



# Theaster Gates

**Artist + Cultural Developer**

As a Chicago-based visionary artist, Theaster Gates has developed an expanded practice that includes space development, object making, performance, and critical engagement with many publics.

Trained in urban planning and religious studies, Gates creates visually breathtaking and compelling works of art that also serve as platforms for community redevelopment and social activism. Gates has spearheaded numerous development projects in some of the most disinvested parts of Chicago, which function as an extension of his studio work.

Gates contends with the notion of Black space as a formal exercise of social sculpture. His latest example is the Stony Island Arts Bank, owned and envisioned by Gates, which opened in October 2015 in conjunction with the inaugural Chicago Architecture Biennial.

Gates is the Founder and Executive Director of Rebuild Foundation a not-for-profit organization that endeavors to rebuild the cultural foundations of neighborhoods and incite movements of community revitalization that are culture-based, artist-led and neighborhood-driven. He is also

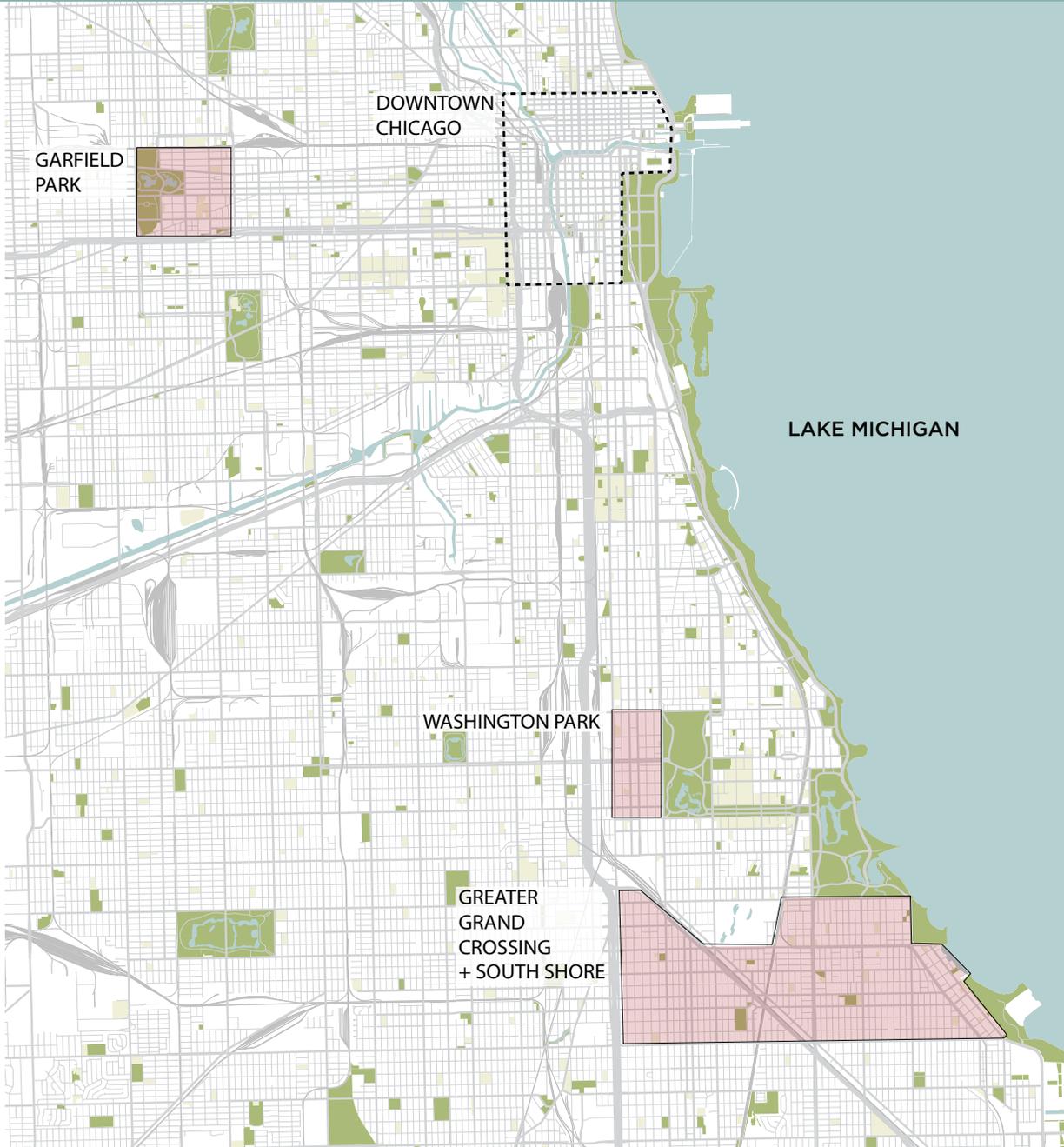
a professor in the Department of Visual Arts and director of Arts + Public Life and Place Lab at the University of Chicago.

