



FRIENDS OF THE PARKS

PLATFORM FOR PARKS

Friends of the Parks' 2018 State of the Parks report raised a number of concerns that align with the Lightfoot Administration's core themes of: ***diversity and inclusion; equity; accountability; transparency, and; transformation.*** Though the Chicago Park District is a separate governmental entity from the City of Chicago, we see the opportunity for the Lightfoot Administration to lead in transforming the approach of and in insisting on a framework that seeks equitable outcomes for Chicagoans via the Chicago Park District.

PLATFORM ISSUE #1—LIFTING UP EQUITY

Utilize a new City of Chicago Office of **Equity** to guide and monitor the Chicago Park District by:

- Encouraging the application of Racial Equity Impact Assessments (REIAs) for examination of Chicago Park District policies and programs to effect equitable investment in:
 - Programming
 - Maintenance
 - Capital Investment
 - Land Acquisition
- Studying models from Chicago history and current efforts in other cities to guide park **equity** in product and process
 - Look back at the requirements of the 1983 Consent Decree which was meant to keep the Chicago Park District from discriminating against minority communities after it was successfully sued for such by the U.S. Department of Justice and consider which of these might be applicable, useful models now.
 - Look to cities like Minneapolis, which has an equity framework for capital investments in its parks.
 - Review “Just Green Enough” justice-oriented model of park investments, which call for park design and development that is community-appropriate, as defined by local residents, rather than primarily focused on revenue generation activities in the park or through rapid escalation of nearby property taxes via gentrification.
- Leading the development of Community Benefits Agreement models for implementation in cases where local residents often bear the burdens but tend not to reap the benefits of parks being monetized as revenue generators for the Chicago Park District and the City, such as, but not limited to:
 - Concerts and festivals in parks
 - Development of “temporary” and/or permanent tourist venues in parks
 - Private sports leagues and eco-recreation that is not targeted to local residents
- Studying the experiences of other large cities that have tried to substitute privately-owned public spaces for truly public open space to understand:

- the impacts on people of color who already experience discrimination in public spaces
- the impact on democratic participation in the form of public demonstrations.
- the impact on free use of the space (as in, not purchasing anything)
- whether these spaces indeed remain open to the public the same hours and seasons as publicly-owned spaces
- the structures of **accountability** and **transparency** regarding such spaces when things go wrong.
- Leading in proposing new and/or refined models for public participation in park policy, as the current system of Park Advisory Councils has become co-opted, much like Local School Councils and the Community Alternatives Policing Strategy constructs of previous years.
- Screening carry-over plans for river and parks from Mayor Emanuel's administration through a lens of true public participation, transparency, accountability and equity.

PLATFORM ISSUE #2—SIGNATURE TRANSFORMATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

To contribute to the Lightfoot administration's stated concerns about Chicago's violence, lead in the **transformation** of Chicago Park District security strategies along with transformation of the role and accountability of the Chicago Police Department.

- An unsafe park in an unsafe neighborhood, no matter how well-invested in, will be chronically underutilized. While many parks have remarkably safe track records, the crimes that occur in our parks leave a deep scar on the collective memory of the community. They can also go un- or under-reported. The solutions that can create healthy, stable, and safe parks need to holistically address the both the immediate and root causes of this issue.
 - Update security guidelines. The current mandate and training park district security officers appears insufficient for the security issues facing parks. Simply being visible and reporting potentially criminal behavior is not ensuring the safety of all park users. CPD security must be trained to intervene, de-escalate, and resolve conflicts, in a manner informed by restorative justice practices and avoiding racial bias.
 - Support the development of community-based security solutions. Park stakeholders may be encouraged to pursue culturally-relevant community-based paths to park safety outside of increased policing. An interesting model is the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization's Mi Parque Leadership program, in which youth work as seasonal paid interns and are trained in community stewardship, conflict de-escalation and resolution, and restorative justice practices. It has proven effective at reducing violence in the La Villita Park while promoting community ownership of the park.

