

Jackson Park, South Shore Cultural Center Grounds & Midway Plaisance

Bounded by Lake Michigan, 56th, Stony Island and 71st, Chicago



Aerial Photo of Jackson Park, Women's Garden, Midway Plaisance, Lagoons and Wooded Island with Museum of Science & Industry © Steven Vance

Jackson Park, South Shore Cultural Center Grounds & Midway Plaisance

Address: Bounded by Lake Michigan, 56th, Stony Island and 71st, Chicago

Landscape Architects: Frederick Law Olmsted & Calvert Vaux , F.L. Olmsted & Co., Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot with additions by Alfred Caldwell and May McAdams (Jackson Park & Midway Plaisance)

Architects: Benjamin Marshall & Charles Fox, Thomas Hawkes (South Shore Cultural Center)

Date: circa 1870s to 1937

Style: Naturalistic

Neighborhood: Hyde Park, Woodlawn, South Shore



View of Museum of Science and Industry in Jackson Park from the Japanese Garden on Wooded Island © Eric Allix Rogers

OVERVIEW

Jackson Park, Midway Plaisance and the South Shore Cultural Center have been part of Preservation Chicago's Chicago 7 Most Endangered List for a fourth year in a row highlighting the threat to one of America's greatest public parks and boulevards, and one of Chicago's lakefront legacy parks and greenspaces.

Preservation Chicago welcomes the proposed Obama Presidential Center to Chicago's South Side, however, it should be relocated to an alternate nearby site. It should not be built on historic public parklands designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, Olmsted Brothers, and with additions by Alfred Caldwell, May McAdams and others of national and world recognition.

The Obama Presidential Center (OPC) has been highly contentious among neighborhood residents, citizens of Chicago and elsewhere across the nation because of concerns about gentrification, displacement, and its placement within a historic park belonging to the people of Chicago for more than 130 years. The chosen location is also a lakefront site and subject to ordinances designed to keep the shoreline protected from private development and unnecessary non-public structures—and understood by many citizens to be “forever open and free.” While this principal has been challenged periodically at Grant Park due to development pressure, its seldom been an issue beyond the downtown area. The idea of a “forever open and free” Chicago lakefront originated in 1836 with the establishment of Lake Park and was a revolutionary concept for a large American city of the 19th and early 20th century. The majority of Chicago's lakefront has historically been and continues to be open to the public and free of private development. These values and regulations are challenged every so often due to political pressure and speculation. The “forever open and free” concept is once again challenged by elected officials who desire to allow private development in the city's parks, lakefront and greenspaces when they should be representing the voice of the people and protect public assets for the public good.

The OPC campus is proposed to be sited on 19.5 acres of Jackson Park near the Midway Plaisance at 60th and



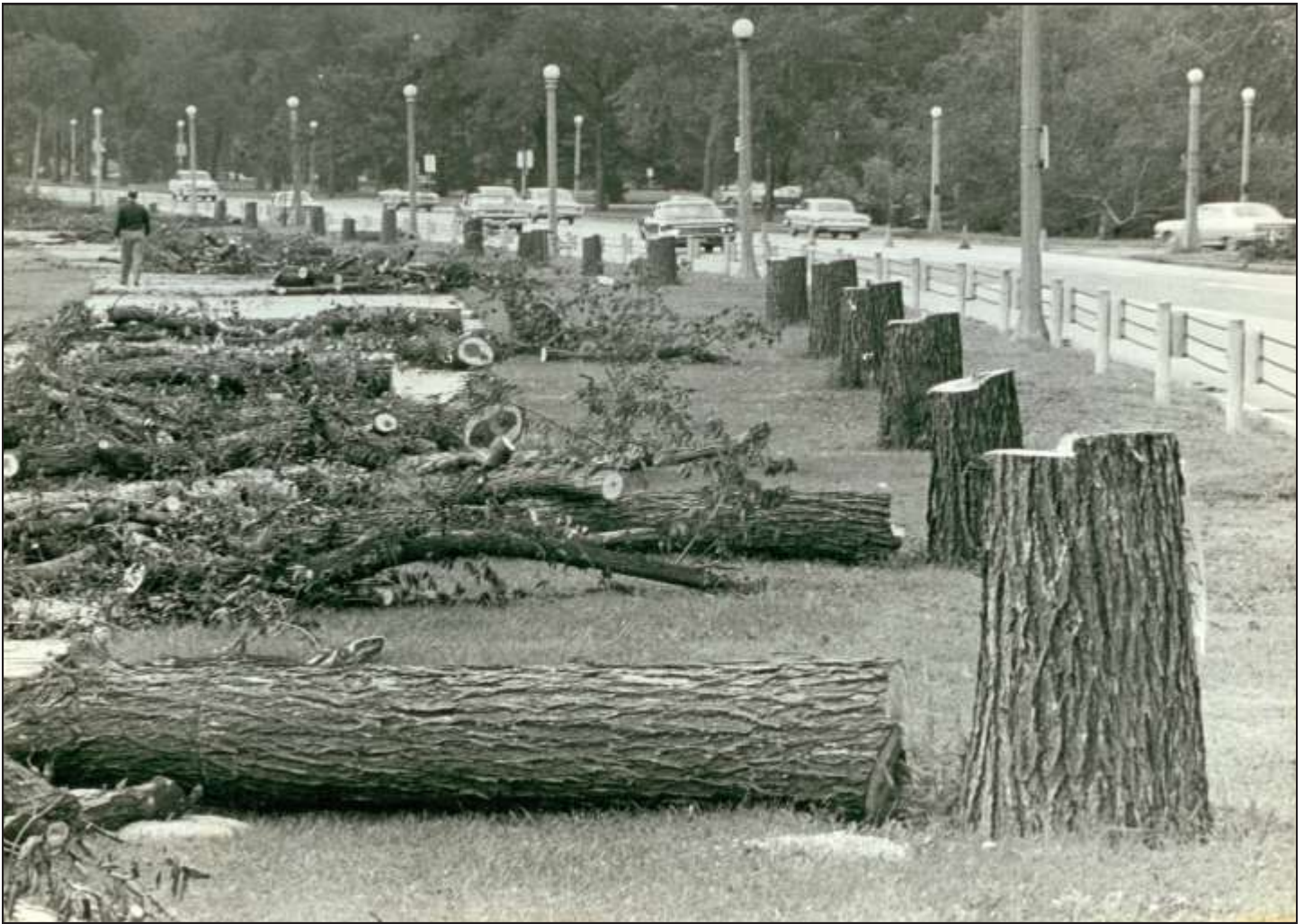
Proposed Obama Presidential Center in Jackson Park towering over the Museum of Science & Industry and lagoons © Obama Foundation

