

“5950 S. Stony Island Ave. (Hyde Park, 5th Ward) – Proposed Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection ordinance application submitted by the Chicago Park District”.

Astrida Tantillo <astridatantillo@yahoo.com>

Tue 4/18/2023 2:46 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

Dear Chicago Plan Commission,

I live at 5844 S. Stony Island Avenue and would like to comment on the proposed work for 5950 S. Stony Island. 1) I request that the Section 106 MoA be amended in order to save the wetland area found in the eastern panel of the Midway. It is an area that supports birds and diversity of plant life and should be preserved. 2) I request that the City and the Park District identify an alternate location for the UPARR replacement. Replacing parkland with existing parkland does not increase the number of parks on the Southside--an area in need of additional park space.

Best wishes,

Astrida Orle Tantillo
5844 S. Stony Island, 12H
Chicago, IL. 60637

Midway East End Project

Elizabeth Sonnenschein <esonnen@uchicago.edu>

Sat 4/15/2023 9:38 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

Cc: Elizabeth Sonnenschein <esonnen@uchicago.edu>

[Warning: External email]

I understand there will be a hearing on April 20 regarding the Midway East End Playground Project.

May I offer a few comments. The following points support a **rejection** of the plan.

- The plans presented to the community by the Park District were creative. However, the spirit of the UPARR suggests the park should be located in an **underserved community**, not Hyde Park.
- **Funding** is not in hand. The CPD representatives had no solution, and were seemingly not concerned. Not to mention additional funds for **annual maintenance**.
- The **wetland designation** part of the plan is not clear.
- The CPD said there were no plans for any **restroom facilities**, not even a few **porto potties**. The CPD recommendation was to take your child to the Obama center (across Stony Island) or several blocks down the Midway to the ice skating facility. That is not a practical solution.

Thank you for your attention to my concerns.

Respectfully,
Beth Sonnenschein

Elizabeth (Beth) Sonnenschein
5825 South Dorchester Ave
Apt 13W
Chicago IL 60637
esonnen@uchicago.edu
(H) 773-288-2720
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5950 S. Stony Island Ave. (Hyde Park, 5th Ward) – Proposed Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection ordinance application submitted by the Chicago Park District

Brigid Maniates <brigidmania@gmail.com>

Tue 4/18/2023 11:37 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

To Whom it may Concern,

The Chicago Park District seeks to use the eastern end of the Midway Plaisance to satisfy the City's legal responsibility to replace recreational park space lost in Jackson Park as a result of the construction of the Obama Presidential Center and funded by the federal UPARR program. The proposed shifting of UPARR assets from an under-served area to Hyde Park promotes disinvestment in underserved communities in contravention of UPARR, and in contravention of Chicago Park District and City policies.

The application describes the proposed project as "a new playground, lawn, gardens, and associated utility work." The project description is misleading, because the "utility work" is not described. This hides the fact that the "utility work" consists of the draining of an existing wetland.

The eastern end of the Midway is designated as a wetland in an Environmental Assessment published on the City of Chicago's website. The Chicago Park District proposes to drain the wetland and install water-diverting piping to try to replicate the wetland's natural functions. The preservation and management of this wetland should be the foundation for any planning for the eastern end of the Midway.

Finally, in its application to the Chicago Plan Commission, the Chicago Park District identifies itself as the "owner" of the eastern end of the Midway. The eastern end of the Midway is owned by the City of Chicago, as part of the City's boulevard system, not by the Chicago Park District.

While the new playground is laudable, it could be better located. And in planning to artificially drain and then maintain wetland as a playing field, this plan works against proper flood control and waste water management.

Brigid Maniates
5450 S East View Park, Chicago, 60615

APPLICATION NO. 777: CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT APPLICATION TO THE CHICAGO PLAN COMMISSION CONCERNING THE EASTERN END OF THE MIDWAY

Clare Lipinski <ayosgalan@yahoo.com>

Tue 4/18/2023 10:33 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

The Chicago Park District is trying to use the existing park space at the eastern end of the Midway to satisfy the City's legal responsibility to replace recreational park space lost in Jackson Park for the construction of the Obama Presidential Center and funded by the federal UPARR (Urban Park and Recreation Recovery) program.

Even setting aside the frustration of using existing parkland to supposedly replace the parkland being destroyed - rather than creating new park space, which surely should be the goal - the Park District's plan has significant problems.

The proposed shifting of UPARR money from an under-served area (south Woodlawn) to Hyde Park promotes disinvestment in neglected communities, in direct contravention of UPARR's intent. It continues the longstanding practice of leaving lower income (and largely non-white) South Side communities to fend for themselves rather than using our resources to promote equity and improve standards of living for all of Chicago's residents. The program was intended to ease that inequity, and this proposal thoroughly undercuts that intention.

The selection of the eastern end of the Midway as the UPARR replacement site was a top-down designation dictated by the City of Chicago, without any consideration of park-related values. At no time did the public have an opportunity to present, review, or comment on any alternative sites. If we had, residents of the area could have told people (and we've been trying to tell people anyway) that the eastern end of the Midway is utterly unsuitable for an inclusive playground intended for people with various disabilities.

The land is surrounded on three sides by increasingly busy roads and on the fourth side by a railroad embankment carrying Amtrak, freight and Metra trains. It is far too easy for an inattentive moment to become dangerous due to the small area and the lack of barriers between traffic and children and adults with a wide range of needs and experiences. The car and train traffic creates a lot of noise, which would disturb anyone with audio sensitivities. To top it off, there is very limited parking, and there are no restrooms - key considerations for any caregivers who might otherwise wish to bring their charges to enjoy an all-inclusive playground.

So how can it be anything other than an attempt to check off a bureaucratic box? An all-inclusive playground would be amazing - but purely from a practical user perspective, the eastern end of the Midway is not the place to put it.

And that's even without considering the anti-environmental aspect of the plan.

The application describes the proposed project as "a new playground, lawn, gardens, and associated utility work." (Part Two, Section VI) The "utility work" is the draining of an existing wetland. And here we are, right before Earth Day.

The eastern end of the Midway is designated as a wetland in an Environmental Assessment published on the City of Chicago's website. The Chicago Park District proposes to drain the wetland and install water-diverting piping to try to replicate the wetland's natural functions. The preservation and management of this wetland should be the *foundation* for any planning for the eastern end of the Midway. It reads as a soggy field (I know; I played soccer over there as a kid) because it's not supposed to be lawn. Trying to persuade the area otherwise will be (and has been) a much more expensive and so far futile effort to fight what could be fostered into natural resource for education, engagement, habitat, and water management.

According to the Park District, the construction budget for the planned so-called improvements to the eastern end of the Midway is \$3,000,000. The Park District has acknowledged that it lacks \$2,700,000 of this funding.

And I object to being taxed to raise money for a bureaucratic check box that will not serve it's intended patrons well, will destroy an existing wetland, and will, in fact, result in a net loss of parkland to the detriment of the community the federal UPARR funds were supposed to help.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Clare Lipinski
Member of the Midway Plaisance Park Advisory Council

Chicago Plan Commission - Application 777

Dan Brown <djpbrown@yahoo.com>

Mon 4/17/2023 8:59 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

To: Chicago Plan Commission

Re: Chicago Park District application 777,

Property address: 5950 S. Stony Island Avenue

Date: April 17, 2023

Regarding the Chicago Park District application to use the eastern end of the Midway (at 5950 S Stony Island Ave.) to satisfy the City of Chicago's legal responsibility to replace recreational park space lost in Jackson Park from the construction of the Obama Center funded by the federal UPARR program – there are so many things wrong with this application and proposal.

I oppose the construction of this playground at the east end of the Midway for several reasons:

1. The intent and requirement of UPARR funding is the creation of new recreational park space, not to take existing open recreational space and pretend it opens up a new recreational area.
2. The east end of the Midway is not at all in an underserved community, as UPARR requires. The closest neighborhood (Hyde Park) is blessed with recreational park space on three sides, as well as numerous smaller parks within the neighborhood. The proposed location is nowhere near an underserved neighborhood.
3. The eastern end of the Midway would not be accessible to any nearby underserved communities, except by car, bus or train. And anyone driving to use the playground would have to park some distance away - there is no proposed parking adjacent to the project area, leaving children and their caregivers with only dangerous choices to avoid traffic.
4. The site of the proposed project is noisy, surrounded by high traffic roads and railroad tracks used by commuter, freight, and Amtrak trains. This is not a suitable site for children to play.
5. The site is a natural wetland – the Park District proposes to do 'utility work' as part of the development, obscuring the fact that they would install diverting pipes to drain the wetland. It is bad enough that the Obama Center construction resulted in the removal of several hundred mature, beneficial trees in Jackson Park – now this proposed project will destroy a natural wetland, at a time when preservation of such environments is more important than ever.