His team has successfully revitalized more than 20 dilapidated buildings in Chicago, Omaha and St. Louis, creating more than 225,000 square feet of residential and commercial space, including public venues for cultural programming and over 80 affordable live/work spaces for artists.

Gates has exhibited and performed at Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Fondazione Prada, Milan, Italy; the Studio Museum of Harlem, New York; Whitechapel Gallery, London; Punta della Dogana, Venice; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Santa Barbara Museum of Art; and dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, Germany; among others.

The recent winner of Artes Mundi 6, Gates has received awards and grants from Creative Time, the Vera List Center for Art and Politics, United States Artists, Creative Capital, the Joyce Foundation, Graham Foundation, Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, and Artadia.

# THEASTER GATES ECOSYSTEM



Gates' ecosystem is composed of a constellation of **entities** and **projects** located primarily on Chicago's South Side. Individual organizations hold administrative and fiscal responsibility for specific projects, but each organization engages in programmatic collaboration across projects.



**Entities** Rebuild Foundation  
• Space Fund NFP

**Projects** Chicago Arts + Industry Commons: Stony Island Arts Bank, St. Laurence School, Kenwood Gardens, Garfield Park Industrial Arts • Dorchester Projects: Listening House + Archive House • Black Cinema House • Black Artist Retreat [B.A.R.] • Dorchester Art + Housing Collaborative



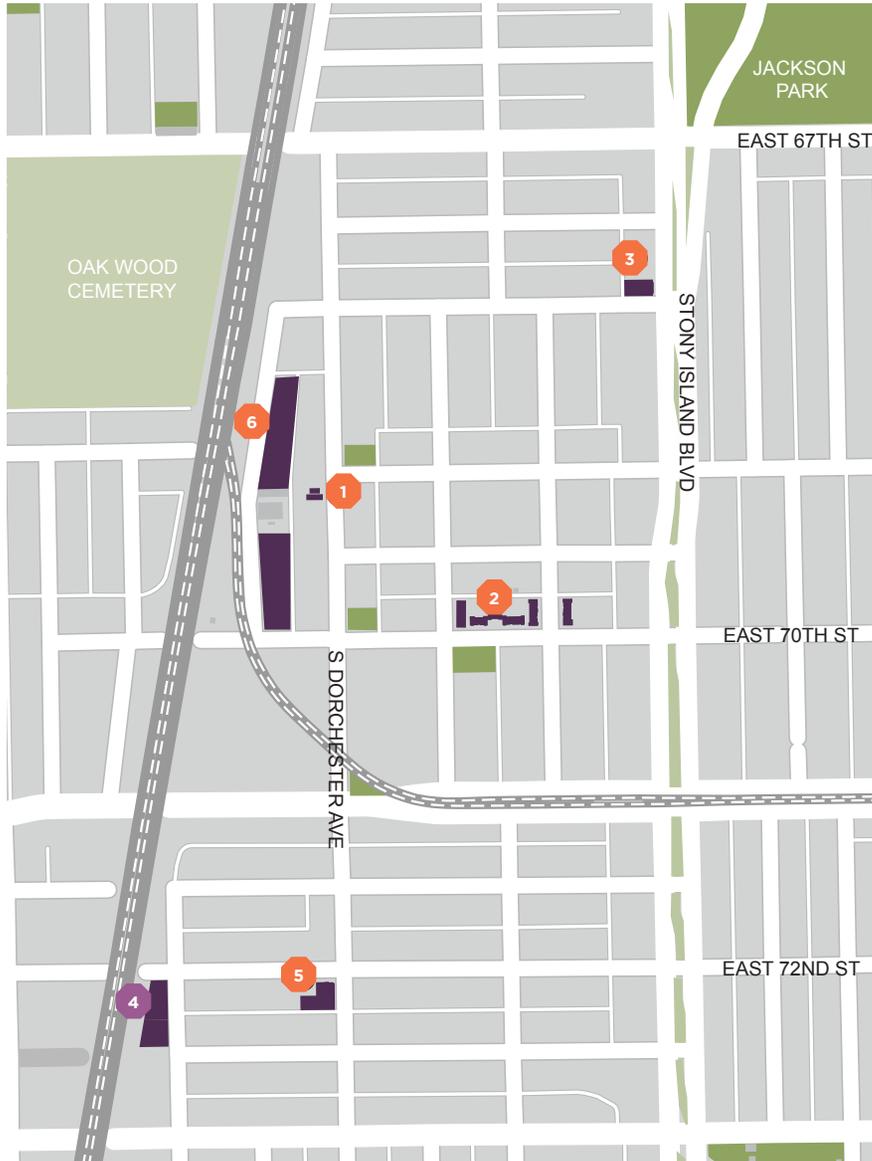
**Entities** Arts + Public Life • Place Lab