Stony Island Avenue and extending southward. The plans from the very beginning were fundamentally flawed, with the University of Chicago offering two public park sites to the Obama Foundation that they did not own, control or have any right to gift to a private entity. Former City of Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, and former Chief of Staff to President Obama, enthusiastically supported the use of Chicago lakefront parks as a potential site for a private development. A number of ordinances were pushed through the Chicago Council and Illinois Legislature with minimal public comment or scrutiny and imposed this proposed complex with its hundreds of millions of dollars of costs on the citizens of Chicago. The resulting momentum gained through these political maneuvers has created a myth of inevitability around the development. The City's expedited approval process for the proposed OPC plans was neither transparent nor without controversy. It was essentially a taking of public lands to allow private development on parklands that are considered sacred by the people of Chicago.

Efforts by the City and officials to support this proposed OPC in Jackson Park have resulted in spending countless taxpayer money – perhaps millions of dollars – in addition to City staff time and resources. This is all occurring when an abundance of nearby vacant land in Woodlawn, the Washington Park neighborhood, and other nearby communities remain idle.

Due to this historic park site being selected by the Obama Foundation for the nearly 20-acre OPC and its campus of buildings, this site is part of an on-going Federal Section 106 review process required by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. This is due to the park's significance and listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It is also subject to a review process through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and to the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery (UPARR) Act administered by the National Park Service. However, we are hopeful that those agencies will be true to their founding principles and not swayed by political pressures. However, some of these agencies have appointed representatives from the City of Chicago to lead and direct local public hearings and to write reports, which raises questions regarding the impartiality of the process.

Negative and adverse effects on Jackson Park by the OPC have been determined by the City and several agencies,



Despite citizen protests in September 1965 , hundreds of mature trees were removed from Jackson Park for the widening of Cornell Drive © Nancy Hays

yet no significant changes have been required to the proposed plan to address these issues. Ironically, the only material change to the proposed plan is that the height of the OPC tower has grown taller to 230 feet, effectively a 23-story office building. The City of Chicago and federal agencies appear resigned to the destruction of Jackson Park including the loss of hundreds of trees, important landscapes and historic viewsheds.

The adverse impact to Jackson Park will be further exacerbated by the drastic and insensitive proposed changes to South Shore Cultural Center where plans are underway to consolidate two historic golf courses into one new course. This plan proposes to cut hundreds of trees which will profoundly and adversely impact the historic landscapes of two important parks including a lakefront nature sanctuary.

Additionally, there is on-going legal action by Protect Our Parks, Inc. (POP) before the U.S. District Court of the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, after a prior ruling in favor of the City of Chicago. This lawsuit or other potential lawsuits could delay the construction of the OPC in Jackson Park for many more years. Preservation Chicago continues to advocate and encourage the Obama Foundation to relocate OPC to another nearby location on private land. If a privately-owned site had been selected originally, the OPC would be open today.

The City of Chicago has spent vast resources in an effort to locate this proposed center and campus of buildings into a historic Olmsted park and lakefront land where it does not belong. This proposed complex is contrary to Lakefront Ordinances and the public good, acknowledging for this site what has been upheld by Chicago for more than 150 years — that the lakefront should be “public ground. A common to remain forever open, clear and free of any buildings or other obstructions whatever,” with access to all.

In addition, hundreds of millions of dollars of public money will be spent to rebuild roads in and around Jackson



View of Lake Michigan shoreline from the South Shore Cultural Center grounds © Eric Allix Rogers

Park to accommodate the OPC's new and radically different use. South Lake Shore Drive is proposed to be widened and brought up to contemporary highway standards which will destroy its current boulevard characteristics. Tragically Cornell Drive and portions of Hayes Drive, both historic Olmsted-designed boulevard carriage-ways, will be eliminated from Jackson Park. Stony Island Avenue is also proposed to be widened, and this land is to be essentially commandeered from Jackson Park along with a portion of newly restored prairie and countless trees — some old growth trees — lost to these proposed ill-conceived plans. Jackson Park still hasn't fully recovered from the destructive road widening projects in and around the park in the 1960s. The clear-cutting of mature trees to widen Cornell Drive and Lake Shore Drive in the 1960s should not be repeated to accommodate additional lanes of pavement on Stony Island Avenue and South Lake Shore Drive.