The funds for this project would be better spent in a neighborhood that is underserved, creating a recreational space within walking distance for the residents of the neighborhood, with less traffic, pollution and noise, and with safe, adjacent parking for those who choose to drive.

Please reject this project.

Respectfully,

Dan Brown

5535 S Dorchester

Chicago, IL 60637

5950 S. Stony Island (Hyde Park 5th Ward)--Proposed Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection ordinance application submitted by the Chicago Park District

Deborah Strauss <ddstrauss@gmail.com>

Tue 4/18/2023 1:11 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

Legality and Equity

The proposed shifting of UPARR assets from an under-served area to Hyde Park promotes disinvestment in underserved communities in contravention of UPARR, and in contravention of Chicago Park District and City policies.

The Park District's plan for an inaugural all-inclusive playground is a laudable goal. However, the eastern end of the Midway is unsuitable for a playground given that it is surrounded on three sides by increasingly busy roads and on the fourth side by a railroad embankment carrying Amtrak, freight and Metra trains.

Note that there are very few children who live within walking distance of the proposed park. What street parking there is used by Metra commuters who arrive early and remain parked all day. Consider crowding when the Obama Presidential Center opens.

Wetland

The eastern end of the Midway is designated as a wetland in an Environmental Assessment published on the City of Chicago's website. The Chicago Park District's proposal to drain the wetland and install water-diverting piping to try to replicate the wetland's natural functions. The preservation and management of this wetland should be the foundation for any planning for the eastern end of the Midway.

Planning for the Future

Accessibility advocates, park advocates, community residents, and public officials could come together to plan an extraordinary park with inclusive features in an area that is safely accessible and more in need of park space.

Deborah and Harvey Strauss

5720 S. Dorchester

Community Residents, Advocates for the Olmsted Vision

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Deborah Strauss

773-450-3153 (cell)

ddstrauss@gmail.com

5950 S. Stony Island Ave. (Hyde Park, 5th Ward) – Proposed Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection ordinance application submitted by the Chicago Park District

Debra Hammond <dhammond4761@gmail.com>

Tue 4/18/2023 8:43 AM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

I write now regarding the application of the Chicago Park District for approval of proposed changes to the eastern tip of the Midway Plaisance under the terms of the Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection Ordinance. The Park District proposal is a direct consequence of changes being made in Jackson Park to accommodate the construction of the Obama Presidential Library.

I ask the Plan Commission to deny Application 777 for the reasons outlined below.

It is important to understand the full context for the Park District proposed changes to the Midway Plaisance, something that is not provided in the application. The project is designed to fulfill the City's legal responsibility to replace recreational park space lost in adjacent Jackson Park by the construction of the Obama Presidential Center. The narrow focus on that singular purpose has resulted in an ill-conceived and flawed plan that should not be enacted.

The proposed project was developed without prior community discussion and constituted a done-deal from its inception. Contrary to City and Park District representations to the National Park Service and other federal agencies, the current proposal does not accurately reflect community opinion. Rather it is based on the presumption that this is a conveniently vacant space rather than an existing park space that needs regular maintenance but not "improvement."

The selection of the Midway site by the City without public discussion of other possible sites is a missed opportunity to expand the public open space available for nearby underserved neighborhoods in Woodlawn and especially in West Woodlawn. Instead, the City and Park District are proposing to provide additional resources to adjacent Hyde Park, which is relatively well-endowed with park space.

Beyond the illogical, top-down decision to use a portion of an existing park -- the Midway Plaisance -- as "replacement" parkland, the specific design proposal by the Park District is also flawed. The application proposes to reconfigure that portion of the Midway by draining an existing wetland and installing water-diverting piping to try to replicate its natural functions and by constructing an expansive, universally accessible playground as the central feature.

The Park District application to the Plan Commission does not acknowledge the existence on the site of a natural, half-acre wetland (as determined and defined by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) and instead presents the installation of a system of drainage pipes as a solution to a problem that does not exist.

Similarly, the proposal to install a large-scale universally inclusive play space on the site is also ill-conceived. The aim is admirable as it would be the City's first such facility. But the site is ill-suited for such a facility given that it is surrounded on three sides by increasingly busy roads and on the fourth side by a railroad embankment with four tracks carrying Amtrak, freight and Metra Electric trains. The proposed design (which is not presented as part of the application) lacks protective barriers between the traffic and intended park users, it lacks adequate parking and drop-off spaces close to the site, and it lacks adjacent restroom facilities.

With this context in mind, I note the following specific misstatements, errors, and omissions in the Park District's Application 777.

Part One, III, B:

The Chicago Park District is identified as owner of the site, whereas we understand that the City of Chicago (through the Department of Transportation) owns the boulevard system of which the Midway Plaisance is a key component, and that the Park District is delegated to manage the Midway Plaisance as a public park. This relationship is hinted at in the response to Part Four, I, 1, which indicates that the site "is already publicly owned or controlled by the Chicago Park District." The application should provide an accurate and complete statement of ownership and responsibilities.

Part One, IV:

The Brief Description omits a key aspect of the Park District proposal: the drainage and eradication of the existing natural wetland.

Part Two, II:

The Map of the Existing Site fails to identify an important special feature – the half-acre wetland at the eastern edge of the site.

Part Two, VI:

The Narrative description of the Proposed Development continues the omission of any reference to the existing wetland and its eradication, mentioning only "drainage improvements to the informal recreation lawn." The statement also omits a full explanation of the MOA that is the impetus for the proposed changes to the Midway, which provide necessary context,

Part Three, VI:

The response of "Not Applicable" to the issue of Off-street Parking and Loading is inadequate and incomplete. While the proposed development does not include any residential or commercial structures that would routinely require provisions for off-street parking and loading, it does include the construction of a "fully inclusive 21,000 square-foot playground," a very large installation aiming to attract a sizable number of users and particularly users with special needs. The location, across from the Obama Presidential Center (OPC) to open in 2025, is surrounded on three sides by increasingly busy vehicular traffic. The construction of the OPC and accompanying roadwork is removing some multitude of previously available street-level parking spaces from Jackson Park, leaving the paid parking garage of the OPC (and perhaps the Museum of Science and Industry) as the main close-by option. Given this, the lack of provision of any adjacent parking spaces and of safe drop-off zones for users of the proposed playground on the Midway tip is an incomprehensible omission that will limit access to and use of the playground and may create unsafe transit traffic situations.

Part Four, I, 2:

The application states that the proposed project "will replace these important amenities from Jackson Park," without any identification or explanation of "these important amenities." In fact, the proposal is a misguided attempt to fulfill the requirements of the City's obligation to the National Park Service to replace recreational spaces lost in Jackson Park to the OPC. The Midway site is an inadequate and inappropriate substitute for the lost space MORE

Part Four, I, 3:

The assertion that the proposed changes "will improve the water quality and ecological balance of Lake Michigan" is incorrect. The existing wetland already serves as a natural soil filtration system, and the Midway site, including the natural wetland, is not directly linked to the lagoons in Jackson Park that are connected to Lake Michigan.

If this is true, then the Chicago Park District is required to conduct a full environmental impact assessment for the removal of a wetland and its carbon sequestration functions. This review has not

happened to date.

Part Four, I, 4

The proposed changes will not be “keeping the historic character of the Midway Plaisance” as it was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted. Olmsted’ design for the Midway stressed open space for flexible recreational uses. His iconic design linking the Plaisance and Jackson Park has been dismantled by the roadwork to accommodate the OPC, and the design for the large-scale playground further counters the historic plan

Part Four, I, 6:

The goal of the Park District to “increase the diversity of recreational opportunities” available to Chicago residents is admirable and should be supported. However, the decision to use this particular site for the City’s first “universally accessible playground designed to cater to the needs of physically, developmentally, and emotionally impaired users” of all ages, is terribly flawed as noted above and should not be endorsed.

Also, during the Park District’s solicitation of public input, over 80% of respondents — individuals, organizations and consulting parties — called for a new site selection in a park-scarce neighborhood as required by UPAAR rather than taking land from an existing park. Creation of a new park, new public green space, is an issue of economic and social justice in South Side Chicago neighborhoods without neighborhood parks. The Chicago Park District has repeatedly and consistently ignored the community’s concerns.

Part Four, I, 7:

The claim that the project “will protect and enhance the wildlife habitat by maintaining the existing land use” is inaccurate. The eradication of the natural wetland and the erection of a 21,000 square foot playground cannot be viewed as “maintaining the exiting land use.”

