

January 5, 2017

Ms. Abby Monroe
Coordinating Planner
City of Chicago
Department of Planning and Development

Dear Ms. Monroe,

As a designated consulting party to the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 review and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review for Jackson Park, Friends of the Parks is pleased to submit the following remarks for the public record in reference to the initial phase of identifying historic features that could be adversely affected by the Obama Presidential Center (OPC) and related road closures.

Since it was first proposed that an Obama presidential library be sited in a public park in Chicago, Friends of the Parks has welcomed the idea of an Obama Presidential Center in Chicago but has vociferously maintained that it should not be in a park. We have suggested that it be located instead on vacant land across the street from Washington Park. The location of the Obama Presidential Center in any part of Jackson Park represents an adverse affect on this historic, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux-designed park—one which is on the National Register of Historic Places and is but one element of the larger South Parks system, which includes the Midway Plaisance and Washington Park. As The Cultural Landscape Foundation has clearly detailed in their submission to you as part of this review process, the designers of this park intended for the building that is now the Museum of Science and Industry to be the only and main focal point structure in Jackson Park. Any additional buildings would detract from that original vision. Additionally, the proposed location of the Obama Presidential Center specifically detracts from the designers' intended vistas from the Midway to Lake Michigan and detracts from recent federal efforts to ensure climate-protecting green space and blue space enhancement strategies in Jackson Park.

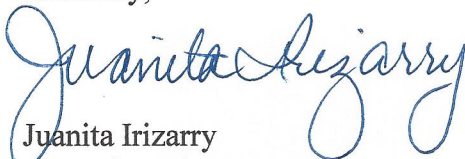
Similarly, as The Cultural Landscape Foundation points out, the existing layout of the roads in Jackson Park was very intentional. The designers sought to provide the ability for movement throughout the park for users to survey the various landscapes throughout the park. While Olmsted and Vaux certainly could not have imagined the amount of vehicle traffic that now traverses the park, and while Friends of the Parks can appreciate the concept of minimizing concrete and traffic throughout the park, it cannot be automatically assumed that removing roads through Jackson Park honors the spirit of Olmsted and Vaux's vision. In this context, any options that are considered must be reviewed through

a lens of having an adverse affect on the intentions laid out by the designers of this architecturally significant park.

With various proposals for Jackson Park and South Shore Cultural Center “revitalization” coming to light in conjunction with the timing of planning for the Obama Presidential Center in Jackson Park, Friends of the Parks has strongly spoken out for the need for comprehensive park planning which takes into consideration community views and ensures an integrated approach in the spirit of Olmsted’s vision that every part be planned subordinate to and dependent on every other part. Since then, the Obama Presidential Center has surprised the community with a proposal to take over land on the Midway, as well, for a parking garage. Because the local process has not been fully comprehensive and because the public does not have clarity on how the proposed golf course improvement, expansion, and linking of the current two, separate golf courses in Jackson Park and South Shore Cultural Center will relate to OPC buildings and road closures and the timing of this Section 106/NEPA review process, Friends of the Parks asks that the Area of Potential Effects (APE) be expanded to include the entire South Park System, including the Midway Plaisance and Washington Park, as well as the South Shore Cultural Center grounds.

We thank you for the opportunity to speak into this process and look forward to continuing dialogue about the protection of Jackson Park and surrounding parks in light of the many proposals on the table to modify them.

Sincerely,



Juanita Irizarry
Executive Director