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Merchandise Mart

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**MAYOR EMANUEL AND MERCHANDISE MART ANNOUNCE NEW LARGE-SCALE
ARCHITECTURAL PROJECTION TO ILLUMINATE THE CHICAGO RIVER**

New lighting concept leverages historic landmark as a major contribution to Chicago's public art scene; builds on series of investments to make the Chicago River the next recreational frontier

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Merchandise Mart announced today a new large-scale architectural projection to debut in 2018. Using its nearly 3-acre façade as their canvas, architecture and design firm A+I Architects and creative studio Obscura Digital will illuminate the historic landmark as a major contribution to Chicago's public art scene and another privately-financed investment on the Chicago River. This is the first time that art has ever been projected onto the Mart at this scale. Obscura Digital has created similar projects for Sydney Opera House, St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, Empire State Building and Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi.

"The redevelopment of Chicago's riverfront is vital to our ongoing efforts to attract 55 million visitors annually to the City of Chicago by 2020, creating new jobs and injecting millions of dollars into our local economy," said Mayor Emanuel. "I commend the Merchandise Mart on this visionary project, as it will bring new energy to the Chicago River while strengthening our city's reputation for iconic public art."

Vornado Realty Trust and the Mart have engaged A+I Architects and Obscura Digital to develop a feasibility study for projecting art on the south, River-facing facade of the Mart in 2018. A+I Architects (www.aplusi.com) was their designer for the highly acclaimed and award winning common area improvements completed at the Mart last year. Obscura Digital (www.obscuradigital.com) is the foremost design engineer of large projection projects with the technical and design skills capable of developing an architectural projection at this scale. The entire project is privately funded.

"Once the largest building in the world, the Merchandise Mart is two city blocks and 25 stories of innovation and culture," said Myron Maurer, Chief Operating Officer of Vornado, Merchandise Mart. "Vornado and the Mart are committed to adding to the vibrant public art already in Chicago—and providing a dramatic cultural attraction for the more than 1.5 million annual visitors to the Chicago Riverwalk."

“We’re eager to welcome this incredible project into the pantheon of iconic public artworks in Chicago,” said Mark Kelly, Commissioner of the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events. “In this Year of Public Art, this project reminds us that lighting, illumination, video and digital art will play an important role in the future of public art in Chicago.”

Mayor Emanuel and the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events have designated 2017 the "Year of Public Art" with a new 50x50 Neighborhood Arts Project, the creation of a Public Art Youth Corps, a new Public Art Festival, exhibitions, performances, tours and more—representing a \$1.5 million investment in artist-led community projects. Additionally, the City of Chicago is exploring options for siting more public art on the Chicago Riverwalk during the Year of Public Art. This year’s public art initiative exemplifies the city’s commitment to infusing arts and culture throughout its neighborhoods for all residents and visitors to enjoy, and is a key driver of the rising tourism numbers and last year’s record-setting 54.1 million visitors from across the globe.

This week, Mayor Emanuel will host 17 mayors from five continents and 11 countries at an Urban Waterways Forum on March 13, 2017, co-hosted by Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo. The event is designed to foster an international conversation about the future of urban waterways, while highlighting Chicago's commitment to increasing access to and recreational activities on the river.

Urban waterways – whether on rivers, lakes, seas or oceans – have always been natural centers of gravity. For thousands of years, cities around the world were built around bodies of water, first because they are a critical resource and later because they sustain trade and commerce. Transportation and manufacturing have evolved and the old industrial waterways that turned into unused land are again ripe for new design, development and purpose.

In Chicago, the recently extended 1.25-mile Riverwalk and the completion of a fourth boat house along the Chicago River demonstrates the Mayor's commitment to increasing access to and recreational opportunities on the river, as outlined in both his Building on Burnham plan and Our Great Rivers, a forward looking action agenda for Chicago's three rivers.

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