Part Four, I, 8:

The claim that the project will increase public safety is flawed. Any increased public safety to the site will be due to additional pedestrian traffic to the OPC, not to the “improvement” to the Midway site. As noted, there is no provision for easy, safe access to the site for special needs users, so usage will likely be limited, and at the same time the possibility of traffic accidents involving site users may increase.

Part Four, II, 1:

The claim that the project will promote and the general welfare of the people, and conserve our natural resources is false. It fails to acknowledge the safety concerns noted above or the eradication of the wetland, a key natural resource that should be preserved for its inherent value in improving air quality and that also should be used as opportunity for public education about the importance of such spaces for environmental protection.

Part Four, II, 8:

The Park District dismisses this topic as not applicable as the site is along an existing bus route, and adds that no new parking is proposed. This is easy dismissal of the transit issues relating to this proposal is unfortunate and blinkered. As noted above, the lack of near-by, accessible parking will be a major impediment to the success of the proposed playground. It is a curious blind spot, given that the plan for the OPC, of which this proposal is a result and adjunct, is weighted toward automobile transport rather than public transportation.

For the reasons outlined above, I oppose the Park District’s proposal for changes to the Midway Plaisance, as detailed in Application 777. The plan results from a flawed decision-making process and will destroy environmental, cultural and historic resources that serve residents of Chicago and beyond.

We respectfully request that the members of the Chicago Plan Commission decline to approve the application.

Thank you for your serious attention to these issues and concerns.

Sincerely,

Debra L Hammond
5052 S Woodlawn Ave, Apt 1B
Chicago IL 60615-2825

5950 S. Stony Island Ave. (Hyde Park, 5th Ward) – Proposed Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection ordinance application submitted by the Chicago Park District

Donna Twickler <twicklerdonna@att.net>

Mon 4/17/2023 9:45 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

To: Chicago Planning Commission

I just learned that The Chicago Park District has applied to use the eastern end of the Midway to replace recreational park space lost in Jackson Park as a result of the construction of the Obama Presidential Center and funded by the federal UPARR (Urban Park and Recreation Recovery) program. While creating an all-inclusive playground is a wonderful idea, I do not think it should not be built at this site for many important reasons.

First, this replacement site was chosen without public input. Alternative sites could have been presented and reviewed, but there was never an opportunity for the public to provide comments. I am convinced that accessibility and park advocates, climate advocates, community residents, and public officials could collaboratively find a safer, more accessible location that would not destroy a wetland.

Second this application describes the proposed project as “a new playground, lawn, gardens, and **associated utility work**.” (Part Two, Section VI) It appears this “utility work” means the draining of an existing wetland. This is extremely destructive as wetlands are such a critical natural resource for wildlife and carbon sequestration. The eastern end of the Midway is *designated* as a wetland in an Environmental Assessment published on the City of Chicago’s website. Why would the Chicago Park District propose draining this important wetland and then spend all the extra money to install water-diverting piping in an effort to replicate the wetland’s natural functions? Preserving and managing this wetland should be essential when anything is planned for the eastern end of the Midway.

Third, this site is not a safe place for a playground! It is surrounded on three sides by busy roads and on the fourth side by a railroad embankment carrying Amtrak, freight and Metra trains. There are inadequate barriers between traffic and potential playground users, in particular children. A safer location should be found to protect children and care-takers.

Last, according to the Chicago Park District, the construction budget for this project is \$3 million, and to date the Park District has secured only \$300,000 of this money. Some of the cost will be used to drain the wetland and manage the resulting stormwater that is no longer stored by the wetland. Why not locate this playground at a safer site that would be much less expensive and would not involve the cost of draining a wetland?

Please reject this proposal and ask the citizens and community organizations in the area to work with the Park District on alternative sites. It would be a much better use of money; safer; and it would protect an important environmental area.

Thank you for taking the time to read these comments.

Sincerely,

Donna Twickler

From: E. Bashir <ebashir@yahoo.com>

Sent: Monday, April 17, 2023 10:01 AM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

Subject: Proposed changes to east end of Midway Plaisance

[Warning: External email]

Dear CPC,

I write as a resident at 5842 S. Stony Island, who stands to be affected by these proposed changes (so-called "improvements").

We have already experienced the removal of over 800 trees in Jackson Park, and transformation of 19 acres from parkland to built-up development. The current proposal wants to do the same thing to even more parkland by draining a natural wetland and building more concrete structures, thus causing the loss of even more natural parkland. and increasing the urban heat island effect. In this time of increasing climate change, efforts should be toward preserving trees and planting more of them, not on cutting down trees to make room for buildings, golf courses, or playgrounds.

This proposed project is out of step with the needs of the times. If another playground is necessary, let it be built on some of the vacant lots in Woodlawn, which are closer to the people it is supposed to benefit, and would result in net improvement--transforming vacant lots into a probably landscaped playground-- rather than additional loss of parkland.

The proposal would effectively result in additional parkland capture by the Obama Foundation to repair some of the damage they have done in Jackson Park. Let them find other land to build a playground on, and leave public parkland alone.

Elena Bashir

This is an appeal to the CPC to listen to the voices of the local residents, and not run roughshod over their opinions and feelings.

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Midway East End Improvements Plan Commission Review

Erin Adams <ejadams@uchicago.edu>

Wed 4/19/2023 9:45 AM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

To Whom it May Concern,

I write to express my full support for the planned improvements at the Midway East End. I am a single-mother to a 7 year old son; we live in South Shore and my son attends the Laboratory School, very close by this location. I have followed the proposal since its inception and have attended all but one of the review meetings where feedback was solicited and incorporated. I'm thrilled with the planned natural play area, which we have almost none here on the south side (contrasting with MANY on the north side and downtown, i.e. Maggie Daley park). This will be a wonderful place for our children to play and learn that trees, stumps, etc are ok to play on. They might even get a little bit dirty in their play.

Currently the site is a swamp in the rainy hot weather, with a stench to stifle one's breath (due to Canada Goose excrement). Claims that these are "wetlands" are surprising, as the only floral and fauna currently there are grass (a monoculture) and Canada geese. In contrast, approximately 100 feet across Stony Island is the Jackson Park lagoon, where you can witness cranes, ducks, etc... representatives of a much more diverse water-fowl ecosystem. The east end of the midway has much potential, and this carefully thought out plan is exciting and will open up so many new play ideas for our children, and give more recreational opportunities to the area.

I hope that the ulterior motive of those that object to this plan is obvious, they would like nothing more to further delay the Obama Presidential Center construction, despite it already being almost half way completed. Please don't let them keep this investment for our children from happening!

My many thanks for all those that contributed to its planning!

Respectfully,

Erin Adams

+++++

Erin J. Adams Ph.D.
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April 19 2023 Re: Letter of Comment to App 777 CPKD Midway. Comm. on Chicago Landmarks, Lakefront Prot Ord

From Gary Ossewaarde.

Dear Commissioners:

My name is Gary Ossewaarde and I have been an active resident, park supporter and parks and community organization leader in Hyde Park for 25 years, and involved in planning groups re: Midway Plaisance and Jackson Park and have attended most of the very many public meetings about the UPAAR designation and CPD Project for the East Panel.

I strongly support both the UPAAR transfer designation from the Obama Center (OPC) site to the adjacent east panel of the Midway and also the City/Chicago Park District Proposal for site restoration and rehabilitation. Under this plan, the site mostly stays the same but will better fulfill its historic and natural Olmsted design and purpose, also its tradition from the beginning of light recreational use, especially for youth. All will benefit from the Project vs. its abandonment.

