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**CITY OF CHICAGO CELEBRATES NEW YEAR'S EVE WITH MIDNIGHT FIREWORKS DISPLAY**

The success of the 2018 Chicago Riverwalk season culminates in a public celebration with a fireworks display along the Chicago River on New Year's Eve. The free midnight fireworks display, choreographed to music, will be launched at five locations along the River.

"The Riverwalk has changed the way people interact with the Chicago River, transforming from an industrial waterway to one of art, culture, music, architecture, and commerce," Mayor Emanuel said. "Ringing in the New Year with a fireworks display along the River will build on the success of the past season and highlight all that is coming to the Riverwalk in 2019."

Spectators will be able to view the display at multiple locations along the Chicago Riverwalk from Lake Street to Lake Shore Drive. Three launch sites will take place on the Franklin Street, Clark Street, and Wabash Avenue bridges. Barges will also be staged both east and west of Columbus Drive to provide additional launch points.

Pedestrians, motorists, spectators and residents should be aware of the traffic impacts with the closure of Franklin Street, Clark Street and Wabash bridges, as well as Wacker Drive from Lake Street to Stetson Avenue. Spectators and residents are also advised to be cognizant of their surroundings and report suspicious activity to 9-1-1.

"We are proud to be a part of Mayor Emanuel's efforts to build on Daniel Burham's vision for Chicago", said Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events Commissioner Mark Kelly. "Activation of the Chicago Riverwalk allows even more ways for residents and visitors to embrace Chicago's beauty and a key reason the City has reached its goal of attracting 55 yearly visitors two years ahead of schedule".

In 2019, the City will improve older sections of the Riverwalk east of Michigan Avenue to help create even more opportunities for residents and visitors to interact with and enjoy the Chicago River. Improvements will include changes to the path to re-orientate visitor's experience with the river, recreation areas, children's play area, public art and improved landscaping.

The plan focuses on access points or gateways along the east end, including:

- **Ellen Lanyon Gateway, LSD entrance:** improved landscaping, outdoor public seating, viewing area to showcase existing Ellen Lanyon murals within gateway structure.

- **Entrance at Field Drive:** pedestrian connection from Lake Shore Drive east, children's play area, public art space, improved landscaping, outdoor public seating, proposed submarine memorial
- **Columbus Drive Plaza:** improved landscaping and drainage, outdoor public seating, new elevator from Wanda Vista development
- **Michigan Avenue East Plaza:** access point from Michigan Avenue to showcase new gateway structure, improved plaza area with enhanced landscaping, outdoor furniture to provide visual screen for lower Wacker Drive. Immediate improvements to be made by Chicago's First Lady Cruises to their sight, including new signage, re-cladding exterior of ticket offices and improved queuing on the path
- **Michigan Avenue West Plaza:** reconfigure existing plaza with improved landscaping and public seating to make plaza easier to navigate and more inviting to the public
- **Michigan Avenue Market:** west of Michigan Avenue Plaza, city planning to develop market to complement current concessions program to highlight neighborhood businesses

The City identified \$10 million in funding towards these improvements and anticipates completion of the project by 2020. More immediate improvements will be privately funded by Chicago's First Lady Cruises and other vendors, including Northman, Island Party Hut and Urban Kayaks, per the contracts approved by City Council in February. Wanda Vista is funding construction of the elevator at Columbus Plaza, which is expected to be completed in 2019.

Also expected in 2019, to complement the current Chicago Riverwalk concessions program, the City will develop an area for a marketplace to highlight minority-owned, Chicago-based businesses. This concessions program will expose Riverwalk visitors to small businesses reflective of the rich cultural diversity of the City and allow Chicago-based businesses the opportunity to promote their neighborhood locations.

Since 2011, the Chicago River has been transformed into the city's next recreational park, with vast opportunities for residents and visitors to access and enjoy the river at almost every mile. The Chicago Riverwalk, which covers 1.25-miles through the heart of the city, was completed in 2016 and continues to offer new and improved ways to enjoy Chicago's waterfronts and architecture.