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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES CHICAGO RIVERWALK GENERATED \$16.5 MILLION IN REVENUES DURING 2019 SEASON

Riverwalk concessions revenue increased by \$2 million in 2019

CHICAGO --- Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and the Chicago Department of Fleet and Facility Management (2FM) today announced the Chicago Riverwalk generated over \$16.5 million in concessions revenue during the 2019 season, a \$2.2 million increase over the Riverwalk's 2018 season. The Chicago Riverwalk concessions program continues to exceed revenue projections and is a thriving downtown destination offering recreation activities, shopping and featuring dining offerings from several of the City's neighborhoods. The 2019 season was also the inaugural year for the Riverwalk's Community Marketplace which brought eight new dining and retail locations featuring some of the best of Chicago's neighborhood businesses.

The Riverwalk provides a concessions program that runs from the beginning of the Spring season through the late Fall season, weather permitting. This year over 750,000 residents and tourists alike visited the Riverwalk concessions program vendors, an increase in visitors over 2018. As the Riverwalk has grown in popularity, employment opportunities have also expanded, with nearly 500 people employed during the peak busy season.

"The Chicago Riverwalk is an architectural gem that puts our city's second waterfront on display for the world and connects residents and visitors alike through open spaces, locally inspired businesses, public artwork, and much more," said Mayor Lightfoot. "As we saw in the 2019 season, the Riverwalk continues to draw more people from our both our neighborhoods and visitors from around the world. We look forward to setting many more records in the years to come, as Chicago continues to be a top destination for work and travel."

The Riverwalk, home to 10 major concessions vendors, expanded in 2019 with the opening of the Community Marketplace, adding 8 new vendor kiosks to showcase a variety of dining and retail locations found across Chicago's 77 neighborhoods. The Community Marketplace also expanded opportunities for Chicago's diverse business owners and is expected to generate increased traffic at their main street-



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side location. Based on their success in 2019, the following Riverwalk Community Marketplace vendors will return for the 2020 season: Batter and Berries, Beat Kitchen, Chiya Chai Café, Gordo's Homemade Ice Cream, Justice of the Pies, Neighborly, Shop Small Chicago and Twisted Eggroll.

"We are pleased to announce another year of increased revenues from the Chicago Riverwalk's most successful concessions program yet," said 2FM Commissioner David Reynolds. "The Riverwalk remains an economic engine for this City, and we are thrilled the program is continuing to grow to include additional vendors from throughout Chicago's neighborhoods, employ more residents and attract more visitors than ever before."

In addition to dining, Chicago's Riverwalk concession program also includes various types of aquatic transportation and tours including Mercury, Chicago's Skyline Cruiseline and Chicago First Lady Cruises, electric boats, cycleboats, docks, kayaks, the Chicago Water Taxi and more. These services allow visitors to both traverse the River to different locations throughout the city and provide opportunities to learn more about Chicago and its River. The Chicago Architecture Center, the McCormack Bridgehouse and Chicago River Museum also provide educational and informative entertainment for Riverwalk visitors.

"This year's launch of the Chicago Riverwalk Community Marketplace allowed me to bring my small business to new customers in the heart of the city's downtown," said Nikkita Randle Owner and CEO of Twisted Egg Roll. "Being a vendor on the Riverwalk has allowed me to make new connections and I can't wait to build on my success in the upcoming 2020 season."

Of the \$16.5 million in overall revenues, \$1.3 million dollars is allocated to the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) Fund, which was used to finance construction of the Riverwalk between State and Lake Street.

"The Chicago Riverwalk has quickly become an important tourist destination for our city thanks to its array of amenities," said President and CEO of Choose Chicago David Whitaker. "Over the past several years, the city has experienced consistent rises in visitors from its unique offerings like the Riverwalk, and we look forward to maintaining this trend in years to come."

The Chicago Riverwalk is a 1.25-mile long path that includes four distinct districts: The Confluence, Arcade, Civic and Esplanade. The continuous path from Lake Street to the lake front allows vertical connection from Upper Wacker Drive down to the waterway. In addition to providing a range of services to various departments



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within the City of Chicago, 2FM oversees operations and maintenance for Chicago's Riverwalk including the concessions program.

The City and vendors are already in the planning stage for the Concession Program 2020 Season, with many vendors expected to open prior to May, if weather permits. Additional site improvements are expected by vendors at the East End of the Riverwalk in 2020, in the area known as "The Esplanade," to compliment the City improvements made in 2019.

The City reminds both residents and visitors that the Riverwalk remains open daily from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. with vendors returning in Spring 2020. To learn more about the Chicago Riverwalk's offerings please visit <https://www.chicagoriverwalk.us/>.

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