- Site and Landscape. The proposal maintains and enhances the historic mission of FL Olmsted and Olmsted and Sons as an open space to relax and play in, and view the beauty of nature as a respite from the city. It keeps the sound trees and plants with updates according to sustainable habitat science and avoidance of monoculture.
- Water and drainage. Currently, the panel does not fit the definition of wetland but is an ephemeral or seasonal pond that has often been an unattractive and unhealthy eyesore that detracts from both the historic design and the light recreation options available. The proposal recognizes a broadly-shared desire for a water feature by reclaiming and stabilizing the flooding section with a combination of a small water retention and natural-plant feature and environmentally sound natural infiltration drainage.
- Light recreation meadow is retained. The drainage solution increases and makes reliable the size of the area that has for decades already been used for light recreation, especially for youth, such as soccer games and makes that area useable for more of the year.
- Paths. The proposal recovers and restores historic circulation pathways as a step in rebuilding a bike and pedestrian circulation between Washington and Jackson Parks, Obama Center (OPC), Wooded Island, and eventually the Lakefront Trail. It includes new ways to safely access the site near the embankment and transit.
- Bench and Women's History. The proposal includes restoration, access to, and celebration of the historic Cheney-Goode Bench that celebrates our first women legislators and women's contributions—this has been part of a women's celebratory area since the Columbian Exposition. That will again have a shining light.
- An All-access and Nature Play Space Feature welcoming all ages including children from Woodlawn. This will enhance inclusivity, diversity, and opportunities for children and persons of all ages and abilities, including from the disinvested and lower income community of Woodlawn (in which Woodlawn resides) and which according to what I have observed, wants it. The feature adds more height near trees and elevated transit, uses just a modest portion of the site, and is set back unobtrusively.
- Finally, the proposal greatly increases the benefit of the parkland as nature/open land and for people. It will create parkland that complements and carries its weight as an attractive, usable, pride-creating linkage between the communities of Hyde Park and Woodlawn (in which it formally resides) at the convergence of major roads and the Boulevard System, the Midway and Jackson Park, nearby landmarked structures and districts, the University of Chicago, and the Obama Center that will include a public library, nature and landscape, gardens, and spaces that will convene and people from Chicago and around the world in civic and justice action and possibilities.

I oppose the call of some to block the UPAAR designation from being moved from JP right next door to the east panel of the Midway, the site of best option vs. conjecture that it could have been elsewhere. Such denial could require reopening the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the OPC, which could both threaten the OPC in Jackson Park that is so far into its construction and also threaten to prolong the current traffic disruption in and around Jackson Park due to improvements in support of the OPC, but more important for pedestrian/bike/ auto circulation, and access, to and through Jackson Park. This roadwork is very far along and in its most critical phases.

In studying the designs and options, I find that both Project and the MOA and the National Park Service decision to site the displaced section of UPARR designation next door and in the same NRHP designations was done properly, is eminently reasonable, and does not entail harms to or change the character of the historic Midway or the view-shed from Jackson Park, especially as compared to keeping it the failed-same or leaving it to chance of an unspecified and unfunded fix up that will still leave it an underused and avoided barrier between neighborhoods.

Agenda item = 5950 S. Stony Island Ave. (Hyde Park, 5th Ward) – Proposed Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection ordinance application submitted by the Chicago Park District

jackspicer@earthlink.net <jackspicer@earthlink.net>

Tue 4/18/2023 10:28 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

Cc: Bronwyn Nichols Lodato <bronwynnich@midwaypac.org>

[Warning: External email]

Dear Members of the Chicago Plan Commission —

As a long-time Hyde Park resident (since 1970) and long-time Chicago parks equity advocate (Promontory Point since 2000), I have many strong arguments against abusing the use of UPARR replacement money for a park project at the east end of the Midway Plaisance, but I will focus on just one.

Hyde Park is a very park-rich neighborhood and a very wealthy neighborhood. We already have more than our fair share of public green space. Many adjacent neighborhoods are park-poor. West Woodlawn, for instance, has no public parks.

The UPAAR program was intended by Congress to correct this unjust imbalance. Instead the mis-use of UPAAR money will create even more inequity.

It is not an accident that this project is across the street from the Obama Presidential Center and half a block from the University of Chicago Laboratory School. Those are the real, intended and undeserving beneficiaries of this project. Meanwhile the historic and traditional inequity of the Chicago Park District's treatment of poor and Black neighborhoods on the South Side will be even more blatant if this project is approved.

— Jack Spicer

jackspicer@earthlink.net

872-226-2240



Jackson Park Conservancy

info@jacksonparkconservancy.org
www.jacksonparkconservancy.org

Chicago Plan Commission
CPC@cityofchicago.org

19 April 2023

Letter in Support of Proposed Improvements to the East End of Midway Plaisance

Dear Chicago Plan Commission Members:

Jackson Park Conservancy writes in strong support of improvements proposed for the East End of the Midway Plaisance. Currently the space is underutilized and uninviting, serving informally as a practice field for soccer and football, but largely neglected and subject to mosquito infestation when water is allowed to pool in May and June. Plans for a universally accessible playground, environmentally-sound infiltration drainage utilizing native plants, renovated bike and walking paths, restoration of the Cheney-Goode Memorial Bench, and attractive landscaping will transform this site into much more functional and enjoyable parkland.

The park will serve many local families, as well as families visiting Chicago, and a state-of-the-art playground within a natural area is ideal. There are currently three elementary schools within a three-block walking distance of the site and another half dozen within a two-mile radius, and the neighborhoods of Hyde Park and Woodlawn include many families with young children. During public community meetings many Woodlawn and Hyde Park residents voiced their support for the improvements since this portion of the Midway Plaisance is so close to their homes and has been minimally maintained in the past.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support.

Sincerely,

Jackson Park Conservancy
Board of Directors

Submitted by: Susan BW Johnson, Vice President
Communications Committee, Chair

Chicago Park District Application 777: Midway Plaisance East End

Jackson Park Watch <jacksonparkwatch@gmail.com>

Sat 4/15/2023 2:12 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

Cc: Jackson Park Watch (bnelms2120@gmail.com) <bnelms2120@gmail.com>; Jack Spicer <jackspicer@earthlink.net>

[Warning: External email]

Jackson Park Watch

P.O. Box 15302, Chicago, Illinois 60615

jacksonparkwatch@gmail.com www.jacksonparkwatch.org

TO: Members of the Chicago Plan Commission
CPC@cityofchicago.org

FROM: Brenda Nelms and Jack Spicer, co-presidents
Jackson Park Watch

DATE: April 15, 2023

RE: April 20 review of Chicago Park District Application 777

Jackson Park Watch is a virtual community organization with some 500 participants, committed to advancing community input, transparency and comprehensive planning in all major decisions concerning Jackson Park and adjacent public parks.

We write now regarding the application of the Chicago Park District for approval of proposed changes to the eastern tip of the Midway Plaisance under the terms of the Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection Ordinance. The Park District proposal is a direct consequence of changes being made in Jackson Park to accommodate the construction of the Obama Presidential Library.

We ask the Plan Commission to deny Application 777 for the reasons outlined below.

It is important to understand the full context for the Park District proposed changes to the Midway Plaisance, something that is not provided in the application. The project has been designed specifically to fulfill the City's legal responsibility to replace recreational park space for underserved communities that is being taken over in adjacent Jackson Park by the construction of the Obama Presidential Center. The narrow focus on checking a box to fulfill that requirement by the National Park Service has resulted in an ill-conceived and flawed plan that should not be enacted.

The proposed plan was developed without prior community discussion and constituted a done-deal from its inception. Contrary to City and Park District representations to the National Park Service and other federal agencies, the current proposal does not accurately reflect community opinion. Rather it is based on the presumption that this is a conveniently vacant space rather than an existing park space that needs regular maintenance but not imposed "improvement."

The selection of the Midway site by the City without public discussion of other possible sites is a missed opportunity to expand the public open space available for nearby underserved neighborhoods in Woodlawn and especially in West Woodlawn. Instead, the City and Park District are proposing to provide additional resources to adjacent Hyde Park, which is relatively well-endowed with park space and is rarely tagged as an “underserved” population.

Beyond the illogical, top-down decision to use a portion of an existing park -- the Midway Plaisance -- as “replacement” parkland, the specific design proposal by the Park District is also flawed. The application proposes to reconfigure that portion of the Midway by draining an existing wetland and installing water-diverting piping to try to replicate its natural functions and by constructing an expansive, universally accessible playground as the central feature.

The Park District application to the Plan Commission does not acknowledge the existence on the site of a natural, half-acre wetland (as labeled by the US Army Corps of Engineers and so identified in Chicago Department of Transportation maps) and instead presents the installation of a system of drainage pipes as a solution to a problem that does not exist. It is a slippery way of trying to avoid an assessment of the environmental impact of the removal of the wetland and its carbon sequestration functions.

Similarly, the proposal to install a large-scale universally inclusive play space on the site is also ill-conceived. The aim is admirable as it would be the City’s first such facility. But the site is ill-suited for such a facility given that it is surrounded on three sides by increasingly busy roads and on the fourth side by a railroad embankment with four tracks carrying Amtrak, freight and Metra Electric trains. The proposed design (which is not presented as part of the application) lacks protective barriers between the traffic and intended park users, it lacks adequate parking and drop-off spaces close to the site, and it lacks adjacent restroom facilities.

These concerns have been raised to the Park District repeatedly since 2018, not only by Jackson Park Watch, but also by other organizations including Friends of the Parks, Openlands, Landmarks Illinois, Preservation Chicago and, most diligently, by the Midway Plaisance Advisory Council. The Park District has continued to ignore community concerns

With this context in mind, we note the following specific misstatements, errors, and omissions in the Park District’s Application 777. References are to sections of the Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection Ordinance.

