

Nichols Park Advisory Council
Concerns Regarding Proposed Changes to Jackson Park, October 17, 2017

Whereas we are delighted that the proposed Obama Presidential Center will be located on Chicago's south side, there are aspects of the existing plans which we find unacceptable and of grave concern to all those who treasure our historical Jackson Park, as follows:

I. Objections to the proposed Tiger Woods Golf Course:

- A. The proposed Tiger Woods Golf Course calls for an expansion of the portion of Jackson Park now solely dedicated to golf, significantly increasing the area dedicated to this single purpose.
- B. The proposed golf course expansion will displace basketball courts, tennis courts, and fields used for baseball, softball, soccer and football. Many of these areas can now be used for other activities as well. Once these areas are dedicated to the golf course, they cease to be available for multiple purposes and instead will be devoted to a single purpose - golf. Relocating the other activity areas will result in the loss of additional trees and of non-dedicated parkland.
- C. The proposed golf course will result in the loss of a sizeable portion of the South Shore Nature Sanctuary, currently a refuge for a wide diversity of wildlife, as well as a respite for human beings.
- D. We believe any redevelopment of the golf courses at Jackson Park should be confined within the current footprint for golf.
- E. The Chicago Park District has failed to identify the funding sources for the improvements needed for the proposed Tiger Woods Golf Course, even though it is promoting this project as a way to resolve long deferred maintenance issues. If the Chicago Park District and the City of Chicago lack funding for current maintenance, where will they find the funding for the proposed improvements and ongoing maintenance? Will funding this project result in more deferred maintenance for other parks?

II. Objections to the proposed Obama Presidential Center (OPC) parking structure on the east end of the Midway Plaisance, between the Metra tracks and Stony Island Avenue:

- A. The proposed parking structure will be 20 feet above grade. While it will be landscaped, in reality a landscaped aboveground parking structure is a parking structure, not a park.
- B. The proposed parking structure will occupy an additional 4 acres (174,240 s.f.) of existing parkland. The sacrifice of parkland for a parking structure is not a green solution.
- C. The proposed parking structure is being promoted as offering a way for visitors to "interact with the surrounding neighborhood". As proposed, the "interaction" would actually be a walk of less than one block to Stony Island Avenue, where there is no nearby surrounding neighborhood.
- D. Residents who live on Stony Island, 59th and 60th Streets currently park along both sides of 59th, 60th, and the Midway. Removing any existing parking to create entrances and exits from the parking structure would adversely impact all of those residents.
- E. The proposed parking structure could be underground, beneath the OPC, which would enhance OPC visitor convenience and eliminate the visual impact of a 20' high embankment between 59th and 60th Streets.
- F. Alternatively, the proposed parking structure could be located in an area where OPC visitors could actually interact with the surrounding neighborhood, such as 63rd Street, which might lead to economic development in an area which needs it.

III. Objections to the proposed closure of Cornell and Marquette Drives, and the expansion of Lake Shore Drive, Hayes Drive, and Stony Island Avenue:

- A. The OPC, the City of Chicago, and the Chicago Park District all seem to support the closing of Cornell Drive. According to Chicago Department of Transportation estimates, this will increase daily traffic on Stony Island from 13,800 vehicles per day to 19,600 vehicles per day, an increase of over 40%. It is poor planning to require OPC visitors, or current residents, to endure this additional traffic congestion.
- B. Removing access to Cornell Drive from the Midway Plaisance will force northbound traffic onto 56th and 57th streets in order to access Lake Shore Drive. Not only will increased traffic on 56th Street endanger children at the Bret Harte School, but also eastbound 56th Street is closed to traffic during school opening and closing hours (which include the morning rush hour).
- C. Widening both LSD and Stony Island to attempt to accommodate traffic rerouted from Cornell drive will cause the removal of many more existing mature trees (than will be removed for the proposed OPC construction) on both the east and west sides of the existing park. This is not a green solution.
- D. Cornell Drive currently provides a buffer between Wooded Island (officially known as the Paul Douglas Nature Sanctuary) and pedestrians. The Wooded Island is not supposed to be easily accessible to people - it is a wildlife sanctuary, intended to be undisturbed as much as possible by humans. Removing Cornell Drive will provide easy access for people along the entire western edge of the lagoon, making that shoreline inhospitable to nesting waterfowl and other wildlife, and endangering the entire ecosystem of the Nature Sanctuary.
- E. The cost(s) for rearranging traffic flow on Lake Shore Drive, Stony Island, Cornell Drive, the Midway, Hayes Drive, the proposed underpasses, and all the intersections in between have not been made public. Who will pay for this work? Taxpayers should not.
- F. Removal of parking along Hayes Drive will obliterate the last remaining free parking east of Stony Island for all visitors to Jackson Park, from the Museum of Science and Industry south to the South Shore Cultural Center.
- G. We urge you to make public the exact number of mature (12" caliper) trees which will be removed for the proposed golf course redevelopment, the OPC construction, the proposed parking garage, and the reconfiguration of Lake Shore Drive, Hayes Drive, and Stony Island Avenue.

In summary, while we applaud the idea that the remodeling of Jackson Park is apparently intended to stimulate increased economic development of this south side area of the city, we question whether these plans, as currently presented, will do more harm to this historic park than they will do to actually spur economic development in the area(s) south and west of Jackson Park which are in serious need. We respectfully repeat that parks are not vacant land awaiting development; they are instead valuable assets for rejuvenation of the human spirit. Chicago's open, free, and accessible lakefront is unique and unequaled anywhere in the United States, despite the fact that Chicago ranks 92nd out of 100 major U.S. cities in the amount of open space per 1,000 population. If these proposed changes to Jackson Park, as presented, are made, they are irreversible. We urge you to take more time to consider the consequences, seriously consider the objections, analyze the impacts, and then, hopefully, revise these proposed plans.

This statement was approved by the Nichols Park Advisory Council at our regular October 12, 2017 meeting.
Stephanie Franklin, President