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MAYOR EMANUEL AND NAVY PIER ANNOUNCE THE PURCHASE OF A NEW, WORLD CLASS FERRIS WHEEL IN TIME FOR 2016 CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Home to the First-Ever Ferris Wheel at 1893 World’s Fair,
New State-of-the-Art 196-Foot Wheel Will be Privately Financed as Part of “Elevate Chicago” Redevelopment

CHICAGO – June 23, 2015 – Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Navy Pier announced today that a new Ferris wheel has been purchased and will debut at Navy Pier in time for its 2016 Centennial. The new 196-foot wheel will fit into the space that will be vacated by the existing wheel that was installed in 1995. It will feature a wide assortment of enhanced features and amenities, including accommodations for up to 180 more passengers per ride and temperature controlled gondolas allowing guests to enjoy it year-round.

The new wheel, which will be 49 feet taller than the existing Ferris wheel, is being privately financed by a loan from Fifth Third Bank. No public money was used toward its purchase.

“The redevelopment of Navy Pier is a vital to our ongoing efforts to attract 55 million visitors annually to the City of Chicago by 2020, creating new jobs and injecting millions of dollars into our local economy,” said Mayor Emanuel. “I commend Navy Pier on the purchase of this new Ferris wheel, as it will bring new energy to this one of a kind Chicago attraction.”
Since the first-ever Ferris wheel was unveiled at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, the Ferris wheel has been a hallmark of Chicago. The wheel symbolizes how Chicago has remained true to Daniel Burnham’s vision for the “people’s pier,” as articulated in his famous 1909 Plan of Chicago. Today, Navy Pier, Inc., is a 501 (c)(3) not for profit organization that maintains and oversees Navy Pier and its redevelopment into a bolder, greener and more contemporary urban space.

“As we reimagine Navy Pier, we couldn’t think of a more exciting and appropriate way to celebrate the upcoming 2016 Centennial Celebration than acquiring a brand new world-class Ferris wheel,” says William J. Brodsky, Chairman of the Navy Pier Inc. Board of Directors. “The new wheel is yet another example of our continuing commitment to ensure that Navy Pier remains the region’s number-one leisure destination and a place of pride for the city and its residents.”

Navy Pier, Inc. conducted a thorough 6-month worldwide search for a wheel that would best meet the unique structural and operational requirements of the Pier. Working alongside engineers from Thornton Tomasetti, a new model was selected and purchased -- the DW60 -- from Dutch Wheels, the Netherlands-based company that built the Pier’s current wheel. Considered the world’s top designer and manufacturer of Ferris wheels, Pier leadership was impressed with the company’s exemplary safety record and commitment to excellence.

The state-of-the-art DW60 will be the first and only one of its kind in the U.S. with similar wheels currently in operation in Hong Kong and Baku, Azerbaijan. Significant features include two-sided cars that allow for easy loading and unloading, a fortified structure to withstand winds of 115 miles per hour, and safety glass capable of weathering intense storms.

“One of our goals was to be sure the new wheel would provide our guests with a significantly enhanced year-round experience,” says Marilynn K. Gardner, President and CEO, Navy Pier, Inc. “The new wheel will deliver a smoother and more luxurious ride – increasing ride time from seven minutes to twelve minutes, and circling three times, not just once as the current wheel does.”

The size of the new wheel was selected because it fits in the footprint of the current wheel. As such, Ferris wheel operations will be closed for construction during the off-season months beginning in late September 2015 and re-opening in summer of 2016.

The new gondolas will seat up to 10 passengers (the current wheel holds six), include padded seats, TV screens and speakers, and will feature an innovative HVAC condensation drainage system that collects and releases water when gondolas are at the bottom of their rotation to prevent dripping and clouding during rotation.
News of the Ferris wheel acquisition comes on the heels of the Pier announcing the addition of several impressive restaurant partners that will offer a more elevated Chicago dining experience. Included in the collection of new restaurants is Chicago’s famous stuffed pizza from Giordano’s, Big Bowl, Frankie’s Pizza by the Slice, DMK Burger and Fish, Goddess and the Baker, and more to be announced and opened this summer.

In May 2013, Mayor Emanuel, the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority and Navy Pier announced Elevate Chicago, an ambitious tourism and tradeshow redevelopment program designed to facilitate nearly $640 million in new investments which will be added to ongoing projects that will create 10,000 construction jobs, 3,700 permanent jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in economic growth for the City of Chicago. Elevate Chicago is a crucial component of Mayor Emanuel’s efforts to attract 55 million visitors to Chicago annually by 2020.

The new Ferris wheel is being privately financed and is incremental to Phase I of the Elevate Chicago redevelopment, budgeted by Navy Pier Inc. (NPI) at $115 million.

**About Navy Pier:**
Located on Lake Michigan, Navy Pier is the top attended leisure destination in the Midwest, stretching more than 6 city blocks and welcoming more than 8 million guests annually. Originally opened in 1916 as a shipping and recreation facility, this Chicago landmark showcases more than 50 acres of parks, restaurants, attractions, retail shops, sightseeing and dining cruise boats, exposition facilities and more. Navy Pier, Inc., a 501 (c)(3) not for profit organization, maintains and oversees Navy Pier and its redevelopment into a bolder, greener and more contemporary urban space. For more information, visit our website at [www.navypier.com](http://www.navypier.com)

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