Part One, III, B:

The Chicago Park District is identified as owner of the site, whereas we understand that the City of Chicago (through the Department of Transportation) owns the boulevard system of which the Midway Plaisance is a key component, and has delegated the Park District to manage the Midway Plaisance as a public park. This relationship is hinted at in the response to Part Four, I, 1, which indicates that the site “is already publicly owned or controlled by the Chicago Park District.” The application should provide an accurate and complete statement of ownership and responsibilities.

Part One, IV:

The Brief Description omits a key aspect of the Park District proposal: the drainage and eradication of the existing natural wetland.

Part Two, II:

The Map of the Existing Site fails to identify an important special feature – the half-acre wetland at

the eastern edge of the site.

Part Two, VI:

The Narrative description of the Proposed Development continues the omission of any reference to the existing wetland and its eradication, mentioning only “drainage improvements to the informal recreation lawn.” The statement also omits a full explanation of the MOA that is the impetus for the proposed changes to the Midway and that provides necessary context.

Part Three, VI:

The response of “Not Applicable” to the issue of Off-street Parking and Loading is inadequate and incomplete. While the proposed development does not include any residential or commercial structures that would routinely require provisions for off-street parking and loading, it does include the construction of a “fully inclusive 21,000 square-foot playground,” a very large installation aiming to attract a sizable number of users and particularly users with special needs. The location, across from the Obama Presidential Center to open in 2025, is surrounded on three sides by increasingly busy vehicular traffic. The construction of the OPC and accompanying roadwork is removing some 200 previously available street-level parking spaces from Jackson Park, leaving the paid parking garage of the OPC (and perhaps the Museum of Science and Industry) as the main close-by option. Given this situation, the lack of provision of any adjacent parking spaces and of safe drop-off zones for special-need users of the proposed playground on the Midway tip is an incomprehensible omission that will limit access to and use of the playground and may create unsafe transit traffic situations.

Part Four, I, 2:

The application states that the proposed project “will replace these important amenities from Jackson Park,” without any identification or explanation of “these important amenities.” In fact, the proposal is a misguided attempt to fulfill the requirements of the City’s obligation to the National Park Service to replace recreational spaces lost in Jackson Park to the OPC. The Midway site is an inadequate substitute for the lost recreational spaces, and is inappropriate for the active recreation facilities that the NPS has noted.

Part Four, I, 3:

The assertion that the proposed changes “will improve the water quality and ecological balance of Lake Michigan” is incorrect. The existing wetland already serves as a natural soil filtration system, and the Midway site, including the natural wetland, is not directly linked to the lagoons in Jackson Park that are connected to Lake Michigan. There has been no environmental impact assessment to support the Park District’s assertion.

Part Four, I, 4

The proposed changes will not be “keeping the historic character of the Midway Plaisance” as it was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted. Olmsted’s design for the Midway stressed open space for flexible recreational uses. His iconic design linking the Plaisance and Jackson Park is being dismantled by the roadwork to accommodate the OPC, and the design for the large-scale playground further compromises the historic plan.

Part Four, I, 6:

The goal of the Park District to “increase the diversity of recreational opportunities” available to Chicago residents is admirable and should be supported. However, the decision to use this particular site for the City’s first “universally accessible playground designed to cater to the needs of physically, developmentally, and emotionally impaired users” of all ages, is terribly flawed as noted above and should not be endorsed.

Part Four, I, 7:

The claim that the project “will protect and enhance the wildlife habitat by maintaining the existing land use” is inaccurate. The eradication of the natural wetland and the erection of a 21,000 square foot playground cannot be viewed as “maintaining the exiting land use.”

Part Four, I, 8:

The claim that the project will increase public safety is flawed. Any increased public safety to the site will be due to additional pedestrian traffic around the OPC, not to the “improvement” to the Midway site. As noted, there is no provision for easy, safe access to the site for special needs users, so usage will likely be limited, and at the same time the possibility of traffic accidents involving site users may increase.

Part Four, II, 1:

The claim that the project will promote the general welfare of the people, and conserve our natural resources is false. It fails to acknowledge the safety concerns noted above or the eradication of the wetland, a key natural resource that should be preserved for its inherent value in improving air quality and that also should be used as opportunity for public education about the importance of such spaces for environmental protection.

Part Four, II, 8:

The Park District dismisses this topic as not applicable as the site is along an existing bus route, and adds that no new parking is proposed. This easy dismissal of the transit issues relating to this proposal is unfortunate and blinkered. As noted above, the lack of near-by, accessible parking will be a major impediment to the success of the proposed playground. It is a curious blind spot, given that the plan for the OPC, of which this proposal is a result and adjunct, is weighted toward automobile transport rather than public transportation.

For the reasons outlined above, we oppose the Park District’s proposal for changes to the Midway Plaisance, as detailed in Application 777. The plan results from a flawed decision-making process and will destroy environmental, cultural and historic resources that benefit and serve residents of Chicago and beyond. We respectfully request that the members of the Chicago Plan Commission decline to approve the application.

5950 S. Stony Island Avenue (Hyde Park, 5th Ward) - Proposed Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection Ordinance Application submitted by Chicago Park District - Application No. 777

Jackson Park Watch <jacksonparkwatch@gmail.com>

Mon 4/17/2023 9:35 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

Cc: Jackson Park Watch (bnelms2120@gmail.com) <bnelms2120@gmail.com>; Jack Spicer <jackspicer@earthlink.net>

[Warning: External email]

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Jackson Park Watch** <jacksonparkwatch@gmail.com>

Date: Sat, Apr 15, 2023, 3:11 PM

Subject: Chicago Park District Application 777: Midway Plaisance East End

To: <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

Cc: Jackson Park Watch (bnelms2120@gmail.com) <bnelms2120@gmail.com>, Jack Spicer <jackspicer@earthlink.net>

Jackson Park Watch

P.O. Box 15302, Chicago, Illinois 60615

jacksonparkwatch@gmail.com www.jacksonparkwatch.org

TO: Members of the Chicago Plan Commission
CPC@cityofchicago.org

FROM: Brenda Nelms and Jack Spicer, co-presidents
Jackson Park Watch

DATE: April 15, 2023

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We ask the Plan Commission to deny Application 777 for the reasons outlined below.

It is important to understand the full context for the Park District proposed changes to the Midway Plaisance, something that is not provided in the application. The project has been designed specifically to fulfill the City's legal responsibility to replace recreational park space for underserved communities that is being taken over in adjacent Jackson Park by the construction of the Obama Presidential Center. The narrow focus on checking a box to fulfill that requirement by the National Park Service has resulted in an ill-conceived and flawed plan that should not be enacted.

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Beyond the illogical, top-down decision to use a portion of an existing park -- the Midway Plaisance -- as "replacement" parkland, the specific design proposal by the Park District is also flawed. The application proposes to reconfigure that portion of the Midway by draining an existing wetland and installing water-diverting piping to try to replicate its natural functions and by constructing an expansive, universally accessible playground as the central feature.

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These concerns have been raised to the Park District repeatedly since 2018, not only by Jackson Park Watch, but also by other organizations including Friends of the Parks, Openlands, Landmarks Illinois, Preservation Chicago and, most diligently, by the Midway Plaisance Advisory Council. The Park District has continued to ignore community concerns

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For the reasons outlined above, we oppose the Park District’s proposal for changes to the Midway Plaisance, as detailed in Application 777. The plan results from a flawed decision-making process and will destroy environmental, cultural and historic resources that benefit and serve residents of Chicago and beyond. We respectfully request that the members of the Chicago Plan Commission decline to approve the application.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT APPLICATION TO THE CHICAGO PLAN COMMISSION CONCERNING THE EASTERN END OF THE MIDWAY

James E Mann <mannwayfinding@gmail.com>

Sat 4/15/2023 5:49 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

Commissioners of the Chicago Plan Commission

My family lives a block from the East End of the Midway and have for just shy of 50 years. This natural resource has provided and should continue to provide my family, our neighbors and the City an important sanctuary outdoors to refresh and regenerate from our daily lives. The importance of that function was spotlighted during the pandemic and hopefully will be a lesson learned to take into all of our post-pandemic lives.

The Lakefront Protection Ordinance has policies and standards that require for new projects within its purview that an approvable project meet a need, serves the community, preserves the character of the lakefront and its related adjacent uses, and will be a reality and not a dream. Applying those criteria makes the Park District's proposal for the East End of the Midway a non-starter.