This proposed presidential center to be situated on public lands has also absorbed thousands of hours of City staff time over the past few years, as well as preparation of thousands of pages of documents required for the Federal Section 106-related hearings and U.S. District Court proceedings. Had the University of Chicago and the Obama Foundation chosen a site that was not historically significant, not on the National Register of Historic Places, and not on public lakefront lands, the time investment would have been significantly reduced. If the OPC were proposed for nearby private lands, the complex would have most likely already been under construction and completed and likely with significantly less investment of public resources. The City of Chicago and the University of Chicago own significant amounts of land at alternative site locations, and these viable sites should be further explored.

Recent rising water levels of Lake Michigan have led to the destruction of some lakefront trails and pathways, seawalls and revetments. The Chicago lakefront parks serve as a buffer zone and at times wetlands and partially submerged land between beautiful Lake Michigan and the City's built environment beyond. Even Frederick Law Olmsted and the South Park Commissioners in the 1870s recognized the marshy wetlands where Jackson Park was located, embraced these conditions and designed accordingly. These challenging marshland conditions resulted in Washington Park and the Midway being completed first. It was only later, and with additional funds, that Jackson Park's partially submerged wetlands were converted to a park. To this day, Jackson Park has a high-water table and its tremendous landscape is lined with many lagoons, harbors and inlets, all bordering expansive Lake Michigan.



Fredrick Law Olmsted's 1895 Revised General Plan for Jackson Park Map with red outlines indicating locations of World's Fair Buildings including the Museum of Science and Industry building. Courtesy Digitalcollections.nypl.org

To protect the built environment of Chicago against a changing climate and rising Lake Michigan water levels, our legacy lakefront parks and greenspaces must be protected as a buffer-zone. In locations where parkland does not exist, or is minimal, such as at South Shore on the South Side and Rogers Park and Edgewater on the North Side, we see frequent flooding and severe beach erosion, and in some cases beaches have been completely washed away.

These extreme weather conditions will likely continue to impact buildings, roadways and lakefront lands. Lakefront parks will continue to provide a important buffer between Lake Michigan and the built-environment which allow for a flood plain or overflow lands if necessary, for water retention in the future. The lagoons, harbors and semi-marshlands already provide this function in Jackson Park and the Chicago Lakefront. The construction of a large 20-acre campus of buildings, will also adversely impact and perhaps further exacerbate water management and retention issues in the parks, with their prominent wetlands and wildlife sanctuaries.

Legacy lakefront parks and greenspaces serve as our collective “green lungs.” It is also important to remember and protect “the beauties of nature for its restorative health, stress relieving help” and this will be adversely and negatively affected, with the proposed impact of the OPC. In every way, Jackson Park is an inappropriate site for the Obama Presidential Center development and should not be forced onto these lands and into this public park.

HISTORY

Chicago would not be the city we know and love without its expansive park system and its celebrated lakefront lined with public open space, beaches, parks, harbors and public access. This extensive network of parks, green spaces and lakefront lands should not be compromised in any way by anyone or anything which would cause irreparable harm to these parks, landscapes and features so powerfully associated with the City of Chicago. After all, the city’s motto is “Urbs in Horto” which translates to “City in a Garden.”

Chicago 7: Jackson Park, South Shore Cultural Center & Midway Plaisance



View of the Woman's Building at the World's Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park © The World's Columbian Exposition; Portfolio of Views, C.D Arnold and H.D. Higinbotham, 1893



View of the Woman's Building at the World's Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park © Beautiful Scenes of the White City and the Fabulous Midway Plaisance, Farewell Edition, Laird & Lee Publishers, 1894

Jackson Park, Midway Plaisance and the South Shore Cultural Center are among the greatest historic and natural assets of Chicago's South Side. These parks converge at South Shore Drive at 67th Street, and also at Stony Island Avenue and the Midway Plaisance, where Jackson Park connects to Washington Park, another remarkable Chicago treasure, all designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux.

These many different and unique green spaces and parklands are woven into a single brilliant series of ideas by Frederick Law Olmsted and his firm to extend and connect the lakefront and its parks through the boulevard system. Tree-lined meadows, lagoons, islands and harbors are an integral part of the cityscape and provide a respite from the dense built environment and urban life. These magnificent parks allow public access to millions of people, both residents and visitors alike, to lush green landscapes situated among old-growth trees and gardens.

The historic significance of Jackson Park, Midway Plaisance and the South Shore Cultural Center are monumental and well known to most audiences, including national and international scholars of architectural landscape design, historic landscapes and cultural heritage. All three sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and certain features, structures and buildings of both park sites are designated Chicago Landmarks. These designated



Interior view of the Woman's Building Gallery of Honor at the World's Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park © The World's Columbian Exposition; Portfolio of Views, C.D Arnold and H.D. Higinbotham, 1893

Chicago Landmarks within the boundaries of the two parks include the Museum of Science and Industry (MSI) building, constructed as the Palace of Fine Arts in 1893, along with the Columbia/Darrow Bridge and the landscape features of the park surrounding the MSI building and bridge. The South Shore Cultural Center buildings, the Club Building, the Gatehouse, Stable, Pergola, and several outdoor terraces are also part of a separate Chicago Landmark designation.

