

Joint Statement on Recreational Open Space Requirements in the Proposed North Branch Industrial Corridor Framework Plan

We Aldermen, representing three Wards, community organizations and park advocates stand together to oppose the North Branch Industrial Corridor plan based on its lack of vision for critical open space and recreational facilities. Collectively our groups represent the interests of over 350,000 Chicagoans. We speak for 100,000 young professionals playing on leagues and team sports; thousands of children under the age of 18; scores of volunteers serving on local park councils and other nonprofits focused on quality of life and the environment, and we speak for future generations of Chicagoans. For over a year, these voices have been ignored by the City of Chicago Department of Planning.

We are, quite simply, out of space to play as we enter a period of unprecedented growth with the proposed plans for the Industrial Corridor – which may be up to 50% residential by acreage. The bookend to the area, the Lincoln Park lakefront, has the third highest usage of any park in America after Central Park and the National Mall, according to the Trust for Public Land.

Our neighborhoods are undergoing great demographic change. In Lincoln Park there are 65% more children in the area today than in 2000. Baseball fields are inadequate and turn away thousands of children wishing to join a league. The entire Lincoln Park community (66,000 people) has one soccer field – located at the lakefront, which annually hosts 20 million regional visitors. Without additional park space, newly created resident populations will put further strain on the over-utilized parks.

Logan Square and Wicker Park residents are even more park-starved. According to the CitySpace plan, Logan Square is, “one of the top ten underserved communities,” with an open space deficit of 68 acres, and, “all opportunities for open space should be considered.” A significant part of the Industrial Corridor touches the greater Logan Square Community. The redevelopment is a rare opportunity to correct that deficit.

The DPD framework plan offers a vision as though the Industrial Corridor exists in a bubble and fails both the recreational needs of the surrounding area and also those of the proposed new riverfront community. The Department of Planning incorrectly asserts that no new recreational space is needed in this part of the city, stating, “Areas that were within a half mile of an open space were considered served with respect to access to open space.”

This flawed reasoning contradicts years of thoughtful public policy and irrefutable facts on the ground.

The North Branch Industrial Corridor (750 acres) is the largest contiguous property on the north side to be rezoned in over three decades and the first in a

century along the Chicago River to be opened to residential development. It is no exaggeration to say this is the last significant property between North Avenue and Fullerton to undergo large-scale transformation.

DPD's decision to allow the North Area (350 acres) of the Industrial Corridor to become "mixed-use" creates tremendous opportunities for developers but such radical change must be balanced against its impact on hundreds of thousands of residents surrounding the corridor.

Even in 1988, Chicago's first Planned Manufacturing District was clearly designed with surrounding communities in mind when retail was inserted as a buffer between existing industry and nearby neighborhoods.

The value of the corridor is enhanced by its proximity to Lincoln Park, Bucktown, Wicker Park and Logan Square and the growing desire to work closer to home. This alone should prompt DPD to yield to community consensus and not disrespect the areas that are the catalyst for this latest corridor redevelopment.

But, beyond that, city planners should adhere to open space planning goals that were nurtured and developed by the city itself.

According to the City of Chicago's CitySpace Plan of January 1998, "One of the most pressing problems with Chicago's open space system is that over half of the people in Chicago live in neighborhoods where the parks are either too crowded or too far away." In 1998, Chicago ranked between sixth or eighteenth out of a select group of twenty cities. That ranking has not improved over the decades.

The Park District's *Land Policies Plan* of 1993 wisely defined "service areas" for various kinds of parkland – for example, stating that the minimum acceptable distance a resident should be from a tot lot, should be only .1 mile, while the minimum acceptable distance from a park of over 50 acres should be one mile. These standards reflect a common sense use of playlots for toddlers versus larger regional parks.

The City in 1998, stated "Lincoln Park . . . appear(s) to be well served when considering total open space acreage. However, much of this open space is contained within [a] lakefront park that attracts visitors from the entire Chicago metropolitan region . . . many of the large regional parks do not contain adequate park facilities, such as ball fields or playgrounds, to serve the needs of nearby neighborhoods."

While our individual groups may have differing opinions on various parts of this enormous plan, we are united in the belief the City of Chicago must require a development of this size to include open space for sport such baseball, soccer,

ice skating, and the like. To do otherwise is shirking entrusted government responsibility to plan for our communities.

We call on the Department of Planning and the City of Chicago to include in the Plan and design guidelines for the North Branch Industrial Corridor firm design goals for contiguous recreational space of 15 acres. This can be accomplished with a variety of means, both public and private, as has been done in many other cities. But, without government commitment, no such space will be attainable.

Signed:

Alderman Brian Hopkins (2nd)

Alderman Michele Smith (43rd)

Alderman Scott Waguespak (32nd)

Bucktown Community Organization

Chicago City Soccer

Chicago Sport and Social Club

Friends of the Chicago River

Friends of the Parks

Lincoln Central Association

Oz Park Baseball Association

Ranch Triangle Association

Sheffield Neighborhood Association

Wicker Park Committee

Wrightwood Neighborhood Association

Local Park Advocates:

Erma Trantor

Judy Johansen

Joan Dahlquist

Stephanie Munger

Betsy Costello

Jeanne Atkinson

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