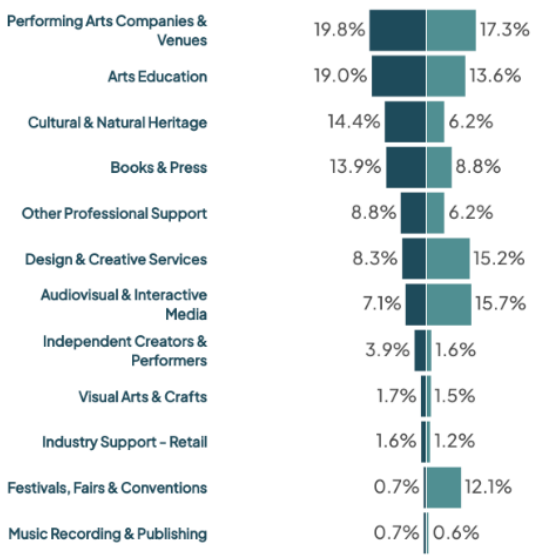
The Creative Economy of the South Side of Chicago
Impact & Assets



The South Side of Chicago is home to a dense, historically rooted creative economy, spanning independent musicians and visual artists to performing arts venues, cultural heritage institutions, and community-based arts organizations.

BY THE NUMBERS

- Supports 19,264 jobs (11.3% of local employment)
- Generates $4.1B in annual economic output
- Contributes $429.4M in annual tax revenue



Direct Creative Jobs by Industry: South Side vs. Chicago

● South Side ● Chicago

Performing arts companies and venues represent the largest source of creative employment in both areas, while the South Side shows stronger concentrations in arts education and cultural heritage sites like museums and nature centers.

Commercial and client-driven creative industries are more concentrated outside the South Side. Nevertheless, the South Side shows strong localized vitality in independent creative work and literary publishing, with a higher share of writers, independent performers, and press institutions than the city as a whole.

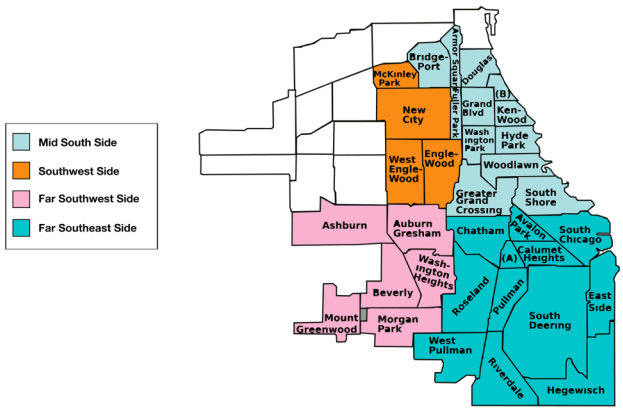
$1 → $1.04

Every $1 generated by the South Side's creative economy produces an additional $0.04 elsewhere in the local economy, compared to $0.38 citywide and $0.95 statewide. Decades of systemic disinvestment force creative workers and businesses to spend elsewhere, draining wealth and jobs from the local community.

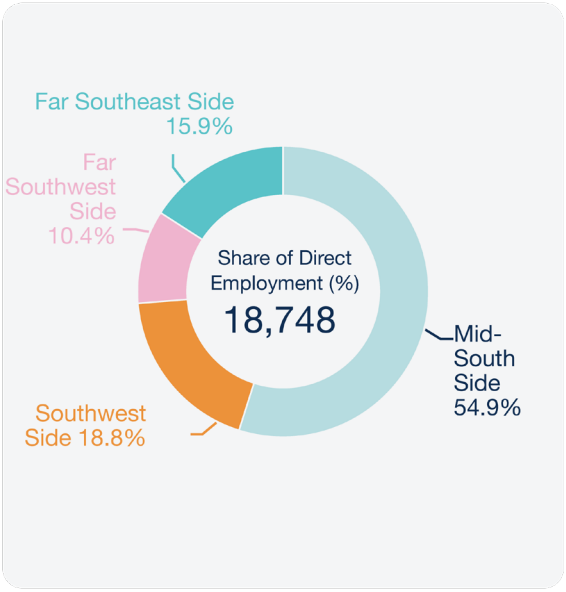
The South Side's share of Chicago's Creative Economy

- **12.1% of citywide creative employment**
- **11% of citywide creative output**

Direct Creative Jobs by Sub-Region

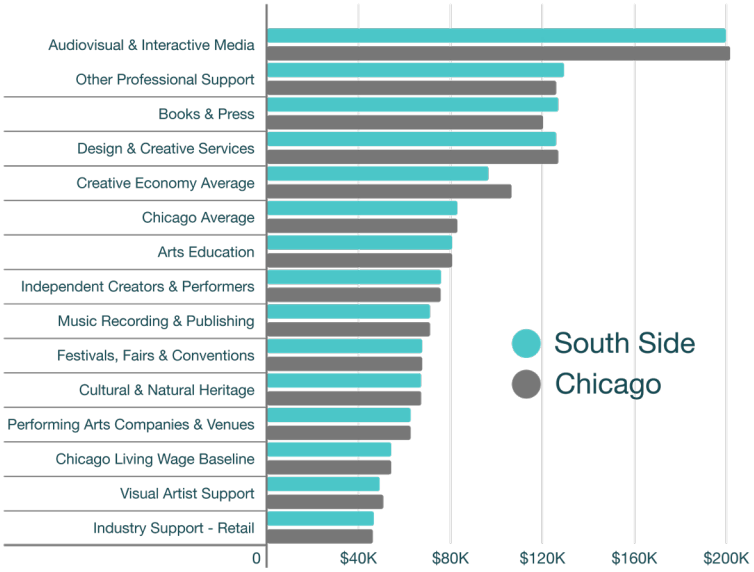


South Side Direct Employment



The Creative Economy is responsible for nearly 1 in 5 local jobs in the Mid-South Side (19.5%) and Southwest Side (18.8%) regions.

What South Side Creative Workers Earn



$96,432
South side creative economy average

$106,226
Chicago creative economy average

$82,748
Chicago average, all industries

Visual arts & crafts support ($48,718) and retail support ($46,488) average below Chicago's $53,667 living wage.

Read more about the creative economy of Chicago and Illinois in the full reports, view the asset map, and more at **artsalliance.org/creative-economy**.

CReative Measures

Arts Alliance IL