The 500-acre Jackson Park was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, perhaps the most famous landscape designer of the 19th century and widely considered to be the father of American landscape architecture. Jackson Park was also the site of one of the most important events in Chicago's history and arguably one of the most important cultural events of the 19th century, the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Jackson Park is connected via the Midway to Washington Park and then to Chicago's Emerald Necklace of great parks and boulevards, forming one of the most magnificent networks of urban parkland in the country.

The proposed site of the Obama Presidential Center in Jackson Park will be located on the site and adjacent to Sophia Hayden's Woman's Building for the World's Columbian Exposition. This was the only building designed by a woman architect in 1893, among an assembled group of prominent male architects from across the nation. It was extraordinary that Ms. Hayden was selected to design such a building to celebrate the accomplishments of women, and this was a very forward idea on the world stage. It was Ms. Hayden's only building, but it was a massive and impressive structure. During a period when architecture was dominated by men, it was almost unimaginable at the time for a woman to design such an important building for a World's Fair.

The proposed Obama Presidential Center site also includes the Woman's Garden, designed in 1937 by the Chicago Park District's first female landscape architect May McAdams, another remarkable achievement. It's a beautiful, mature garden, and it is proposed to be destroyed—bulldozed for a construction staging ground for the Obama Presidential Center. However, the University of Chicago-owned asphalt parking lot located directly across the street on Stony Island Avenue at 60th Street, would seem to be an ideal alternate construction staging ground. The Obama Foundation then plans to build a new garden and incorporate it into a water management system. The destruction



View of the Central Entrance of the Woman's Building at the World's Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park. The architect of the Woman's Building was Sophia G. Hayden of Boston. The bas-relief pediment was designed and modeled by Alice Rideout of San Francisco. © Beautiful Scenes of the White City and the Fabulous Midway Plaisance, Farewell Edition, Laird & Lee Publishers, 1894



Jackson Park Woman's Garden designed in 1937 by pioneering female landscape architect May McAdams © Eric Allix Rogers

of a historic landscape designed by a pioneering female landscape architect dedicated to women would be yet another tragic loss.

Other historic temporary World's Columbian Exposition structures once located on the site of the proposed OPC, include the Children's Building, the massive Horticulture Building and a number of other smaller structures. To explore the site's archeological value, seven small sample holes were drilled across the 20-acre site. These small exploratory holes revealed over 7,000 items and artifacts from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition and generated international interest. Such a remarkable discovery should have ended the consideration of this site for the proposed development or required proper archeological excavations of the entire 20-acre site. Instead, the report which was prepared on behalf of the Obama Foundation dismissed the discoveries as routine and provided a green light for the construction to proceed without any additional exploration or protections.

Other nearby sites should be considered for this proposed private development that will not disturb this archeological site or the seminal landscapes of a legacy lakefront park. Jackson Park was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and others of great note, with an amazing history, known and published around the world. Jackson Park is one of the great park landscapes of the United States and belonging to the people of Chicago for more than 130 years. Its destruction would likely be another huge embarrassment to the City of Chicago, for decades to come, much in the same vein as the many Landmark buildings, Landmark-eligible structures, and public assets that we have allowed to be destroyed.

The Mediterranean Revival-style South Shore Cultural Center, situated at 71st Street and the lakefront, was originally designed as the South Shore Country Club by the notable Chicago architectural firm of Marshall & Fox and landscape designer Thomas Hawkes. It is one of the most grand-scaled and recognizable landmarks on



Aerial view of South Shore Cultural Center and Grounds, formerly the South Shore Country Club © Eric Allix Rogers

Chicago's South Side. More recently, it was the site of Barack and Michelle Obama's wedding reception.

The transformation in the 1970s of the site and buildings from an exclusive private club to a public park and golf course is a major community preservation success story. In 1975, South Shore, Hyde Park and Woodlawn neighborhood residents and activists famously rescued the former private South Shore Country Club from demolition. The Chicago Park District and City of Chicago had the foresight to purchase the grounds from the failing country club, but they had planned to demolish and clear the club and ancillary buildings. After a lengthy community preservation advocacy effort and under intense community pressure, the Chicago Park District relented to broad public outcry and decided not to demolish the historic buildings and in time renovated and restored the buildings. Ultimately the Chicago Park District supported the Chicago Landmark designation of most of the former country club structures and reversed a previous course of action that would have been as disastrous and heavy-handed as current plans for both Jackson Park and the South Shore Cultural Center landscapes.

The creation of the South Shore Cultural Center as a public facility open to all visitors represents a victory for diversity and inclusion over the South Shore Country Club's legacy of exclusion.

In 2017, a handful of local community groups came forward to advocate for changes to the proposed development plans for both the Obama Presidential Center and the proposed golf course reconfiguration. The number of organizations has grown exponentially, expanding well beyond the local stakeholders to include advocates from around the city and the nation including The Cultural Landscape Foundation and The National Association for Olmsted Parks. To advance the advocacy effort, Preservation Chicago has partnered with Openlands, Friends of the Park, and Landmarks Illinois, along with local community organizations including Jackson Park Watch, Save the Midway, Midway Plaisance Advisory Council, Coalition to Save Jackson Park, Blacks in Green, and The Hyde Park Historical Society.