Lead in the **transformation** of South Side communities with juxtaposed environmental health and justice and economic development challenges.

- The redevelopment of the South East lakefront represents a signature opportunity for the Lightfoot administration. It offers an immediate context to lead in managing the delicate balance between environmental issues and economic development while also spurring the completion of a significant section of the last four miles of uncompleted lakefront park system which is otherwise a jewel of this city.
 - Intervene immediately in the current debate on an urgent timeline over what to do with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-managed confined disposal facility (CDF) on land at the confluence of the Calumet River and Lake Michigan—land that is supposed to become Chicago Park District parkland—to ensure the long overdue closure of this site and its transformation into environmentally-safe, public parkland that connects with the adjacent Calumet Park.

- Ensure the City's commitment to the redevelopment of the South Works site in a way that transforms this environmentally-degraded area, situated on land protected by the public trust doctrine, into a robust community that provides ample, fully-accessible, connected, public park space along the lakefront and throughout a newly development neighborhood that supports economic development and a range of reasonably-priced housing options for the health and benefit of the South Chicago neighborhood, the entire South East Side, and all of Chicago.
- Ensure that the Chicago Park District prioritizes more equitable development of the existing, but under-invested Steelworkers Park and transformation of the undeveloped Park 566 parcel into public lakefront parkland that are adjacent to the above-mentioned sites.

Lead in the actualization of DuSable Park, a contaminated parcel at the confluence of the Chicago River and Lake Michigan, which was dedicated three decades ago by Mayor Harold Washington to honor Jean Baptiste Point DuSable, a black Haitian man who was Chicago's first non-native settler, who married a Potawatomi woman. (*Diversity & Inclusion*)

- Manage the relationship between local and city-wide stakeholders currently represented in the DuSable Park Coalition and the DuSable Park Advisory Council (including Haitian community interests to uphold the legacy of Jean Baptiste Point DuSable and others seeking to lift the legacy of Harold Washington), the Chicago Park District, and developer Related Midwest—which has pledged \$10 million for development of the park per its commitments related to the Spire site—to ensure the site is: developed with a broad cross-section of users in mind rather than just those who might inhabit Related Midwest's proposed 400 North Lake Shore Drive, and; ultimately is maintained as public park land.
- In addition to the value of the park itself and the removal of an eyesore and environmental degradation from the banks of our river and lake, the completion of this park at the east end of the Riverwalk, across from Polk Bros. Park at Navy Pier, and beneath the Flyover represents a **transformational** opportunity to promote educational and tourist opportunities for Chicago that lift the profile of a black, Haitian man.
- Since Harold Washington dedicated it, no mayor of Chicago has considered this site important enough to finish, and thus DuSable Park represents another signature opportunity for the Lightfoot administration to honor Chicago's black legacy.

PLATFORM ISSUE #3—ENHANCING AND ENSURING AN ADEQUATE AND EQUITABLE PARK SYSTEM FOR THE HEALTH OF CHICAGO

Protect and expand public park land across Chicago, with an emphasis on expanding acreage and/or amenities serving underinvested and “park poor” neighborhoods.

- While Chicago's appeal for many reasons depends on our amazing park system, the Trust for Public Lands' 2017 report ranks Chicago as 14th of 18 cities in park acreage per 1000 residents. The Trust for Public Lands' 2018 ParkScore for Chicago is 8, taking into account other categories beyond the amount of park land owned by the Chicago Park District. Either way, Chicago needs more park land, not less.
 - Push to ensure that the new mega-developments like Lincoln Yards and The 78 include fully public parkland that is owned by the Chicago Park District and is of adequate size and design (such as the 24-acre North Branch Park and Nature Preserve proposal) to support the density of the current and future neighborhoods and the recreational sports needs of nearby neighbors as well as Chicagoans from around the city enjoying the results of these Daniel Burnham-magnitude urban planning opportunities.