The proposal from the Chicago Park District to transform this park from its laudable passive purpose so enjoyed by so many of us from many neighborhoods to an active play area makes no sense and serves no community purpose. Yes, the landscaping needs to be revived & updated and equally important stewarded at the highest level. A couple of more benches would make it ever more compatible for this of us who wish to get fresh air and watch the birds of all seasons romp around the grass and existing wet land.

The Park District's apparent sole interest in deconstructing the existing passive park to another use arises from its obligation to reprogram a past investment of Federal dollars to meet its contractual responsibilities. The situation arose because the Park District gave away the original land developed with the Federal dollars for another use. That is not a reason to disrupt an existing neighborhood park when the purpose of the original Federal dollars was to expand parks, especially in underparked, under-served communities. The East End of the Midway meets neither of these conditions.

In addition, the East End fails to meet commonsense standards for a park to serve active recreation use. It lacks (1) barriers between traffic and children and adults with a wide range of needs and experiences, (2) adequate parking close to the site, and (3) adjacent restroom facilities. This puts at risk park users chasing a ball or crossing a street. This outs the safety of park users at high risk.

Had the Park District engaged in a real community input process as actually required under the guidelines for refusing the Federal dollars, it could have heard that there were far better locations to meet the purposes the Federal dollars than putting them in the East End. The whole process was overshadowed by what appeared to be a predetermined outcome from on high. And the park will suffer and the community will lose its rejuvenating space to pavement and play structures whose use may never be.

Lastly, the Park District has admitted in public meetings that the Federal dollars—some \$300,000—have already been exhausted in their planning and engineering studies—the output of which is attached to the application to present a pretty picture yet not a whole picture! More importantly, when pressed as to the availability of funds on hand to carry out its proposal, the Park District has answered that it does not have them! No approval should be made until the Park District can prove up that it has in hand the funds needed to carry out its dreams. Dreams raise expectations yet fail to deliver results to communities. The East End should not be another undeliverable that not only is a misplaced investment but also disappoints in never coming to be.

James E Mann
5838 South Harper Ave
Chicago IL 60637
312/371-5861
mannwayfinding@gmail.com

UPAAR

S Jerome Levy <sjlevy@jeromelevylaw.com>

Wed 4/19/2023 9:20 AM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

I support the Park District's proposal for the recreation area at the east end of the Midway. I am very familiar with the details and the specifics of the plan and I believe it will change a relatively useless space into a wonderful recreation area for children and disabled people including disabled children. The objection that it is converting a natural wetland is ridiculous. I am a master gardner, a tree keeper and a devoted volunteer steward for Jackson Park and it will be a great neighbor for the adjacent park. Jerry

Levy

Sent from my iPhone

Objections to Application No. 777,

John Lipinski <jlipinski81@yahoo.com>

Tue 4/18/2023 10:44 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

To the Chicago Plan Commission,

My name is John Lipinski and I am a resident of Hyde Park. I'm writing to object to the Chicago Park District's application, Application No. 777, and current plans concerning the eastern end of the Midway at 5950 S. Stony Island Avenue.

The Chicago Park District seeks to use the eastern end of the Midway to satisfy the City's legal responsibility to replace recreational park space lost in Jackson Park as a result of the construction of the Obama Presidential Center and funded by the federal UPARR (Urban Park and Recreation Recovery) program. The proposed shifting of UPARR assets from an under-served area to Hyde Park promotes disinvestment in under-served communities in contravention of UPARR, and in contravention of Chicago Park District and City policies.

While the Park District's plan for an inaugural all-inclusive playground is a laudable goal, the eastern end of the Midway is unsuitable for a playground. It is surrounded on three sides by increasingly busy roads and on the fourth side by a railroad embankment carrying Amtrak, freight and Metra trains. All of which act as barriers for those intended to enjoy the structure.

The proposed playground location is inappropriate due to a lack of (1) barriers between traffic and children and adults with a wide range of needs and experiences, (2) adequate parking close to the site, and (3) adjacent restroom facilities. It is careless and dangerous to approve such a proposal.

The application describes the proposed project as "a new playground, lawn, gardens, and associated utility work." (Part Two, Section VI) The project description is misleading, because the "utility work" is not described. This hides the fact that the "utility work" consists of the draining of an existing wetland.

The eastern end of the Midway is designated as a wetland in an Environmental Assessment published on the City of Chicago's website. The Chicago Park District proposes to drain the wetland and install water-diverting piping to try to replicate the wetland's natural functions. The preservation and management of this wetland should be the foundation for any planning for the eastern end of the Midway.

In addition, the selection of the eastern end of the Midway as the UPARR replacement site was a top-down designation dictated by the City of Chicago, without any consideration of park-related values, the residents of the area, and those meant to, supposedly, make use of and enjoy the site. At no time did the public have an opportunity to present, review, or comment on any alternative sites.

According to the Park District, the construction budget for the planned so-called improvements to the eastern end of the Midway is \$3,000,000. The Park District has acknowledged that it lacks \$2,700,000 of this funding.

In its application to the Chicago Plan Commission, the Chicago Park District identifies itself as the "owner" of the eastern end of the Midway. The eastern end of the Midway is owned by the City of Chicago, as part of the City's boulevard system, and is not owned by the Chicago Park District.

The Chicago Park District also fails to identify itself as the agent of the City of Chicago.

Accessibility advocates, park advocates, community residents, and public officials could come together to plan an extraordinary park with inclusive features in an area that is safely accessible and more in need of park space. To make something extraordinary, however, would require genuine consultation and collaboration between community members and public officials. The Chicago Park District's proposal falls severely short of this effort.

Sincerely,

John Lipinski

CPD APPLICATION TO THE CHICAGO PLAN COMMISSION CONCERNING 5950 S. STONY ISLAND AVENUE, APPLICATION NO. 777

Karen Daiter <karendaiter.phd@gmail.com>

Mon 4/17/2023 6:19 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

To Whom it May Concern at the Chicago Planning Commission

I was concerned to learn recently that The Chicago Park District is applying to convert a registered wetland at 5950 S Stony Island, the eastern end of the Midway, into a playground as part of the work being done at the Obama Presidential Center. This would replace open Jackson Park land, using federal UPARR (Urban Park and Recreation Recovery) program, with an 'all-inclusive' playground. The choice of this site is concerning on multiple levels.

No public input was gathered about converting this space, the public had no opportunity to weigh in on this proposal. I am sure advocates of all kinds (park, climate, community residents, and public officials) could love to weigh in and plan a wonderful, inclusive playground in another site that is not part of Jackson Park, that is safer, equally accessible and would not destroy a wetland.

Additionally, this application describes the proposed project as “a new playground, lawn, gardens, and **associated utility work.**” (Part Two, Section VI) This “utility work” is not described and actually references draining and destroying an existing, designated, wetland. Wetlands are critical natural resources for wildlife and carbon sequestration, and their destruction for development is having environmental and flood implications for the areas affected. This is not “development”.

Holding this hearing on the eve of Earth Day, is particularly tone deaf related to environmental concerns.

This space is *designated* as a wetland in an Environmental Assessment published on the City of Chicago's website. The cost of draining a wetland and then spending the funds to install water-diverting piping is an ill-conceived effort to replicate the wetland's natural functions. This just doesn't make sense! Preserving and managing this wetland is essential and critical to any planning related to the eastern end of the Midway.

This site is poorly conceived for a playground ! Surrounded on three sides by busy roads and on the fourth side by a railroad embankment carrying Amtrak, freight and Metra trains makes it dangerous and unsafe for young children and families. This is especially true if the playground is to be accessible for special needs children. It's hard to understand the thought process behind this site selection.

Finally, this project will cost \$3 million, and so far the Park District has secured only \$300,000 of this money. I imagine a significant portion of the un-secured funds are to install a water-diverting pipeline. Why not locate this playground on a site that does not involve the cost (and adverse environmental impact) of draining a wetland?

Please reject this proposal and ask the citizens and community organizations in the area to work with the Park District on alternative sites. This would be a better use of money; a safer alternative and it prevents further environmental degradation of park land.

Please let me know how this hearing proceeds and involve us in your decision making process.

Respectfully,

Karen

Karen Daiter Ph.D., M.Ed.
(she/her/hers)
30 N. Michigan Avenue
Suite 1400
Chicago, IL 60601

312.332.7595 office
Psychotherapy with Individuals, Adolescents and Children

The Institute for Clinical Social Work - Core Faculty

<http://www.icsw.edu/>

<https://www.facebook.com/ICSW.Chicago/>

"The smallest good deed is better than the grandest of intentions." Duguet

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny" Martin Luther King Jr.