Tree cut and removal on the Lakefront in Hyde Park for the widening of South Lake Shore Drive in September 1965 © Nancy Hays

THREAT

Jackson Park and the South Shore Cultural Center are intertwined in a host of new proposals which endanger the Olmsted-designed Jackson Park and the historic South Shore Cultural Center's grounds and nature sanctuary. The proposed 20-acre Obama Presidential Center in Jackson Park and the proposed redesign and merging of two historic century-old public golf courses in both parks into one PGA-grade facility will significantly and adversely impact the historic features and the overall design, quality, appearance and spirit of these world-renowned parks.

The proposed OPC's core of buildings is comprised of three structures. The main building stands about 235-feet tall – the height of a 20-story office building – the tallest structure proposed for any Chicago park by more than 150 feet. The next tallest structure in Jackson Park is the Museum of Science and Industry. The two other proposed OPC buildings stand two-stories in height. A partially above-grade parking garage and a fieldhouse are also included in the plans and located to the south of the three-building complex, all designed by Tod Williams and Billie Tsien.

It is almost inconceivable that our elected officials would further consider giving away lakefront lands and parklands to a private developer no matter how popular or accomplished the individual or organization may be. This action is leading to a privatization of Chicago Park District land, and that needs to come to a halt. Such ideas are very much in the same vein as the privatization of the failed Chicago parking meter lease deal which has strapped the City of Chicago of revenue and caused a massive burden on Chicagoans for a period of 99 years.

Despite the common assumption, this development is not a presidential library. The OPC will be a private museum, center and office building headquarters for the Obama Foundation, hosting both public and private events situated on public lands and owned by the City but operated by the Obama Foundation. The Obama Foundation will charge entry and parking fees for operations of its facility. The 20-acres of public land will be leased for 99 years to the OPC for \$10 or 10 cents per year.



Midway Plaisance looking to the West. The greenspace in the foreground is being proposed by the OPC as replacement parkland © Steven Vance

Preservation Chicago and other advocacy groups remain concerned about the level of influence by privately held organizations in the management of public parkland, including the Obama Foundation, the Chicago Parks Golf Alliance, Project 120, and Smith Group JJR. As non-profits and private companies, they serve their respective boards of directors and owners and have their own priorities and objectives which may not align with those of our public and governmental agencies. These private organizations do not directly serve the public and have no obligation to include the public in the planning process. A central challenge is that the control of public lands is being relinquished to private entities.

Preservation Chicago joined a wide consortium of advocacy groups, neighborhood organizations and community leaders in calling for a transparent, comprehensive and thoughtful planning process from the Obama Foundation, City of Chicago, Chicago Park District, governmental agencies, Chicago Parks Golf Alliance and Project 120. The Obama Foundation and governmental agencies have hosted a series of public and consulting party/stakeholder meetings that have allowed public comments to be provided to the design team. However, public comments have largely been ignored and few material changes to the plans have occurred. Multiple rounds of community input and design updates have shown key constituent requests largely dismissed to accommodate the programmatic priorities of the Obama Foundation and Chicago Parks Golf Alliance, casting doubt on the good faith and transparency of the public process.

The community efforts, led by the Midway Plaisance Advisory Council and Save the Midway, were successful in redirecting the planned multi-story parking garage on the Midway Plaisance to another location. Without rigorous oversight and openness to change, the protection of historic landscapes and structures is at risk of being significantly compromised.

Additional threats to Jackson Park include the removal of the Olmsted-designed Cornell Drive in order to privatize the western shore of the Jackson Park lagoon entirely within the grounds of the privately-run museum complex. The loss of all six lanes of roadway on Cornell Drive would require a significant increase in lanes on South Lake Shore Drive and Stony Island Avenue to accommodate the lost road capacity. The proposed high-speed, widened versions of South Lake Shore Drive and Stony Island Avenue will be unpleasant for motorists and much less pedestrian friendly. Additionally, a wider roadway will create an asphalt barrier between Jackson Park and nearby Woodlawn residents. The cost to taxpayers for this extensive roadwork is estimated at \$175 million.



Midway Plaisance looking east towards the University of Chicago, Jackson Park, and the site of the proposed 23-story OPC tower © Eric Allix Rogers

Preservation Chicago supports restoring the original Olmsted-designed Cornell Drive in Jackson Park to its pre-1960s, narrower-proportioned, winding carriage-way character. This could include two slower-speed driving lanes flanked by wide, protected bike lanes and dedicated jogging trails. The complete elimination of Cornell Drive will make experiencing Jackson Park by car nearly impossible for daily commuters and Sunday pleasure drivers. It will also make Jackson Park much less accessible for the elderly and individuals with disabilities.

The proposed widening of South Lake Shore Drive will require the removal of hundreds of trees and mature landscapes and adversely impact Jackson Park. The proposed widening of South Lake Shore Drive will also adversely impact the lakefront and diminish access to Lake Michigan, the harbors, 57th Street Beach and 63rd Street Beach. This is reminiscent of the massive tree cuts and community protests of the 1960s to expand and widen Cornell Drive and South Lake Shore Drive. Even the Obama Foundation and the City of Chicago recognize these past missteps, yet they are pushing towards repeating these mistakes.

The original plan presented to the people of Chicago was for a *presidential library*. Presidential libraries are federally funded research institutions and archives which conform to specific rules and regulations set by Congress. Congressionally mandated requirements for presidential libraries regulate acceptable uses and limit construction and operational costs. Financial requirements and obligations associated with funding presidential libraries are designed to protect taxpayers by preventing the construction of monumental structures with expensive long-term associated maintenance costs.

