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**MAYOR EMANUEL, METROPOLITAN PLANNING COUNCIL UNVEIL *OUR GREAT RIVERS*,
CHICAGO'S FIRST UNIFIED VISION FOR CALUMET, CHICAGO AND DES PLAINES RIVERS**

Our Great Rivers calls for more productive, living, inviting Calumet, Chicago and Des Plaines rivers, by 2040, based on research, ideas from thousands of Chicagoans, and expert input

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today announced his support for *Our Great Rivers*, the City's first unifying and forward-looking vision and action agenda for Chicago's three rivers—the Calumet River, Chicago River and Des Plaines River. The announcement was made at Clark Park in Albany Park at the future site of Riverview Bridge, which will provide bicycle and pedestrian access between the paths in Clark Park to the south and California Park to the north.

"From opening new boat houses to reinventing the Riverwalk, we've made significant investments in the Chicago River to make it the City's next recreational frontier, and we will continue our efforts to ensure that residents across the City have access to recreational opportunities on all three of the City's rivers," said Mayor Emanuel. "*Our Great Rivers* identifies concrete ways to continue to invest in our riverfront in ways that strengthen and connect neighborhoods and improve the quality of life of all Chicagoans."

Our Great Rivers (available in full at www.greatriverschicago.org) calls for Chicago's rivers to be more inviting, productive and living places by 2040, and was created in partnership with the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) based on feedback gathered from thousands of Chicagoland residents who participated in more than 120 community events over the past year.

"I want to thank Mayor Emanuel for co-chairing this report and for dedicating significant City departmental manpower to help create this important initiative. We are grateful for and inspired by the thousands of people who took the time to tell us what they want to see our rivers become," said MPC Director Josh Ellis. "While the City and other government agencies lead on some of the recommended actions, we need residents and local stakeholders across the city to play a lead role in creating a future for our rivers that we can all be proud of."

“The Chicago Community Trust is so pleased to support the ongoing work of *Our Great Rivers*,” said Terry Mazany, president and CEO, The Chicago Community Trust, a funder of *Our Great Rivers*. “We call on residents across the region to be a part of achieving this vision, and on government partners to continually measure progress and stay the course.”

The 26 goals articulated in *Our Great Rivers* reflect the extensive community engagement process, as well as research and input from a Leadership Commission appointed by the Mayor and a Resource Group comprised of a range of experts. Each goal includes recommended actions that can occur by 2020, 2030 and 2040, setting clear benchmarks toward achieving inviting, productive and living rivers.

Examples of recommended actions include:

- Improve water quality and enhance information for river users.
- Expand river edge open space and improve riverfront parks.
- Promote continuous trails and river access.
- Integrate the river system into our broader transportation network.
- Promote neighborhood tourism and entrepreneurship along the rivers.

“Our rivers have come a long way since the days when they were fenced off and polluted with sewage and trash. Progress can be measured in species of fish, miles of trail, and the number of people already out in the water,” said Margaret Frisbie, executive director, Friends of the Chicago River, a key partner in Great Rivers Chicago. “*Our Great Rivers* comes at a critical juncture, capitalizing on our success and providing a collective vision for what we still need to do and how we can get it done.”

“Our Great Rivers reflects many of MWRD’s aspirations: recovering nutrients from our water, making significant investments in nature-based infrastructure to reduce flooding and opening more of our riverfront land for recreation,” said Mariyana Spyropoulos, president of the Board at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, and a member of the Leadership Commission.

The report also includes early ideas of how the vision could play out in specific communities, which emerged from day-long sessions with stakeholders in riverfront areas such as Riverdale, the Collateral Channel and Goose Island. Ross Barney Architects developed renderings to help bring to life the ideas discussed at the sessions; renderings are available upon request.

“Our experience re-imagining Chicago’s downtown Riverwalk got us thinking about what a new day would look like for entirely different places along our city’s rivers,” said Carol Ross Barney, founder and design principal, Ross Barney Architects and a member of the Leadership Commission. “These visions in action show what’s possible when we imagine how to transform dormant spaces into inviting, productive and living landscapes.”

MPC, the City and partners will continue to work together to advance recommended actions, as well as to determine the optimal ways to coordinate the many actors involved, marshal resources and ensure public participation.

Funding for Our Great Rivers was provided by ArcelorMittal, Boeing, The Chicago Community Trust, The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, The Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation and The Joyce Foundation.

Today's announcement complements Mayor Emanuel's Building on Burnham plan to invest in Chicago's waterfronts, parks and neighborhoods. As part of this comprehensive strategy, the Chicago River will continue its transformation into the City's next recreational frontier by creating an opportunity for neighborhoods to access and enjoy the river at almost every mile – from the City limits on the north to Little Village. Projects will include the expansion of the stadium at Devon and Kedzie, the expansion of the Riverwalk through development projects in the South Loop from Harrison to Roosevelt, the opening of Eleanor Boathouse in Bridgeport, the connection of Pilsen and Little Village through a rails to trails project called the Paseo, and the construction of two bike/pedestrian bridges: Riverview Bridge at Addison, a modern, pedestrian-only bridge connecting the river east edge with the west in Albany Park, and a bike/pedestrian bridge at Irving Park that passes under the street at Horner Park to allow bikers, runners and walkers to avoid traffic.

Other partners include the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, which will be working with MPC and additional suburbs this fall on system-wide suburban outreach to expand the vision for *Our Great Rivers* even further beyond the City of Chicago's borders; and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, which already has implemented low-cost, innovative water management techniques along the Collateral Channel (which juts off the South Branch of the Chicago River) to mitigate odor for nearby residents of Chicago's Little Village neighborhood.

Read the full report at www.greatriverschicago.org. Renderings and other visuals are available upon request.

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