'the clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness' John Muir

We did not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children." Native American Proverb

"The one who plants trees, knowing that he will never sit in their shade, has at least started to understand the meaning of life." Rabindranath Tagore

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Please think about the environment before printing.

5950 South Stony Island, (Hyde Park, 5th ward)

Microsoft.com account team <refgkcoach@hotmail.com>

Wed 4/19/2023 12:21 AM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

Dear City of Chicago Planning Commission,

Regarding Proposed Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection ordinance application.
Submitted by the Chicago Park District

Its been quite obvious in the last few years that the entire body of work by City of Chicago agencies/ Depts. in regards to the construction of the Obama Presidential Center wasn't whether the law was followed, just get the place built, regardless of which Federal Laws or City of Chicago ordinances were broken.

To think that a playground for disabled children, would be built in a neighborhood which has horrendous traffic at the moment, and whose traffic will get FAR WORSE when and if the Obama Presidential Center is even finished..... and for disabled children, their parents, teachers or caregivers to have to cross various streets together with major traffic problems to get to a playground with NO bathrooms, NO shelter, etc.... is a great reason to NOT build this playground in this environment. DON'T waste the taxpayers money on such a stupid idea !!!!

The construction of the OPC in Jackson Park has frankly become an environmental nightmare, one of the WORSE decisions by bureaucrats and elected officials in Chicago history; the destruction of a historic park's trees for the greater glory of a president who's time in office will be judged by historians in 50 or 100 years, NOT by those who hold various university professorships right now..... and the road closures which will cause massive traffic jams and prevent first responders from reaching fires, (like the high rise fire on South Stony Island last week), or traffic accidents with life threatening injuries, drowning incidents along the south lakefront, and many MORE potential life threatening incidents.....

I hope this idea is NOT going to pass any vote by the Chicago Planning Commission, the Chicago City Council, etc.....

Sincerely,

Kenneth B. Newman
Member: JPAC/ MPAC/ NPAC/ BPAC/HWPAC
1367 East 55th Place
Chicago, IL 60637
773-363-8117
refgkcoach@hotmail.com

CPD application for the East End of the Midway (#777)

Kineret Jaffe <kineretj@gmail.com>

Tue 4/18/2023 4:31 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

To Whom it May Concern:

I write to offer my full support for the construction of a playground on the eastern end of the Midway Plaisance, as proposed by the Park District in this application.

Not only will families coming to the Obama Presidential Center get to use this space, but community residents, both those who live north and south of the Midway, will be able to enjoy it.

I am a member of the Midway Plaisance Advisory Council and I do not agree with the position that MPAC has taken in opposition to this playground. The argument that this space should be preserved as "wetland" is laughable! It is currently a goose-poop filled swamp that is uninviting and frequently inaccessible.

I hope you will approve this application so that I, my family, my neighbors, and all who will be coming to the OPC can enjoy this new amenity.

Thank you,

Kineret Jaffe

--

Kineret Jaffe

4858 S. Dorchester Avenue

Chicago, IL 60615

Cell: 773-860-8207

Dear Members of The Chicago Plan Commission:

The Chicago Park District (CPD) proposes to use the eastern end of the Midway Plaisance to satisfy the City's legal responsibility to replace Urban Park and Recreation Recovery (UPARR) land destroyed because of the siting of the Obama Presidential Center (OPC) in Jackson Park.

There are several reasons for the Plan Commission to reject this proposal.

While an all-inclusive playground is a beautiful way to celebrate children with varying levels of play needs, constructing such a playground in the wrong location affects the inclusivity the CPD intends. The adjacent streets are heavily trafficked and will become more so once the OPC opens and parking is limited. The proposed site is adjacent to a railroad embankment which carries Amtrak, Metra, and freight trains every day. There are also no close restroom facilities.

The eastern end of the Midway is designated as a wetland in an Environmental Assessment on the City of Chicago's website. The utility work outlined in the project proposes draining the existing wetland and replicating its natural functions by installing water-diverting piping. This sounds like a waste of both money and nature's design.

The shifting of funds and resources from an underserved community to the Hyde Park community continues to perpetuate the inequities on the south side of Chicago by serving wealthier communities at the expense of surrounding disinvested communities.

The eastern end of the Midway is owned by the City of Chicago as part of the boulevard system and is not owned by the CPD. The CPD does not identify itself as an agent of the City of Chicago.

I urge the Chicago Plan Commission to do the right thing and support park advocates and community residents in partnership with public officials to plan and create a new park and not destroy an existing one.

Sincerely,

Lauren Moltz

Midway Park Advisory Council Member
Hyde Park Resident

From: Lesley Bloch <lesley_bloch@yahoo.com>

Sent: Sunday, April 16, 2023 9:46 AM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

Subject: Eastern end of the Midway

[Warning: External email]

Dear sirs and madams, April 16,2023

I am in strong opposition to the conversion of the existing wetland into an all inclusive playground. My primary point is that draining the wetland will be a total failure. Over time the pipes will deteriorate and area will return to its original state. Creating a playground is totally impractical for this spot. It has been home to ducks for many years. All drainage plans are way too expensive and won't work!

1) In addition no bathrooms included in the original plan is ridiculous. ----- When the team was asked about toilet facilities in a zoom meeting they responded that the ice skating rink wayyyyyy to the west bathrooms will be adequately convenient. Or if that is too far there will be toilets to the east in the Obama Center..

2) The parking situation adjacent to the area is already terrible. Adding more cars to a totally packed curb area is not feasible.

I vote against the playground!!!!!!!!!!!!

Lesley Bloch

5765 S Blackstone Ave

Chicago 60637

lesley_bloch@yahoo.com

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UPAAR Midway

Leslie Stulberg <stulbela@outlook.com>

Wed 4/19/2023 9:27 AM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

I support the Chicago Park District's plan for installing a recreation area at the east end of the Midway Plaza. I am familiar with the details of the plan, and there is no question that it will be a wonderful conversion of that square block into a very beautiful and useful recreation area.

Leslie A. Stulberg
5739 S. Blackstone Ave.
Chicago, IL 60637

5950 S. Stony Island Ave. (Hyde Park, 5th Ward) – Proposed Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection ordinance application submitted by the Chicago Park District

Maddie Brown <mraivinbrown@gmail.com>

Tue 4/18/2023 7:15 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

To whom it may concern,

I ask that you deny the plan proposed by the Chicago Park District for 5950 S. Stony Island Ave., given the following reasons:

I live approximately three blocks from the proposed site. From this vantage point, I can say with confidence that it is unsuitable for a playground, given it is surrounded by busy streets and train tracks on three sides. It is not an accessible or reasonable place for children to play.

The land discussed is currently a wetland, which has an essential environmental function. Insufficient care has been taken to address and preserve this wetland.

Moreover, it is in Hyde Park, a community already far better served than most of the Southside.

Resources ought to be placed into underserved communities, in line with UPARR and Chicago Park District and City policies.

There is current insufficient funding, as the Park District lacks \$2,700,000 of the proposed budget.

Finally, the designation and planning occurred with insufficient public input.

Therefore, due to the plan being a poor fit for the location due to divesting from underserved communities and building in an area unsuitable to a playground, insufficient care for the wetland and natural development, and problems with funding and insufficient input, I ask that the application be denied.

Thanks,

Madeline Brown

1414 E 59th St

Chicago, IL 60637

COMMENT OF THE MIDWAY PLAISANCE ADVISORY COUNCIL
CONCERNING 5950 S. STONY ISLAND AVENUE (HYDE PARK, 5TH WARD) –
PROPOSED LAKE MICHIGAN AND CHICAGO LAKEFRONT PROTECTION
ORDINANCE APPLICATION SUBMITTED BY THE CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT
(APPLICATION NO. 777)

The proposal before the Chicago Plan Commission, which would drain an existing wetland and install a recreational structure in a location inappropriate for such use and without input from surrounding communities, fails numerous tests of equity, consultation, financial rigor, and environmental protection. For the benefit of the communities it claims to serve, the project should be rejected and a new plan developed that is located in an underserved community, in line with the stipulations and understandings of the law under which this project is being proposed, and which does not sacrifice the natural amenities inherent to this site.

As the purveyor of this plan, the Chicago Park District incorrectly identifies itself as the “owner” of the eastern end of the Midway Plaisance. It is not—the Midway is owned by the City of Chicago, as part of its boulevard system, with the Chicago Park District serving only a management function for the land in question.