In May of 2017, the Obama Foundation suddenly shifted direction and chose to pursue the creation of a *presidential center*. What initially appeared as only a minor semantic refinement, in fact represented a massive change of direction. Presidential centers are private-entities with private funding sources. As private entities, they are not bound by and therefore exempt from the congressional limits and oversight for presidential libraries.

Every president since Herbert Hoover has had a presidential library and museum administered by the National



South Shore Nature Center on the South Shore Cultural Center Grounds © Eric Allix Rogers

Archives and Records Administration (NARA). These presidential libraries are the repository of all the official presidential records, papers and archives and include a research library for scholars and researchers. They also typically contain a museum for visitors and members of the public. They are largely federally funded institutions and managed by the federal government.

By shifting from a traditional presidential library to a private center, all of the rules, ideals and limitations set forth by Congress can be ignored. In the case of the Obama Presidential Center, the entire complex will be operated by a private nonprofit entity. The Obama Center will not include a research library and will not be a repository for any official presidential records. Where the presidential archives will eventually be housed remains an unanswered question.

The decision to decline federal funding has allowed a modest structure to morph into a massive, sprawling three building complex plus fieldhouse and underground parking garage. It will span across approximately 20-acres and is proposed to be anchored by a 235-foot tall tower, the equivalent of a 20-story office building. The decision to forgo federal funding has shifted this huge burden onto the citizens and taxpayers of the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois. While it is conceivable to consider locating a modest, presidential library on public lands, it is not reasonable to locate a massive private campus of buildings and structures on public lands.

In lieu of an official presidential library, a Chicago Public Library branch has been added to the Obama Presidential Center plans. This branch library will be much like the 79 existing branch library locations throughout Chicago's 77 community areas. It is our understanding that this branch library is completely unrelated to President Obama's presidential records, and it will be operated by the Chicago Public Library and supported by taxpayer revenue. The

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community is already well served by two branch libraries that are more conveniently located directly within the nearby residential neighborhoods. These historic branch libraries, including the Chicago Landmark Blackstone Library Branch by architect Solon S. Beman, would become redundant and could be at risk for consolidation and closure at some time in the future. The inclusion of a branch library appears to have been an attempt to obfuscate the decision to abandon the presidential library. The original idea was premised upon a presidential library, yet now something radically different is being proposed.

Additionally, several plans from the private for-profit design and planning contractors Smith Group JJR, also known as Project 120, have reappeared in some of the Chicago Park District's South Lakefront Framework Plans. These plans include a proposed Jackson Park visitor's center, a large-scale music pavilion and other structures, which will completely and unequivocally destroy and change the character and design of this world-renowned park. Without question, these proposed changes to Jackson Park's Olmsted-designed parklands will negatively alter and adversely impact the landscape. These changes will destroy huge numbers of trees and gardens, interfere with migratory paths of wildlife and negatively impact broad viewsheds, both in and around the park.

These park projects are heavy-handed in design. If implemented, they could lead to the consideration of a de-listing of Jackson Park and perhaps the South Shore Cultural Center from the National Register of Historic Places. This would be much like what occurred at Soldier Field, another Chicago Park District re-visioning project with the City of Chicago. So many adverse modifications were made to Soldier Field in 2002-2003 that it was removed from the National Register. If this same impact and loss occurred at Jackson Park and/or the South Shore Cultural Center, it would be a significant loss to the cultural heritage of the City of Chicago.

Jackson Park is a sacred space and its landscapes should be protected in perpetuity as an asset to the citizens of Chicago. This history and character should not be modified and manipulated over the decades until all that is remains is a shell of what it once was. We should consider for the OPC a location on underutilized land that does not negatively harm our cherished landscapes and public parks. Some of our greatest downtown cultural institutions are located on land that was once railway and freight yards.

Beyond minor and incremental changes to the plans, specific threats to the historic park landscapes remain. According to the Obama Foundation, more than 300 trees (many of which are old-growth) would be clear-cut on the narrowly defined footprint of the Center buildings, and a major regrading of the site would be undertaken for the construction of the OPC. The number of trees removed will be significantly higher if all of the proposed road changes to Cornell Drive, Lake Shore Drive and Stony Island Avenue are implemented. An additional 2,000 trees would be clear cut and major regrading undertaken for the new fairways of an expanded golf course.

On September 20, 2018, the Chicago City Council passed an ordinance that approved the 99-year lease of 19.3 acres in Jackson Park for a total of \$10. Jackson Park Watch co-founder Margaret Schmid said, "The idea of leasing invaluable, irreplaceable public parkland to a private entity for \$10 for 99 years is astounding in this era when public lands and natural resources are under attack in so many places. Besides, Chicago's finances are extremely precarious." (Sweet, Chicago Sun-Times, 9/18/18)

As part of this lease deal, the City agreed to reimburse the Obama Foundation for environmental testing of the development site. These testing costs were capped at \$75,000. However, in the final language of the approved Ordinance, the taxpayers of the City of Chicago and State of Illinois are now fully responsible and liable for *all* costs related to any environmental remediation required or resulting from the construction of the OPC in Jackson Park. This language includes no cap for the total cost. Estimated remediation costs are not yet available, but it can be expected that the final remediation costs for this blank check will be substantial.

