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MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES MILLENNIUM PARK IS NOW THE #1 ATTRACTION IN THE MIDWEST AND AMONG THE TOP 10 MOST-VISITED SITES IN THE U.S.

12.9 Million Guests Visited the Park in the Second Half of 2016 to Enjoy Hundreds of Free Cultural Events, Nature Programs, Public Art and More

Mayor Rahm Emanuel joined Choose Chicago, the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) and the Millennium Park Foundation in announcing today that Chicago's Millennium Park welcomed nearly 12.9 million guests in just the second half of 2016—making it the #1 attraction in the Midwest and among the Top 10 most-visited sites in the U.S. Based on new attendance counting technology, the figures put the Park in the company of Central Park (New York, N.Y.) and the National Mall (Washington, D.C.).

"Millennium Park has become part of the cultural fabric of Chicago, bringing children and families together from all parts of the city to experience world class culture for free," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "With 12.9 million visitors to the Park in just the second half of 2016, I am proud to see it become the #1 attraction in the Midwest."

Last year alone, Chicago broke tourism records by welcoming 54.1 million visitors citywide, moving the city closer to reaching the Mayor's goal of 55 million visitors by 2020. With new events and cultural programs added each year—including hundreds of free cultural events at Millennium Park this summer, and the second edition of the Chicago Architecture Biennial expected to bring hundreds of thousands of visitors this fall—Chicago is on track to continue breaking records.

Thanks to new and improved technology, Millennium Park attendance is now measured by a third-party vendor using passive electronic sensors. A June 15 through December 31, 2016 pilot project covering approximately half of the Park—centered around Cloud Gate (aka "The Bean") and three main entrances—estimated 12,859,360 unique visitors. The new six-month estimate relies on similar technology used by other major events, tradeshow, retail spaces and airports around the world.

"Millennium Park is Chicago's town square—a lively, spectacular gathering spot located in the heart of the city and a destination for Chicagoans and visitors alike," said Mark Kelly, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events. "We invite the citizens of the world to come experience this state-of-the-art collection of art, architecture, gardens and design that provides the backdrop for hundreds of free cultural events this summer."

Millennium Park is Chicago's town square and the anchor of an urban cultural campus that includes the Chicago Cultural Center, Maggie Daley Park and the Art Institute of Chicago—all connected by the Chicago Cultural Mile. Attendance at Maggie Daley Park is also growing, with an estimated 3 million visitors in 2016. In addition, last year Navy Pier brought in a record 9.3 million visitors.

Opened in 2004, Millennium Park is a 24.5-acre urban park in the heart of downtown Chicago, home to the iconic Cloud Gate sculpture (also known as "The Bean") by Anish Kapoor, Crown Fountain designed by Jaume Plensa, the Frank Gehry-designed Jay Pritzker Pavilion, the internationally-acclaimed Lurie Garden and more. Previous estimates of attendance at Millennium Park revealed 5 million annual visitors.

"Chicago's early planners dreamed of an accessible 'park for all people,' where residents could learn, relax and enjoy life in the company of others outdoors, and aside from life's pressures," said Scott Stewart, Executive Director of the Millennium Park Foundation. "The Foundation built on that legacy by creating a park that set new standards for public land use, and in so doing created a destination tourists from around the world now look to experience, and other cities look to emulate."

The 2017 Millennium Park summer season will offer hundreds of free cultural events—including concerts, festivals, films, family activities, nature programs, public art and more—presented by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events and its programming partners, and made possible by the Millennium Park Foundation and others. New this year, the **Chicago Blues Festival** moves to Millennium Park, June 9–11; and a SummerDance Celebration will fill the Park on August 26.

Other highlights include the Chicago House Music Celebration, May 27; Chicago Gospel Music Festival, June 2–3; Millennium Park Summer Music Series, most Mondays and Thursdays, June 12–August 21; Millennium Park Summer Film Series, most Tuesdays, June 13–August 30; Grant Park Music Festival classical concerts, most Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, June 14–August 19; Chicago Mariachi Festival, June 25; Fifth Star Honors tribute concert, August 28; Chicago Jazz Festival, August 31–September 3; Stars of Lyric Opera concert, September 8; World Music Festival Chicago, September 9 and 16—plus the daily Family Fun Festival; daily After School Matters teen programs; the Lurie Garden Plant Sale, June 3, plus ongoing Garden tours, activities and nature programs; a Chakaia Booker public art exhibition and much more.

Millennium Park is located on Michigan Avenue, bordered by Randolph St. to the north, Columbus Dr. to the east and Monroe St. to the south. The Park is open 6am–11pm daily. For the latest news and events, download the Millennium Park app, visit millenniumpark.org, like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter and Instagram, @Millennium_Park.

To plan your trip to Chicago for Millennium Park events and more, visit choosechicago.com.

Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events

The Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events is dedicated to enriching Chicago's artistic vitality and cultural vibrancy. This includes fostering the development of Chicago's non-profit arts sector, independent working artists and for-profit arts businesses; providing a framework to guide the City's future cultural and economic growth, via the 2012 Chicago Cultural Plan; marketing the

City's cultural assets to a worldwide audience; and presenting high-quality, free and affordable cultural programs for residents and visitors.

Millennium Park Foundation

The Millennium Park Foundation, a private, philanthropic not-for-profit partner, was created in 1998 to support the City of Chicago's efforts in the design, construction and management of Millennium Park. It is the steward of Millennium Park's internationally-recognized icons and public features. These include the prestigious Jay Pritzker Pavilion and dramatic BP Pedestrian Bridge, world-renowned Cloud Gate and Lurie Garden, iconic Crown Fountain, and exquisite Boeing Galleries for public art exhibitions. Through its ongoing development initiatives, the Millennium Park Foundation is dedicated to keeping Millennium Park a free and accessible venue for all Chicagoans today, and for generations to come.

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