

Friends of the Chicago River

411 South Wells Street, Suite 800 • Chicago, Illinois 60607
tel 312.939.0490 • fax 312.939.0931 • www.chicagoriver.org

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Contact: Andrew Herrmann
(312) 939-0490, ext. 12
Cell: (312) 550-0303
aherrmann@chicagoriver.org

Projects, Rahm Emanuel Honored For River-Sensitive Efforts

REI, Method Soap, McDonald's, C.H. Robinson Cited

CHICAGO—Friends of the Chicago River has named the winners of the 2019 Chicago River Blue Awards recognizing people and projects for exceptional contributions to continuing the improvement of the waterway.

The top prize, the Blue Ribbon Award, was given to former Mayor Rahm Emanuel for his leadership and enthusiasm for projects such as the Chicago Riverwalk, the Wild Mile plan, the 312 River Run, the Chicago River Boathouses, the more ecologically-based Chicago River Design Guidelines and the River Ecology and Governance Task Force.



Winners of Silver Ribbon Awards include the Lathrop Homes Redevelopment by Related Midwest, Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation, and Heartland Housing; Method Soap's South Side Soapbox designed by William McDonough + Partners; R2 and REI Co-op for the retailer's new Lincoln Park location; the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago Park District and Metropolitan Water Reclamation District for the North Branch Dam removal; and the City of Chicago, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, and Urban Rivers for The Wild Mile project.

Honored with Green Ribbon Awards were the McDonald's Chicago Flagship and Ross Barney Architects; and Sterling Bay Companies' CH Robinson Building.

“Recognition as a Chicago River Blue Award winner requires intentional choices that push the boundaries of the continued growth of the Chicago River as an essential blue/green corridor of habitat for people, plants, and animals,” said Friends of the Chicago River Executive Director Margaret Frisbie. “The Chicago River Blue Awards illuminate what we should be striving towards as we plan the future of the Chicago River system. This year’s winners, and all of our past winners, are setting the bar for future river-focused work not only in Chicago, but globally.”

“I want to thank Friends of the Chicago River not for this award but what you’ve done for over 40 years, being a voice for the city of Chicago, rediscovering one of the most natural resources we have,” said Emanuel. “Now we have a chorus of voices for making the river a big part of the city of Chicago – not apart from the city but a part of the city.”

Eds: Images available at <http://bit.ly/ChicagoRiverBlueAwards2019>

The awards were announced at Friends’ 14th annual Big Fish Ball, established in 2006 to benefit Friends’ efforts to improve and protect the Chicago River system. Presented by McDermott Will & Emery, the sold out Big Fish Ball was attended by over 540 guests at the Westin Chicago River North.

Blue Ribbon

The Blue Ribbon Award winners represent the rare project, design, or leader exemplifying the highest standard of consideration for the Chicago River system. Only one Blue Ribbon is awarded annually. Past winners include the Horner Park Ecosystem Restoration, the Chicago Riverwalk, the Eleanor Street Boathouse, and former Mayor Richard M. Daley.

Blue Ribbon Award

Former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel

Under Mayor Emanuel, the Chicago Park District invested in river-edge parks, river-edge natural areas, trails, and community boat houses on the North and South Sides. He led the development of a comprehensive green infrastructure strategy to reduce the burden of stormwater pollution and secured a \$98 million loan to realize the Chicago Riverwalk. As a candidate for mayor, Emanuel supported sewage effluent disinfection to ensure dramatically higher water quality, rejecting misinformation regarding costs.

Silver Ribbon

The Silver Ribbon is awarded to projects that exhibit an exceptional level of sustainable practices and design excellence on multiple levels.

Silver Ribbon Award

Lathrop Homes Redevelopment

Chicago, Illinois

Award Winner: Related Midwest, Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation, Heartland Housing

The redevelopment of the former Julia C. Lathrop Homes complex embraces its location along the North Branch of the Chicago River and features the riverfront as a key amenity for the new residents. The development includes naturalized riverbanks and increased access to the waterway

for recreation. The project builds upon many other river improvement efforts in the area including previous Chicago River Blue Award winner Horner Park Ecosystem Restoration.

Silver Ribbon Award
REI Co-op—Lincoln Park
Chicago, Illinois

Award Winner: REI Co-op and R2

The new home of the outdoors retailer was created by redesigning an old warehouse located on the Chicago River on West Eastman Street. The river-edge facility improves public access to the river through kayak and paddleboard rentals and a floating dock. Additionally, it provides opportunity to interact with the Wild Mile project that will include habitat improvements, pedestrian walkways, fishing stations, vegetative islands, and viewing platforms.

Silver Ribbon Award
North Branch Dam Removal
Chicago, Illinois

Award winner: United States Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago Park District, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District

Removal of this dam, built at the confluence of the Upper North Branch of the Chicago River and the North Shore Channel in 1910, provides enormous benefits to people, plants, and animals, particularly fish that are able to access over 50 miles of upstream habitat. Friends began advocating for the dam's removal in 2002. Aesthetically, removing tons of concrete has beautified the area, returning its natural appearance, and improving paddling safety.

Silver Ribbon Award
South Side Soapbox
Chicago, Illinois

Award winner: Method Soap and William McDonough + Partners

The new manufacturing facility of Method Soap uses clean energy, water conservation technology, and environmentally sensitive materials in its production of household products. The first LEED Platinum manufacturing facility in its industry, the Pullman plant traps stormwater from paved surfaces in bioswales where it is released into the ground. Additionally, a 1.7-acre rooftop greenhouse is designed to use 10 times less water than conventional agriculture and avoids fertilizer and pesticide runoff.

Silver Ribbon Award
The Wild Mile Plan
Chicago, Illinois

Award Winners: The City of Chicago, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Urban Rivers

This planned mile-long “eco park” will improve a stretch of the North Branch Canal on the east side of Goose Island, providing animal habitat and recreational opportunities for people. Water quality will be improved through the floating garden's plant roots which will filter waste through

phytoremediation. Included in this effort are wetlands, public walkways, educational learning stations and access points for paddlers.

Green Ribbon

The Green Ribbon Award recognizes projects that demonstrate a high level of river-sensitive design and consideration.

Green Ribbon Award

McDonald's Chicago Flagship

Chicago, Illinois

Award Winner: Ross Barney Architects

The reimagined flagship location for McDonald's at Clark and Ohio streets includes more than 70 trees, a vegetated roof space, and extensive use of native plants. Its permeable pavers are designed to reduce storm water runoff and its on-site underground stormwater tank can hold over 65,000 gallons of water. It is designed to use 38 percent less water than restaurants of comparable size.

Green Ribbon Award

C.H. Robinson Building

Chicago, Illinois

Award Winner: Sterling Bay Companies

The Chicago flagship of this logistics firm along the Chicago River in the Lincoln Yards area was designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill to emulate the flow of the water. The energy efficient building includes an expansive green roof and replaces a former tannery. Its 30-foot setback from the river allows for a riverside landscaped park and trail.

About Friends of the Chicago River

Friends of the Chicago River is an award-winning nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve and protect the Chicago River for people, plants and animals. With over 10,000 members, volunteers, and online advocates, Friends works to make the river greener and more accessible, while building awareness of the benefits that a clean, healthy river can bring to the surrounding community. Friends of the Chicago River is working to make the Chicago River one of the world's great metropolitan rivers. For more information please visit our website www.chicagoriver.org.