The City of Chicago and State of Illinois have also agreed to cover the cost of \$175 million in discretionary road changes in Jackson Park. The oft-repeated argument is that the ultimate cost burden will be borne by taxpayers – both state and federal. Federal funds for road improvements are limited, and those resources should be awarded first to desperately needed roadwork and crumbling infrastructure elsewhere in Chicago.

While Preservation Chicago is not a party to the on-going lawsuits and future litigation by Protect Our Parks, we submitted an Amicus Brief along with the community-based organization Jackson Park Watch. The Brief clarified that most of Chicago's institutions in the parks were built upon the footprint of former buildings and institutions within the parks, had reused or repurposed existing historic structures, or were constructed buildings on lands used for other purposes (e.g. railway yards). The parks have grown around these institutions over time. This is an



South Shore Nature Center on the South Shore Cultural Center Grounds © Eric Allix Rogers

important precedent as no Chicago parklands have ever been given to a new campus of buildings — contrary to assertions by the City of Chicago and Chicago Park District.

The Art Institute of Chicago, by architects Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge of 1893, was constructed on the former site of the Interstate Industrial Exhibition Building by W.W. Boyington at the same location from 1873-1892. The Museum of Contemporary Art, designed by German Architect Josef Paul Kleihues, was constructed on the site of the old Chicago Avenue Armory which was designed by architects Holabird & Roche. The Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, designed by Ralph Johnson of Perkins & Will, was built on the site of the old Lincoln Park/North Shops buildings.

The Museum of Science and Industry is housed in the former Palace of Fine Arts building from the Columbian Exposition or Chicago World's Fair of 1893 in Jackson Park. It is the only large-scale building of great magnitude in Jackson Park. Olmsted also redesigned Jackson Park around this structure following the World's Fair, so this building has been part of the landscape of Jackson Park for 127 years.

The DuSable Museum of African American History is housed in the former South Park Commissioners Building in Washington Park, designed by Daniel Burnham and his firm D. H. Burnham & Company. The DuSable Museum has continued to expand its facilities over time near its site, including a recent renovation and restoration of the former Washington Park Stables Building by architects Burnham & Root.

The National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture is housed in the restored and repurposed former Humboldt Park Horse Stables in historic Humboldt Park, designed by architects Fromman & Jebsen in 1895. The National Museum of Mexican Art reused and reconfigured former buildings in Harrison Park in Pilsen for this important institution.

The Field Museum of Natural History, the John G. Shedd Aquarium and the Adler Planetarium were largely built upon former railway lands, which had been part of on-going landfills over time. Burnham Park and Grant Park grew and extended around these institutions following their construction. Finally, the Chicago History Museum, originally called the Chicago Historical Society, was built upon a corner of the city's old public cemetery at a



South Shore Cultural Center, formerly the South Shore Country Club © Eric Allix Rogers

commercial corner of Lincoln Park near Clark Street and North Avenue. This section of what was to become Lincoln Park which still includes the mausoleum of Ira Couch and the grave of David Kennison, said to be the last survivor of the Boston Tea Party.

Preservation Chicago is also concerned about the redesign and co-joining of the historic Jackson Park Golf Course (18 holes), the oldest course west of the Alleghany Mountains, and that of the nearby South Shore Cultural Center (9 holes). This reconstituting will substantially impact the historic landscape, some features designed by architect Alfred Caldwell and Olmsted & Vaux, and remove and cut several thousand old-growth trees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Preservation Chicago supports the Obama Presidential Center being constructed on Chicago's South Side. However, it should not be located in historic Jackson Park. The Obama Foundation's plans for a site west of Washington Park on private land would be an excellent alternative location for the OPC. The University of Chicago, the Chicago Transit Authority, and the City of Chicago have been assembling vacant lots adjacent to Washington Park and this location is targeted for redevelopment. The Washington Park site has incredible access to public transportation and is adjacent to the Garfield Boulevard/55th Street Green Line CTA "L" station. Locating the development across the street from Washington Park would allow the OPC to more easily accomplish President Obama's articulated vision for the Center. If the OPC were to be located at this site, it would prove to be an extraordinary asset to the community and the City of Chicago.

The City of Chicago and the Chicago Park District need to develop plans that reflect the full range of stakeholders in this process and balance the interests of their constituents with the interests of private developers. They should prioritize an open and transparent process in determining the future of our public lands and green spaces. In the process, they should protect the historic integrity of these nationally and locally significant landscapes, structures and buildings so they may remain accessible assets for the people of the South Side, Chicago and the world for generations to come.

To help restore the area, the City of Chicago and the Chicago Park District should consider narrowing the Olmsted-designed historic parkways of Cornell and Hayes Drives instead of closing and removing them completely, and they



Daniel Burnham designed Jackson Park Comfort Station on South Lake Shore Drive near 67th Street in extreme disrepair © Eric Allix Rogers

should retain South Lake Shore Drive with its current proportions and winding lakefront boulevard characteristics. This would render unnecessary the proposed widening of the other roadways and likely save hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars.

