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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Chicago Loop Alliance announces launch of historic first strategic planning process at 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**

### **Executive Director Michael M. Edwards outlines vision of continued growth and economic development for Chicago's vibrant downtown**

CHICAGO (February 26, 2013)—**Chicago Loop Alliance (CLA)** announced today at its **8<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting** the launch of the first strategic planning process in the organization's history, which will identify areas of greatest opportunity in the Loop. In his keynote presentation, economic development expert and recently appointed **CLA Executive Director Michael M. Edwards** outlined the importance of strategic visioning, building organizational capacity, supporting continued development, and defining value for downtown stakeholders. The Annual Meeting began with opening remarks from **42nd Ward Alderman Brendan Reilly** and concluded with the official announcement of CLA's new Board of Directors, including returning **Chairman Martin Stern**. More than 250 prominent business, cultural and civic leaders were in attendance at the Meeting, held at the University Club of Chicago.

"The Loop and Chicago are emerging as global leaders, based on a number of indexes including real estate, tourism, and quality of life," said Edwards. "As the premier organization responsible for and dedicated to enhancing and promoting the downtown district, Chicago Loop Alliance is in an ideal position to identify areas of opportunity through this strategic planning process."

Edwards' nearly three decades of economic development experience includes six years as President and CEO of the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership and seven years as President and CEO of the Downtown Spokane Partnership. His arrival signals a new phase for Chicago Loop Alliance.

The organization's comprehensive strategic planning process began this month, and will result in the development of a 5-year plan. The plan will clarify the organization's role in economic development, housing, transportation, tourism and culture, and enhanced services in the Loop. Community stakeholders—including business owners, elected officials, civic leaders and CLA Board Members—will contribute to the planning process.

#### **New Board of Directors announced**

At the meeting, CLA announced its 2013 Officers and Directors, including returning Chairman Martin Stern of U.S. Equities Realty LLC. Assuming the position of 1st Vice Chairman is Bill Burfeind of Turner Construction, joined by 2nd Vice Chairman Rich Gamble of *Chicago Magazine*; returning Treasurer Ron Arnold of Robert Morris University; and Pamela Capitanini of Italian Village Restaurants as Secretary.

"The Chicago Loop Alliance Board of Directors shares a vision for continued downtown growth with Alderman Reilly and other elected leaders and institutional stakeholders," said Stern. "This strategic planning process will help us identify shared goals and measurable outcomes moving forward so that we can realize that vision together."

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The Annual Meeting of Chicago Loop Alliance is generously supported by the Berghoff Catering & Restaurant Group, DesignLab and Related Midwest.

**Chicago Loop Alliance** is a member-based nonprofit organization that represents Chicago's most dynamic mixed-use district—the Loop—and advocates for the rapidly growing central business area. CLA is focused on promoting and uniting Loop businesses and organizations to support one another in creating a vibrant, flourishing Loop where people live, work and play.

The **Chicago Loop Alliance Foundation** develops and promotes artistic, cultural, and public events within the service area of the Chicago Loop Alliance. These initiatives enhance the character of the Loop, contribute to its competitive position as a mixed-use destination, and promote economic development and tourism in the area.

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