- Insist on **transparency** about programming to make that the mega-development park land is not essentially being created for the privatized use of select leagues or other revenue-generating activities that create barriers to use by neighbors and other members of the general public who cannot or do not access those monetized amenities.
- Hold the Obama Foundation **accountable** to being a “good neighbor” to the communities around Jackson Park—per their language—by:
 - adding actual park acreage in the near neighborhood in addition to replacing the park land and recreational amenities that must be replaced under UPARR.
 - paying for a new Field House to replace the existing deteriorated structure in Jackson Park;
 - funding new recreational spaces envisioned in the South Lakefront Framework Plan (SLFP).
 - clarifying whether the nature of the open space on the proposed OPC campus would be truly "public" as is claimed by the City, Park District, and Obama Foundation:
- Utilize the **transformational** opportunity of the proposed One Central mega-development to revisit the broken promise made by Mayor Richard M. Daley, in exchange for advocates’ support of McCormick Place expansion, to convert the Bears parking lot into green space, moving parking to the west side of Lake Shore Drive.
- Ensure equitable park development fulfilling the industry’s leading question these days. While almost all Chicagoans live within a 10 minute walk of a park, it must be asked: what is the quality of the park?
 - Consider the use of the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund (NOF) to support park development, such as utilizing NOF dollars generated by Lincoln Yards to create the two incomplete feeder parks at the western end of The 606/Bloomington Trail to address the **inequity** of using TIF subsidy to extend the trail east in a more affluent community while the less affluent end is left undone.
 - Improve the Open Space Impact Fees program to ensure it is fully utilized as well as to orient it toward park development in the neighborhoods of most need.

PLATFORM ISSUE #4—CENTERING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN CHICAGO’S PARK PLANNING AND POLICY PROCESS

In light of current threats to parks—such as a “temporary” concert venue and Hamilton exhibit on Northerly Island and a school proposed to be built in Riis Park—promote **accountability** and **transparency** and minimize legal challenges to existing public park protections by creating a new uniform city procedure for uses and construction on park land to ensure local input and equitable park resource distribution and conservation.

- Enact a “Chicago Parks Conservation Ordinance” creating an administrative process before the Chicago Park District [and/or other appropriate public body] to ensure that proposals for uses of and construction of structures, both temporary and permanent, impacting greater than a *de minimis* portion of any park or more than [TBD] feet of park land, owned, controlled, or otherwise administered by the Chicago Park District are uniformly subject to a rigorous review process, including:
 - a prohibition on uses and/or construction that does not meet specified standards for “equitable resource distribution” and “public park purpose”;
 - a local community public notice, comment and hearing process; a technical “Park Impact Statement”, including an evaluation of alternative non-park land locations for such use and/or structure;

- a requirement that any loss of park open space be replaced with the creation or acquisition of new open space in the same park or community area on a 2:1 basis;
- and judicial review of compliance with the Ordinance.

Ensure a more accountable Chicago Park District.

- Explore models to create a Chicago Park District board of commissioners that is more accountable to the public. Among other things:
 - The aldermen serving on the Committee on Special Events, Cultural Affairs and Recreation that approves mayoral nominations must provide a check on executive power by applying greater scrutiny to these political appointments.
 - Aldermen should require that nominees have demonstrated relevant experience to the management and programming of parks, a commitment to the pursuit of racial and social equity, and/or involvement in a park advisory council.
- Ensure that opportunities for public participation within the Code of the Chicago Park District be strengthened and enforced, inspired by a look back at the 1983 Consent Decree for models.

Create legislation to enable city council oversight regarding issues that impact parks, including but not limited to:

- nearby development that creates pollution, shadows on parks, etc. (such as the new asphalt plant across from McKinley Park, industrial corridor development near La Villita Park, and new high-rise development across from the Clarendon Park community garden.)
- traffic and parking meter issues, as the streets that run through parks belong to the City
- use of police and other City resources for concerts, festivals, and other revenue-generating activities proposed to take place in parks