

**To:** X.Org Foundation Board  
**From:** Michael Larabel  
**Date:** 18 September 2010  
**Subject:** XDS Location Proposal

I hereby propose that Chicago, Illinois be considered as a potential venue for a future X.Org Developers' Summit. Additionally, if there is interest in a Chicago X.Org event, as a resident of Chicago I would be willing to organize the event.

Chicago is a central location in the United States that is served well by two major airports with non-stop flights to major domestic and international cities making rather convenient travel for a vast majority of the developers. The flights are also generally lower cost than other popular destinations. Chicago also has a modest public transportation, a number of affordable hotel options, and other attributes that would make it an ideal location for such an event.

On the following pages are additional details to consider as to why an X.Org Chicago event would be an appropriate location for the foundation and the development community as a whole.

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## Transportation:

Chicago, Illinois is a central location that is easily accessible both for US citizens and those arriving from foreign countries, particularly Europe. Chicago has two airports: Chicago O'Hare (ORD), which is served by many airlines for both domestic and international flights with many non-stop flights from popular European locations, and Midway (MDW), for additional domestic traffic and in particular is served by many low-cost carriers. Either airport also has many non-stop flights to other US cities on the east and west coasts where many of the US developers in attendance reside.

Chicago is also a key location for Amtrak for those that may be interested in arriving by train, albeit rail options are much more limited in the United States than Europe.

Local trains also connect to both O'Hare and Midway airports for quick transportation to most areas of Chicago.

Below are approximate costs for air travel to Chicago from a variety of locations known to be "hubs" for X.Org developers. Additionally, there are comparative costs to other cities where X.Org events have been held in the past or have been expressed as potential locations for future events hosted by the X.Org Foundation.

	<i>Approximate Air Travel Cost To Location</i>				
	<b>Chicago</b>	<b>Berlin</b>	<b>Rio de Janeiro</b>	<b>Brussels</b>	<b>Portland</b>
<b>Chicago</b>	N/A	\$1,144.00	\$982.00	\$1,191.00	\$379.00
<b>Frankfurt</b>	\$1,069.00	\$342.00	\$1,235.00	\$216.00	\$1,349.00
<b>Portland</b>	\$379.00	\$1,629.00	\$1,220.00	\$1,458.00	N/A
<b>Helsinki</b>	\$1,039.00	\$1,256.00	\$1,512.00	\$219.00	\$1,369.00
<b>Paris</b>	\$1,004.00	\$127.00	\$1,484.00	\$395.00	\$1,451.00
<b>Sydney</b>	\$2,548.00	\$2,340.00	\$2,074.00	\$2,040.00	\$1,789.00
<b>Average Cost</b>	<u>\$1,207.00</u>	<u>\$1,139.00</u>	<u>\$1,417.00</u>	<u>\$919.00</u>	<u>\$1,267.00</u>
	<p>1. Dates used for estimating air travel expenses were 2011-07-27 to 2011-07-31 as just arbitrary dates a few months into the future that are representative of the time of the week that X.Org events generally are held. Prices acquired from Travelocity.com on 2010-09-18 with the lowest air fare being reported for a single economy class ticket. Prices reported in USD.</p> <p>2. Chicago airline prices are likely to be lower when flying in September than during July.</p> <p>3. Europe to Europe transportation prices would likely be lower for many individuals that would be commuting via rail rather than plane.</p>				

According to these estimated air travel costs, not only would flying into O'Hare be a non-stop flight for most, Chicago would be more affordable for developers to fly to (on average) than Portland in terms of US locations. It also would likely be more affordable than Orlando, Raleigh, San Francisco, or New York based upon other price queries. Traveling to Chicago would cost less for most of the attendees rather than an event in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

## **Venue:**

A number of potential venues for hosting such a summit are currently being explored that would be sufficient for hosting 50~80 individuals, is affordable (or potentially free) to the X.Org Foundation, is capable of meeting the expected power and Internet connectivity needs, is located near eating and drinking establishments, and is easily accessible and served by public transit.

Among the possible locations that come to mind is hosting the event at the University of Illinois, Illinois Institute of Technology, or a few private facilities I can follow up with that may suit the aforementioned criteria.

## **Lodging:**

Chicago offers a variety of lodging possibilities and there would be no limited supply of rooms for an event of this size at nearly any time of the year. There are affordable hotels from approximately ~\$70 USD and higher (there's also some even lower-cost options available too) within the city depending upon time of the year.

