



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

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CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

[press@cityofchicago.org](mailto:press@cityofchicago.org)

**MAYOR EMANUEL, CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT & THE METROPOLITAN PLANNING COUNCIL ANNOUNCE CHICAGO URBAN RIVER EDGES IDEAS LAB**

*Lab, funded by The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation and Comcast, will engage architectural firms to explore ideas for the development of Chicago's public river edges*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, the Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD) and the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) today announced the Chicago Urban River Edges Ideas Lab, a collaboration funded by The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation and Comcast. The Lab will engage select architectural firms with experience in designing award-winning riverfronts, parks and public spaces to develop design concepts that will lead to a unified design aesthetic for Chicago's riverfront.

"Following the successful completion of the latest sections of the Chicago Riverwalk and with a number of riverfront developments in progress across the city, including the planning process for the North Branch Industrial Corridor around Goose Island, now is the perfect time to engage the architectural community to help us create new river edge guidelines," said Mayor Emanuel. "From building to open spaces, developments along the river are helping to deliver economic, environmental, recreational and social benefits to the City of Chicago."

The Ideas Lab will build off the visionary work started by [Great Rivers Chicago](#), and will serve to engage Chicagoans in envisioning the next wave of transformative riverfront investments.

"When Mayor Emanuel asked MPC to lead Great Rivers Chicago almost two years ago, we knew it was an amazing opportunity to tap both Chicagoans and the design community for ideas on how to make our rivers more inviting, productive and living. The Ideas Lab is an exciting outgrowth of that, and we're pleased that the Ideas Lab designs and community response will inform DPD's update of the City's riverfront design guidelines, which was identified by Great Rivers Chicago as goal for the year 2020," said Josh Ellis, Vice President at MPC and lead on Great Rivers Chicago, a partnership between the City of Chicago, MPC, Friends of the Chicago River and many other partners on the Chicago, Calumet and Des Plaines rivers.

The primary purpose of the Ideas Lab is to gather fresh and innovative ideas from design experts

121 NORTH LASALLE STREET, ROOM 507, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60602

and to excite and engage a local and global audience to provide feedback. The Lab will engage six to ten leading architectural firms to develop renderings and design concepts for several typical river edge conditions found throughout the river system, using examples from the South Branch of the Chicago River. The selected firms all have significant riverfront experience and have demonstrated an ability to blend civic space, nature and opportunities for both solace and active recreation into their designs. The idea development aspect of the Lab is supported by the Driehaus Foundation.

“The look and feel of all redevelopment along Chicago’s rivers is critical to preserving our unique sense of place and enhancing the quality of life,” said Richard Driehaus, Chairman of Driehaus Capital Management LLC and President of The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation. “The Ideas Lab is a necessary first step to ensure design that responds to human needs and emotions is at the center of future development.”

“Chicago’s riverfronts present great design opportunities: People can connect with nature and, at the same time, connect online to work and to friends and family members. Comcast has made this possible by adding WiFi along The 606 and thousands of other locations throughout the city,” said Matthew Summy, Comcast’s Regional Vice President for External Affairs. “Comcast is proud to support the Ideas Lab, and in particular, this fall’s travelling exhibit that will include digital applications that enable Chicagoans to share their thoughts on the future of our riverfronts.”

The architectural firms will submit their design concepts in June 2017. They will then be organized into an exhibition at public locations for review and public comment. The concepts will also be displayed at the Chicago Architectural Biennial. The input collected from residents will provide DPD with invaluable feedback as they update the City’s riverfront design guidelines, which will be released in 2018. In addition to physical exhibitions, WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff will work with MPC to develop digital exhibition components, supported by Comcast, including viewing augmented and virtual reality via cell phones and physical installations using Owlized technology.

Participating architectural firms include Studio Gang, Ross Barney Architects, Perkins & Will, Site Design, SOM, SWA, David Adjaye, James Corner Field Operations and Sasaki.

“On behalf of all of the firms participating in the Ideas Lab, we’re honored and excited to get to work. Chicago’s rivers are an amazing landscape and waterscape that can connect our neighborhoods, enliven our civic life, and provide solace, all at the same time,” said Carol Ross Barney, whose firm, Ross Barney Architects, was the lead design architect of Chicago’s Riverwalk, and the architectural consultant for Great Rivers Chicago.

The launch of the Ideas Lab comes as Mayor Emanuel and Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo are today convening 16 mayors from around the world for an Urban Waterways Forum in Chicago designed to foster an international conversation about the future of urban waterways. Urban waterways – whether on rivers, lakes, seas or oceans – have always been natural centers of gravity. Over time, transportation and manufacturing have evolved and the old industrial waterways that turned into unused land are again ripe for new design, development and purpose.

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