Preservation Chicago reaffirms its commitment to providing a constructive, preservation-oriented voice in this large and complex conversation. As a consulting party in the federally mandated Section 106 review process, Preservation Chicago will continue to strongly advocate for the importance of protecting historic features, including the world-renowned Olmsted landscapes. We continue to work to ensure that any construction in the historic parks will be conducted with sensitivity to historic features, historic structures and historic landscapes. This includes archaeologically important sites including the foundations and remnants of the Women's Building designed by Sophia Hayden, the only female architect who designed a building for the Exposition; the Children's Building; and other important structures and features from the World Columbian Exposition in 1893, likely hidden below the soil line. Also, this proposed construction would impact the Woman's Garden, also known as the Perennial Garden in Jackson Park, designed by May McAdams in 1937, a noted female landscape architect.

There is significant Chicago history buried underground at Jackson Park. Archaeological explorations from seven borings on the site were shared at one of the Section 106 meetings. They revealed nearly 10,000 objects from the 1893 World's Columbia Exposition. Permanent concrete foundations for the World's Fair buildings are located below the soil line, and it is our opinion that these features should remain intact and should not be destroyed by heavy equipment. The Women's Garden on the site of Sophia Hayden's Woman's Building during the World's Columbia Exposition should not be disturbed.

We remain hopeful that the federal review process mandated by the National Historic Preservation Act will reinforce the importance of protecting the historic features of the park and avoid the adverse effects of new construction. If avoidance cannot be accomplished, then minimizing the impact of the proposed 20-story tower could be achieved by reducing it to two-stories and reducing the acreage of the campus. Additionally, we want to insure that the South Shore Cultural Center be included in the Section 106 process already underway or that a new Section 106 process be initiated specifically for the expansion and consolidation of the golf course project at both Jackson Park and the South Shore Cultural Center.

A formal survey of Jackson Park and South Shore Cultural Center trees — detailing type, age and caliper — should be conducted along with an assessment of which trees are planned to be cleared, including those in the nature center. The findings of these surveys should then be released to the public for comment and discussion before any work begins. Also, while an inventory of historic structures in Jackson Park has been assembled, there are a number

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of critical needs for historic buildings that require urgent and immediate repair to stabilize and return them to public use.

Preservation Chicago will continue to advocate for a written agreement from the Chicago Park District that some percentage of the many millions of dollars to be invested in these potential projects will be earmarked instead for the badly needed maintenance and rehabilitation of existing historic park structures. These include the South Shore Cultural Center main building and stables, as well Jackson Park improvements to the two Comfort Stations, the Iowa Building, the Columbia/Darrow Bridge, the Music Court Bridge, Hayes Drive Bridge, public paths and meadows, and ball fields.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Relocate the Obama Presidential Center to a nearby site outside of Jackson Park. Land just west of Washington Park provides great public transportation access and approximately 9 acres of land is already owned by the City of Chicago, the Chicago Transit Authority and the University of Chicago.
2. Repair and restore the existing Jackson Park Golf Course and the South Shore Cultural Center golf course, which currently serve the public well, but require investment to reverse long-deferred maintenance.
3. Move the proposed TGR Golf Course consolidation of Jackson Park and the South Shore Cultural Center southward to the vacant lakefront site of the former United States Steel - South Works factories in the South Chicago neighborhood. This would be an economic boost to the South Chicago and East Side neighborhoods of Chicago, and it would result in three separate golf courses for a major city like Chicago in this vicinity. A large 18-hole PGA golf course on the former U.S. Steel site would “green” this former industrial site and contaminated brownfield as part of on-going efforts to create publicly accessible parks and extend green space along the Chicago lakefront.
4. Landmark and repair Jackson Park’s existing historic buildings, structures, paths, meadows, and bridges (including the Columbia/Clarence Darrow Bridge—closed for almost a decade for safety reasons). These structures have suffered long-deferred maintenance. One of the historic structures, the modest one-story Comfort Station on South Shore Drive at 67th Street designed by architect Daniel Burnham, is in terrible disrepair and had a partial roof collapse. A second historic Comfort Station, known as the English Comfort Station, near the Museum of Science and Industry has no roof.
5. Narrow the Olmsted-designed roadways and parkways to their historic pre-1960s dimensions. The 1960s widening project was considered a misstep by the general public at that time and was part of numerous protests. A substantial number of trees were lost during that widening project. A narrowing of Cornell Drive, in lieu of total closure, could provide a correction of these missteps and help to again restore a tree-lined boulevard through the park. Everyone should be able to enjoy the pastoral setting of Jackson Park by various modes – walking, jogging, biking and driving.
6. Retain South Lake Shore Drive’s current proportions and winding lakefront boulevard characteristics, and retain the current proportions of Stony Island Avenue without unnecessary expansions. Restore original features to Olmsted’s design including landscapes, bridges, islands and lagoons, some of which have been infilled.
7. Consider a Chicago Landmark designation for the Olmsted & Vaux designed parks including the entirety of Jackson Park, Washington Park, and the Midway Plaisance.
8. Consider the Chicago Lakefront Park System in its entirety as a National Monument or National Park. This would be much like the recent honor further recognizing the Indiana Dunes as a National Park, or the Pullman Historic District of Chicago as a National Monument. This would protect our valuable public lakefront parks from further attempts at parceling them out to private developers and would provide additional resources for maintenance and rehabilitation. This could be an amazing partnership if implemented with the National Park Service, the Chicago Park District and the City of Chicago all sharing the stewardship of Chicago’s lakefront parks.
9. In solidarity with the residents of the area, Preservation Chicago calls on the Obama Foundation to enter into a binding Community Benefits Agreement to ensure that promises made are kept to avoid displacement and provide more jobs for local residents.