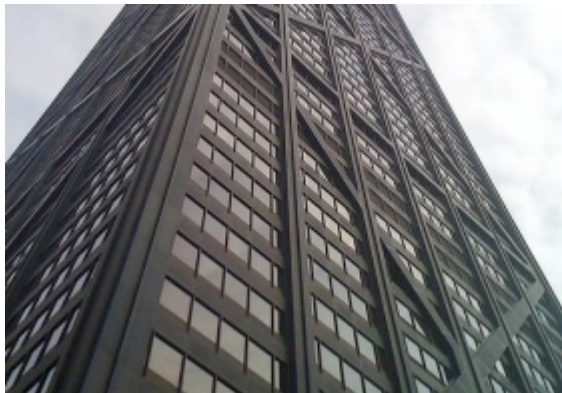


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French firm purchases Hancock Observatory

New owners hope to compete with popular Willis Tower Skydeck

By Jewell Washington



(Flickr, Schnuth)

Montparnasse 56 Group, a Paris-based firm, announced that they purchased the 94th floor of the John Hancock Observatory for at least \$35 million. They hope to attract an additional 100,000 visitors.

feet from the side of the building.

“We certainly look at our attraction as something that is unique and one-of-a-kind,” he said.

But Deutsch argues the Hancock’s new and improved views will be hard to beat.

“We obviously believe that your first choice, your first stop on your trip to Chicago should be on the Magnificent Mile,” he said. “(It) should be at the observation deck of the John Hancock Center.”

The Greater North Michigan Avenue Association welcomed the ownership change.

“To have a great tower like this that’s also a member of this international marketing organization just takes us to a whole new level,” said John Chikow, president and CEO of the association.

The battle for the best bird’s-eye views in Chicago just got a little more interesting: the John Hancock Observatory has a new owner.

Montparnasse 56 Group is a Paris-based firm that operates observation decks in Europe. Vice President Eric Deutsch is helping to lead the U.S. team and hopes to enhance the Hancock experience to compete with the popular Willis Tower Skydeck. He said they hope to attract an additional 100,000 visitors.

Skydeck spokesman, Bill Utter, doesn't seem worried. He said anything that helps attract more visitors to Chicago also helps the Skydeck. He said the company is particularly focused on its Ledge attraction, glass boxes that stick out 4.3