**Projects:** Arts Block: Arts Incubator • Green Line Arts Center • ArtHouse: A Social Kitchen (Gary, IN)



**Enterprises:** Theaster Gates Studios • Currency Exchange Café • BING Art Books + Reading Room • Harding Avenue Development LLC

# SOUTH SIDE GREATER GRAND CROSSING + SOUTH SHORE



**1** **Dorchester Projects:**  
**Listening House + Archive House**  
*operated by Rebuild Foundation*



**2** **Dorchester Art + Housing Collaborative**  
*programmed by Rebuild Foundation*



**3** **Stony Island Arts Bank**  
*Chicago Arts + Industry Commons;*  
*operated by Rebuild Foundation*



**4** **Theaster Gates Studios**  
*private enterprise*



**5** **St. Laurence Elementary School**  
*Chicago Arts + Industry Commons;*  
*leadership by Place Lab*  
*development by Space Fund NFP*



**6** **Kenwood Gardens**  
*Chicago Arts + Industry Commons;*  
*leadership by Place Lab*  
*development by Space Fund NFP*



# SOUTH SIDE ARTS BLOCK AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO IN WASHINGTON PARK



Future development sites, east of the Green Line 'L' tracks

The **Arts Block** is a development project led by Arts + Public Life at the University of Chicago. The 300 block of Garfield Boulevard is envisioned as a public/private partnership, and is home to different entities and sites.

## 1 Arts Incubator *operated by Arts + Public Life*



## 2 Currency Exchange Café *private enterprise*



## 3 Place Lab *joint enterprise of Arts + Public Life and the Harris School of Public Policy*



## 4 BING Art Books + Reading Room *private enterprise*



## 5 Green Line Arts Center *leadership and development by Arts + Public Life*



## WEST SIDE

# GARFIELD PARK INDUSTRIAL ARTS



Reimagining the Civic Commons is a \$40MM national initiative working to be the first comprehensive demonstration of how a connected set of civic assets—a civic commons—can yield increased and more equitably shared prosperity for cities and neighborhoods. The **Chicago Arts + Industry Commons (CAIC)**, Chicago's civic commons project, focuses on the South and West sides of Chicago to increase the number of opportunities available for people who have been left out of the upside of economic development.

The CAIC is being developed by Space Fund NFP, and is convened under leadership by Theaster Gates and Place Lab. Project partners are Rebuild Foundation, Arts + Public Life, Chicago Park District, Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago, Chicago Community Trust, City of Chicago, and Chicago Community Loan Fund.



**1 Garfield Park Industrial Arts**  
*Chicago Arts + Industry Commons;*  
*leadership by Place Lab development by Space Fund NFP*

## 9 Principles of Ethical Redevelopment

-  repurpose + re-propose
-  engaged participation
-  pedagogical moments
-  the indeterminate
-  design
-  place over time
-  stack, leverage + access
-  constellations
-  platforms

[9 PRINCIPLES PDF](#)

Ethical Redevelopment makes the case for mindful city-building. By utilizing cross-city networks and cross-sector innovation, Ethical Redevelopment encapsulates a philosophy by which to shift the value system from conventional, profit-driven development practices to conscientious interventions in the urban context. It is articulated by an emerging set of 9 Principles that were drawn from artist-led, neighborhood-based development work on Chicago's South Side.

Beginning in March 2015, case study interviews were conducted with various members of Chicago-based, artist Theaster Gates' ecosystem—a diverse group of artists, art collectors, arts administrators, community leaders, funders, staff, personal, and professional associates. These interviews were designed to be semi-structured, allowing for natural conversation and unregulated responses from participants. The roster of questions asked in the case study interviews explored distinct themes of Gates' work.

Interviews were organized according to seven themes: approach to work, vision and philosophy, ambition (scale, scope, pace), opportunities and challenges, outcomes and impact, funding, and project or program logistics.

Drawing from the National Endowment for the Arts "Project Showcase" categories, Place Lab interviewers prompted participants to address Gates' individual leadership style as well as how his programs interact with communities and partners throughout Chicago and other cities where work takes place. Additionally, questions covered a wide-ranging scale, from the day-to-day logistical operations of programs to the more general vision and philosophy of Ethical Redevelopment.

Finally, participants were asked to address the opportunities and challenges particular to Gates' work, leading to insights for future improvements as well as feedback on what has been effective so far.

### WORKING DEFINITION OF ETHICAL REDEVELOPMENT

*Ethical redevelopment is the reimagining of space and the politics of spatial and social governance with the intention to create new forms of equity, new ways of encouraging more life in a place. Simply said, it's ensuring that beauty remains high in the hierarchy of human rights.*  
—Theaster Gates

*Shifting the value system from conventional financial and development practices to conscientious interventions in the urban context.*  
— Place Lab