Chicago Food Depository**
- **Center on Halsted**



And the list goes on... Not only will students participate in volunteer organizations but we will donate a portion of our staffs time to nonprofit organizations on a regular basis. Through actively reaching out to our Chicago community, we intend to create bonds, ongoing friendships, and endless positive memories for everyone involved.



SECTION 5

The Facility

A colorful space filled with comedy within Chicago's community.



There are a lot of unknowns regarding the space we will be utilizing, but we know the needs of the comedy community. Our theater location and design will be molded by the people who will fill it-- with respect to design, accessibility and function.

While we are looking for the right space, we understand the search may take a little time. During fundraising for the program and facility, we plan to use a temporary space. Our team brings the benefit of connections. Our pro-forma reflects the price of many temporary spaces who have reached out with a highly discounted rate.

This section presents an idea. We cannot predict the final location or its floor plan, but we can gauge the typical layout of theater spaces or older commercial spaces on the North Side. Having managed theaters both old and new, we understand the often unexpected costs that can surface in these types of buildings. Our layout was created in collaboration with an architect and multiple general contractors.

Additionally, in order to fulfill our mission to bring comedy into as many communities as possible, we will create partnerships with other community organizations, schools, and theaters in the South and West sides of Chicago. By doing this, we hope to make the commute for classes and shows a bit easier and more affordable. As Stepping Stone Theater grows, we hope to function as a space that partners with rideshare and/or transportation companies that will transport students and performers to our location at little to no cost so that they can enjoy the amenities of our theater. In order to commit to our definition of diversity, we will work diligently to make the necessary accommodations for as many people as possible in as many places as possible.

Site Selection Considerations



IN THE CITY

We are a Chicago theater. Chicago is where people cut their teeth in comedy and theater. It's known for its superb training and performance community. Chicago is also a tourist hotspot. We also plan on partnering with venues throughout the city.