## **Local Transportation:**

Chicago's public transportation system is the CTA (Chicago Transit Authority) and consists of buses and trains, but no trams. Chicago has one of the better public transportation systems in the United States, but of course the American transportation systems are far from being of the same quality as in many major European cities. Within the heart of downtown, it's often quite easy to walk to most popular locations and is a rather safe city in recent years.

If traveling just short distances throughout the downtown area it will most often be on one of the buses or within the heart of downtown (where served by the "El" trains in the "Loop") there is also very frequent and efficient train transportation that also serves to the outer areas of the city. Many CTA train lines operate 24-hours a day, but with rather reduced frequency during the night. The cost of using a train or bus for a single ride is \$2.25, a day pass is just \$5.75, or a three day pass is \$14. There may also be other special rates for tourists.

## **Restaurants:**

There is no shortage of bars and restaurants in Chicago serving a variety of food.

## Timing:

Generally there are no major events taking place in Chicago during the month of September when X.Org Developers' Summit commonly takes place, thus air travel and lodging rates should not be inflated or of reduced availability. During the month of September, the weather in Chicago is commonly fair with an average high temperature of 23.94°C and an average low of 13.72°C.

A separate option for the board to consider, however, is whether September remains an appropriate month for the X.Org Developers' Summit. When there were two X.Org events held each year, it was obviously appropriate to have the X.Org Developers' Summit around September with the X Developers Conference / X@FOSDEM taking place approximately six or seven months prior. If X@FOSDEM is to no longer take place in the future and there is no other X.Org event taking place, would it be more appropriate to have the X.Org Developers' Summit at a time that would be more beneficial to the revised X.Org development process and timed release strategy?

If the revised X.Org Server development process is maintained the same going forward of approximately a six-month release cycle, new releases will generally occur in February and August of the year. With the status quo, the X.Org Developers' Summit will always take place one month after the second X.Org Server release of the year when it is nearly half-way through the next release's "merge window." While short and long-term topics are normally discussed at the X.Org Developers' Summit in terms of server-related changes and there are many talks regarding future work outside of the X.Org Server itself, I simply *ask* whether September remains the most ideal month for holding the X.Org Developers' Summit with the event being roughly in the middle of the "merge window" for the next release. Some of the short and medium-term work that results from X.Org Developers' Summit discussions may then be on the brink of hitting the merge window (and thereby a reduced amount of time for testing than what would otherwise be possible) or would be postponed to the next release by the misaligned event.

An event immediately following the release of an X.Org Server may – perhaps – be more logical and effective for X.Org Server development. If closer to the summer months, this may also lead to greater attendance by Google Summer of Code developers or other students that would otherwise be at university during a September event. While some attendees may have holiday plans during the summer months, if the X.Org Developers' Summit is planned and announced well in advance, this may prove to be an issue that could be avoided.

## **Social Event:**

With Chicago being a major American city for tourism, there are a variety of establishments that could be used for providing a unique X.Org social event and other activities in the after-hours. Among the possibilities that may be of interest to X.Org Developers' Summit would be various boating/dinner-cruises/events on Lake Michigan, the Museum of Science & Industry, microbreweries, a selection of unique Chicago restaurants, etc.

## **Google Summer of Code & XDS:**

On a separate but related matter, another suggestion I would like to make – that others have expressed would be a good idea as well – is better inviting *active* X.Org Google Summer of Code developers to participate in future events. As far as I know, it's currently not part of the standard procedure to pursue these Google Summer of Code developers to attend the X.Org event to talk about their progress or work completed. The X.Org Foundation has expressed there are funds available for sponsoring a greater number of developers to attend these events and inviting these active Google Summer of Code developers to attend could result in a more vibrant selection of talks during such events with the Google Summer of Code projects often focusing upon experimental areas and other topics not generally covered by normal discussions. While these student developers already have a vested interest in successfully completing their work due to the financial incentive from Google, if active Google Summer of Code developers were at these events they may be further motivated to work on their projects and could benefit from the knowledge learned via in-person discussions. It could potentially lead to greater motivation by these student developers to participate further in X.Org upon their formal completion with Google Summer of Code thereby expanding the X.Org development community.

## **Other Notes:**

While IRC is already common at the X.Org Developers' Summit, to lead to greater collaboration and interest by those not physically in attendance, with an appropriate venue and due to equipment I already have in Chicago, it would be a possible goal to broadcast live audio/video feeds on the Internet.