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McCormick Place West Building Officially Opens Its Doors - and "Welcomes the World"

*Mayor Daley, state officials join hundreds to celebrate state-of-the-art
addition to Chicago's convention and tourism industry*

*West Building means increased flexibility, functionality
to meet customers' evolving needs*

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CHICAGO -- More than 500 people today gathered to officially open the doors to McCormick Place West, the newest addition to North America's largest convention center. The West Building opened eight months ahead of schedule and on budget.

The festive Grand Opening celebration was joined by Mayor Richard M. Daley, local and state elected officials along with Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA) staff, Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau (CCTB) staff, the Mc4West design and build team, architects, as well as tourism, labor, business, community and civic leaders. A unique ribbon-cutting ceremony included a special performance by *Cirque Shanghai*, the world-renowned Chinese acrobatic troupe.

"The new state-of-the-art facility is an important addition to what is already the world's most advanced convention, trade show and meetings facility - and will serve to enhance Chicago's competitive edge," said Juan Ochoa, Chief Executive Officer of the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA). "It sends a clear message to our industry that the biggest and the best just got bigger and better."

During his remarks, Ochoa acknowledged the more than 7,000 people who contributed to the building of McCormick Place West since the project began in 2001. Their names will be inscribed on a plaque located in the West Building.

“This monumental achievement would not have been possible without the hard work, dedication and creativity of thousands of people. This ‘can do’ attitude proves the City of Big Shoulders is also the City of Grand Achievements,” he concluded.

“Chicago has always been the greatest convention city in the world and today, it’s becoming even greater,” said Mayor Daley. “There’s a lot of competition for visitors and their dollars. But Chicago has never been afraid of competition – and McCormick Place West shows the world that we’re willing to meet our competitors and offer even more.”

McCormick Place West was designed with the goal of meeting the changing needs of customers well into the future. The building’s features were designed to achieve greater flexibility and functionality, enabling McCormick Place to host more simultaneous and back-to-back shows. Much of the West Building’s focus will concentrate on securing small-to-mid range association, corporate and medical meetings. Ultimately, McCormick Place officials intend to solidify the convention center’s growing reputation as the nation’s “medical meeting headquarters.”

“We are all doing a tremendous job promoting Chicago to people across the state, the country and throughout the world. Thanks to tremendous assets like McCormick Place, tourism is thriving today in Chicago as people have taken notice of all the diverse attractions we have to offer. Our investments in spreading this message are being returned many times over with billions of new dollars coming into Illinois that are

creating better jobs for more people. And McCormick Place West is yet another incredible jewel in our crown," Governor Rod R. Blagojevich said.

With more than 75 events already booked at West, the benefits to Chicago and throughout the state are already apparent. One-third of those shows are new business and another one-third are recovered business – shows that haven't been to Chicago in five years or more. The new building is expected to generate approximately 25,000 new jobs regionally and an additional \$1.3 billion in local spending to the city and state, including booking of 250,000 to 300,000 additional hotel room nights – a 25 percent increase over what McCormick Place generates today.

Overall, the MPEA's total estimated direct expenditures to the city and the state each year total more than \$4 billion.

"This industry is an incredible asset to the city and to the state," said MPEA Board Chairman Ted Tetzlaff. "But we must protect this asset even as we grow it. We are in the business of continuous improvement. So, as we dedicate this building today, we also re-dedicate ourselves to keep improving each and every day... to delivering exactly what our customers want to keep them coming back."

The approximately \$882 million publicly-financed West Building adds another 470,000 square feet of exhibit space to McCormick Place's existing 2.2 million square feet. It also adds 250,000 square feet of meeting space, which includes 61 meeting rooms and a ballroom the size of a football field at 100,000 square feet, making it one of the largest ballrooms in the world.

"This building is already hitting a sweet spot in the marketplace," said Tim Roby, Chief Executive Officer of the CCTB, the agency charged with marketing the facilities. "Our goal is to make Chicago one of the top three global destinations for business and leisure

travel. If we can get people here for shows in this beautiful building... and show off the Chicago that all of us here today know so well... we're sure they'll come back with their families as leisure travelers."

McCormick Place West also boasts a distinctive and beautiful Rooftop Garden, which offers stunning views of the city and is ideal for evening receptions. The green roof is part of the larger environmentally-sensitive plans for the building, which include high-efficiency heating and cooling systems, reduced water consumption and recycled building materials. McCormick Place West has already attained LEED certification. LEED is the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council.

The building also houses an impressive collection of 50 commissioned works of art, designed by 30 Chicago and Illinois artists. The collection, curated by a committee led by local artist Paul Klein, showcases the breadth of Chicago artists and educates guests on the region's history.

Some of the building's other unique features include:

- Advanced Internet network
- Expansive wireless capabilities
- Transportation Center with nine LCD screens updating passengers on bus departure and arrival times
- Gourmet food court and fine dining restaurant
- 600-seat Overlook Café on the exhibition floor

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