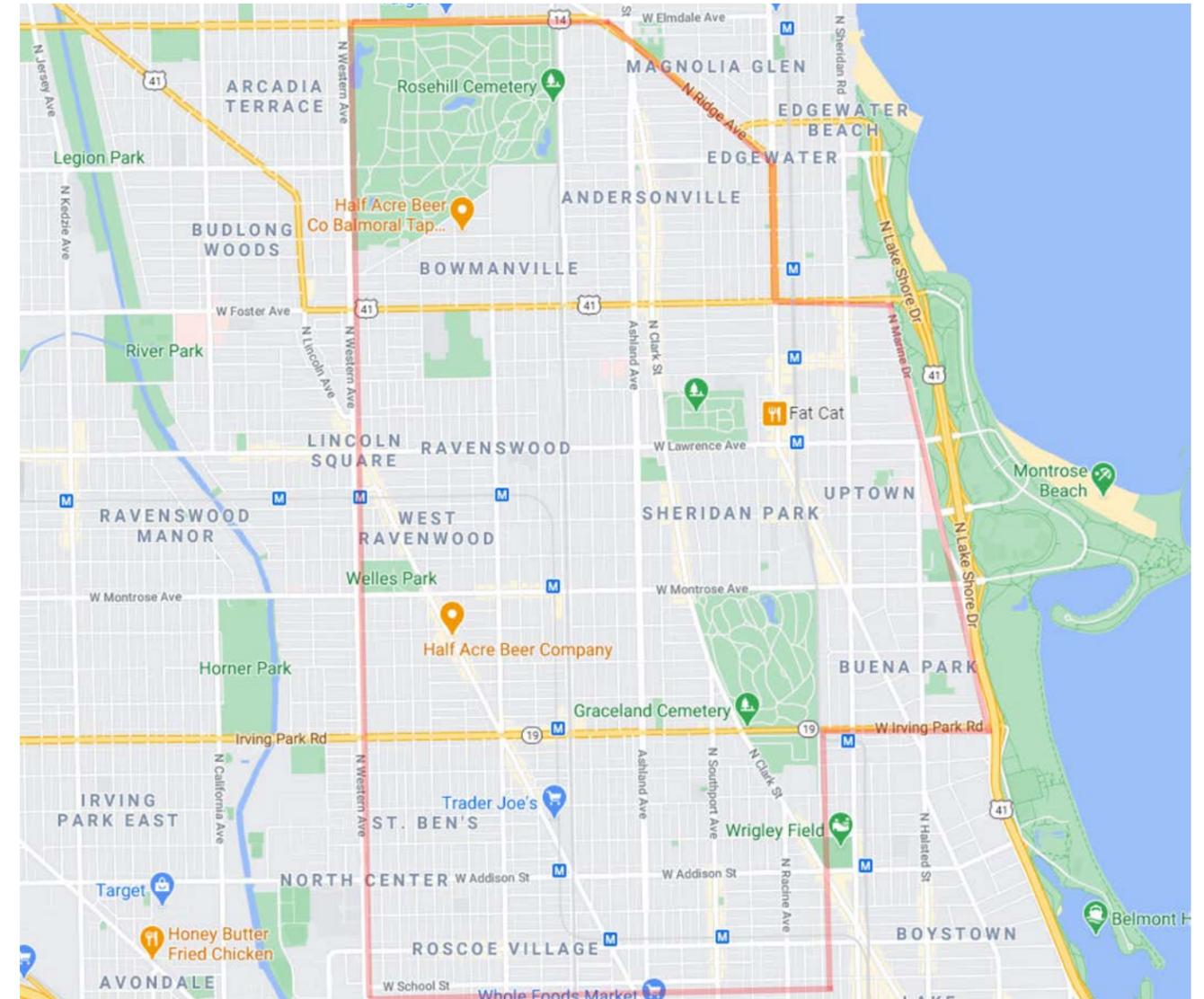
NEAR PUBLIC TRANSIT

Everyone has access. The North Side of Chicago is a great spot for public transit. It's the intersection of the Red Line and multiple bus lines running along some of Chicago's busiest streets. Members and visitors will have multiple options in getting to our space.



CREATIVE RESIDENTS

Near the artists who need us. Most improvisors who come to Chicago to train know the theaters are on the North Side of the city. They're rooted in our vicinity to attend other programs and other shows. They support one another and attend each other's jams. Though there are many theaters, this community is tight.



AFFORDABLE SPACE

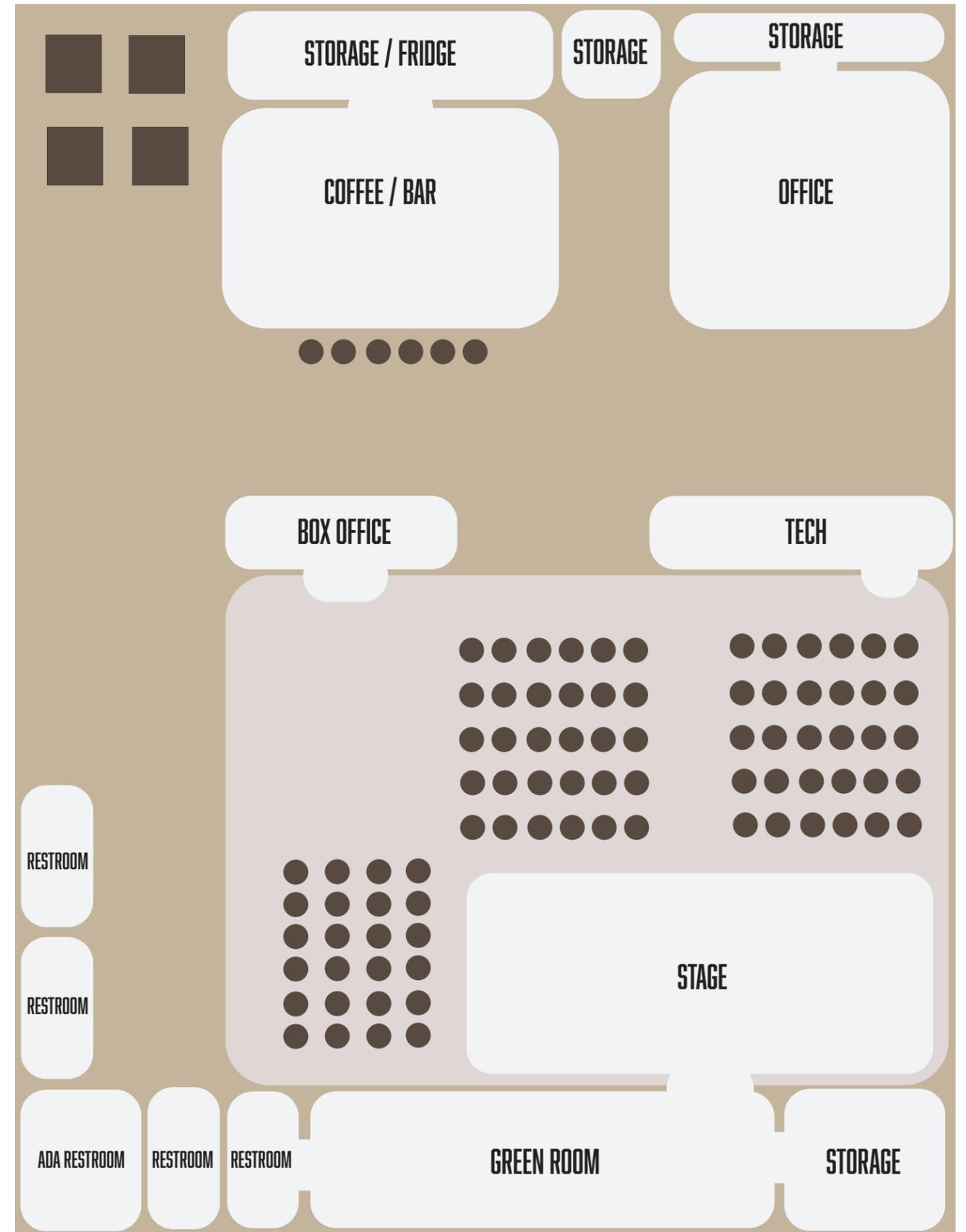
It's a weird time to predict real estate, but many North Side neighborhoods are affordable and accessible. Neighborhoods closer to the loop are expensive. We're a non-profit looking to create an affordable program and keep operational costs low. The North Side also has numerous public transit options and affordable spaces. Easier access means more theater traffic. We also want members from the South Side of Chicago to have a straight shot up the red line.

Things to put in the Space

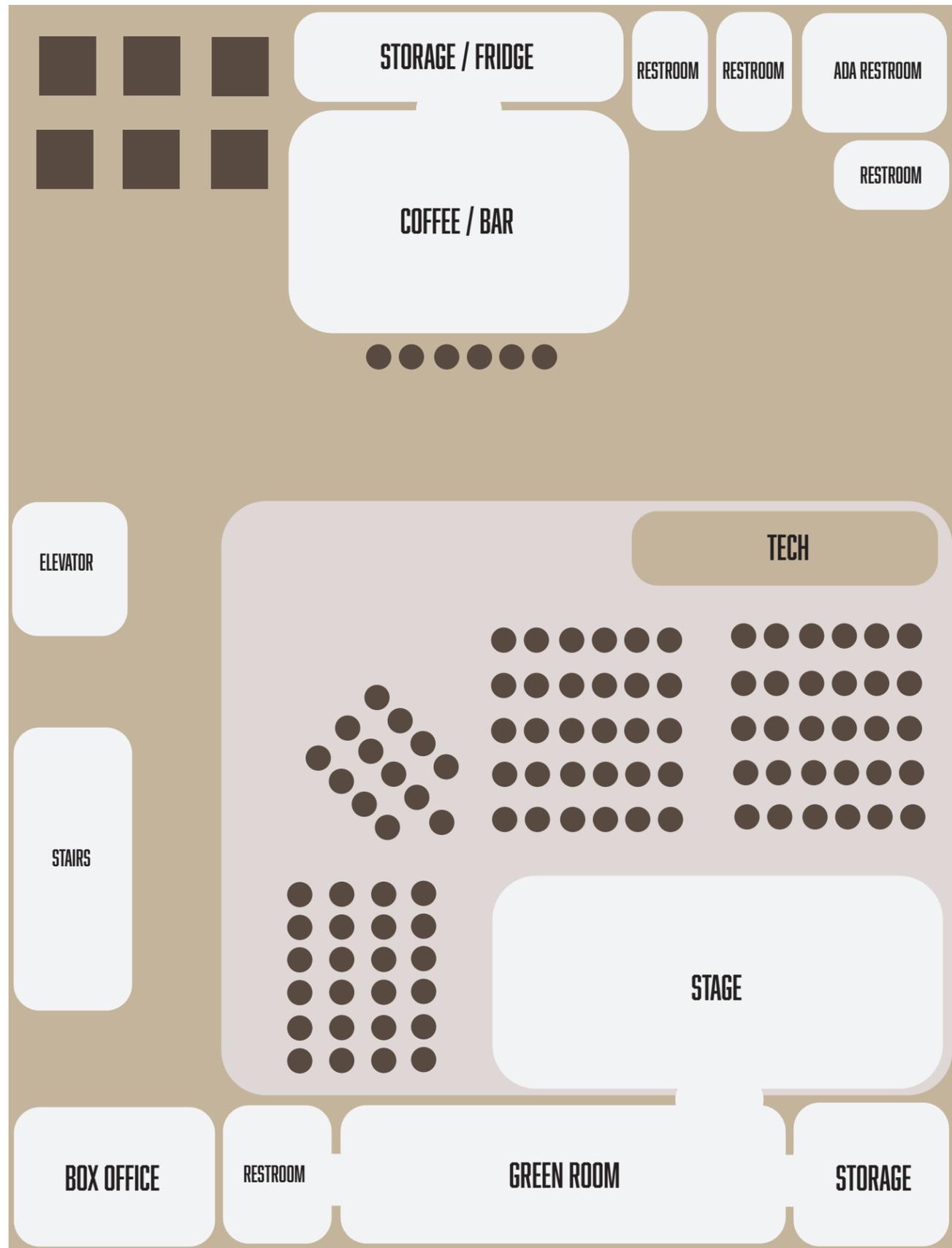
We don't have the exact space, but if we did, here are a few concepts we'd like to consider.



One Floor Blocking Plan



Two Floors Blocking Plan: 1st Floor



Two Floors Blocking Plan: 2nd Floor