The Park District takes the opportunity of its inaccurate ownership claim to propose the draining of the wetland at the eastern end of the Midway and the building of an inclusive playground for persons with disabilities and their caregivers. With regard to the wetland, one of the chief functions of the Park District is the preservation of the natural areas remaining in Chicago for the enjoyment and recreation of the residents of the city and visitors. The wetland at the eastern end of the Midway is designated as such by the Environmental Assessment conducted for the Obama Presidential Center construction project and which is published on the City’s website. Wetlands serve an important function in absorbing and cleansing water from rainfall, and also perform critical carbon sequestration functions essential to the City’s efforts to reach its climate mitigation goals. Ironically, the Park District’s proposal calls for removing such natural functions and replacing them with infrastructure that would replicate these roles, at a cost far beyond that of the existing wetland. The plan also puts the Park District at odds with the carbon sequestration and environmental justice goals of the Biden Administration, by removing a wetland from an urban area.

Preserving the wetland and enhancing it with native wetland plants, as proposed in an alternative design supported by the community through the Midway Plaisance Advisory Council (MPAC), would absorb and thrive on seasonal excess water and could greatly enhance the beauty and biodiversity of the Midway. Midway wetland restoration – achievable at a relatively modest price – would provide habitat for birds and native pollinators and create an opportunity for timely environmental education, while offering a carbon sequestration function that the current mowed

lawn aesthetic at public parks does not provide. Second, the destruction of the naturally occurring wetland on the easternmost portion of the Midway means that rainfall and underground water running beneath the surface of the eastern end of the Midway will be diverted elsewhere. It makes no sense to maximize the diversion of rainfall and groundwater into the City's sewers, to be mixed with pollutants and increasing opportunities for flooding.

The proposed playground plan, while laudable, only achieves such a stature if designed in such a way as to ensure it is accessible to its target audience. The location of the proposed project at the eastern end of the Midway is not.

The eastern end of the Midway, where the proposed play structures are to be built, is surrounded on three sides by high vehicular traffic roadways, and on the fourth side by railroad tracks which carry significant freight traffic. Due to the roadway changes that are currently in progress in and around Jackson Park, the already high vehicular traffic on the three sides will significantly increase. This area is inconvenient at best for individuals with disabilities and their caregivers, because caregivers will need to park at a distance from the playground and then bring individuals with disabilities some distance to the playground. The alternative would be to expect caregivers to get third persons to act as drivers, for drop-offs and pick-ups. Also, the proximity to freight train traffic, heavy vehicular traffic, and related sudden loud noises poses a problem for those who have sensory sensitivities, such as those on the autism spectrum. The practical effect of these problems is to make the proposed playground useless to its target audience. Disabled persons and their caregivers have sufficient obstacles to address as part of daily life. To demand the additional effort required to make this inappropriate playground destination work is both unkind and unrealistic.

In addition, the proposed project diverts resources from the underserved Woodlawn community to Hyde Park, a neighborhood rich in park resources. In so doing, the project violates both the letter and the spirit of the UPARR program from which the City received funding in the early 1980s. The first grant was \$125,300 for "community-based recreation awareness, anti-vandalism training, and park rehabilitation programs" and recognized that "[t]he area lack[ed] recreational programs available in other areas of the city which hinder[ed] the redevelopment of the community." The second grant was \$135,870 "for the replacement of 700 trees and shrubs and restoration of 7,000 yards of landscaped area within Jackson Park" and was "intended to improve the aesthetics of Jackson Park and to enhance picnicking and other passive recreational activities through improved landscaping." The selection of the eastern end of the Midway as a UPARR replacement site flouts both planning objectives. Under no circumstances can the eastern end of the Midway be considered part of an area "lacking in recreational programs available in other areas of the city." And there is no need to divert UPARR funding to the eastern end of the Midway to aid the "redevelopment of the community."

Given its genesis as the result of an inaccurate claim of ownership rights, the project is the product of an insular, secretive, and non-consultative process in which community members were never presented with any alternative sites at any of the scheduled community meetings, nor via electronic postings of any kind. Despite multiple public statements by an official from the Chicago Department of Planning and Development that “a number of sites...were reviewed [for UPARR replacement]” (*Hyde Park Herald*, 5/16/2022 and similar, 6/30/2022), none of the alleged alternative locations were ever presented to the community, in any forum, for public review and input. A public process could have included a discussion about the divestment of underserved communities of parks and recreation funding. A public process also could have identified additional sites in underserved communities that could have been considered.

Finally, the project itself is underfunded and, indeed, unfunded at this point, making any consideration of this project moot. The initial UPARR grants were for slightly more than \$260,000, an amount the Park District has already spent on its ill-conceived plans. The remainder of the project is estimated to cost an additional \$2,700,000 which the Park District has acknowledged is not secured from any source.

The Park District’s need to replace recreational space lost to the OPC construction should not be an occasion to perpetuate inequity in the provision of parkland or to further damage the natural environment by removing the valuable wetland.

Respectfully submitted,

Bronwyn Nichols Lodato, President, Midway Plaisance Advisory Council

Marc Lipinski, Vice President, Midway Plaisance Advisory Council

Matthew Isoda, Secretary, Midway Plaisance Advisory Council

Kristy Rawson, Treasurer, Midway Plaisance Advisory Council

CPD application for the East End of the Midway (#777)

Margot Browning <margotbrowning@gmail.com>

Wed 4/19/2023 10:00 AM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

To Whom it May Concern:

I write to offer my full support for the construction of a playground on the eastern end of the Midway Plaisance, as proposed by the Chicago Park District in this application.

Not only will families coming to the Obama Presidential Center get to use this space, but community residents, both those who live north and south of the Midway, will be able to enjoy it.

I hope you will approve this application so that I, my family, my neighbors, and all who will be coming to the OPC can enjoy this new amenity.

Thank you,

Margot Browning

1312 E 56 St

Chicago, IL 60637

Application 777: CPD Application Concerning the East End of the Midway Plaisance

Matthew Isoda <matthew.isoda@gmail.com>

Mon 4/17/2023 3:50 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

To Whom it may Concern,

The Chicago Park District seeks to use the eastern end of the Midway Plaisance to satisfy the City's legal responsibility to replace recreational park space lost in Jackson Park as a result of the construction of the Obama Presidential Center and funded by the federal UPARR program. The proposed shifting of UPARR assets from an under-served area to Hyde Park promotes disinvestment in underserved communities in contravention of UPARR, and in contravention of Chicago Park District and City policies.

The application describes the proposed project as "a new playground, lawn, gardens, and associated utility work." The project description is misleading, because the "utility work" is not described. This hides the fact that the "utility work" consists of the draining of an existing wetland.

The eastern end of the Midway is designated as a wetland in an Environmental Assessment published on the City of Chicago's website. The Chicago Park District proposes to drain the wetland and install water-diverting piping to try to replicate the wetland's natural functions. The preservation and management of this wetland should be the foundation for any planning for the eastern end of the Midway.

Finally, in its application to the Chicago Plan Commission, the Chicago Park District identifies itself as the "owner" of the eastern end of the Midway. The eastern end of the Midway is owned by the City of Chicago, as part of the City's boulevard system, not by the Chicago Park District.

While the new playground is laudable, it could be better located. And in planning to artificially drain and then maintain wetland as a playing field, this plan works against proper flood control and waste water management.

Matthew Isoda
5450 S East View Park, Chicago, 60615

CPD Application for the East End of the Midway Plaisance (#777)

mms1947@gmail.com <mms1947@gmail.com>

Tue 4/18/2023 5:23 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

To Whom it May Concern:

I write to offer my full support for the construction of a playground on the eastern end of the Midway Plaisance, as proposed by the Chicago Park District in this application.

Not only will families coming to the Obama Presidential Center get to use this space, but community residents, both those who live north and south of the Midway, will be able to enjoy it.

I am very familiar with the work of the Midway Plaisance Advisory Council. I do not agree with the position that MPAC has taken in opposition to this proposed playground. I cannot agree with their argument that this space should be preserved as "wetland". The reality is that it is currently a swamp visited solely and frequently by geese who leave their droppings over the entire space. As a result it is potentially a real public health hazard to anyone who steps foot into this swampy area.

I hope you will approve this application so that I, my family, my neighbors, and all who will be coming to the Obama Presidential Center can enjoy this new amenity.

Thank you,
Morton M. Silverman, M.D.
4858 S. Dorchester Avenue
Chicago, IL 60615

Chicago Park District Application to the Chicago Plan Commission Concerning the Eastern End of the Midway Property Address: 5950 S. Stony Island Avenue Hearing date April 20, 2022

Nancy Juda <npjuda@gmail.com>

Tue 4/18/2023 4:30 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

To whom it may concern,

Please see comments below regarding the eastern end of the Midway, a designated wetland.

Thank you.

Nancy Juda

TOPIC 1 – EQUITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

1. The Chicago Park District seeks to use the eastern end of the Midway to satisfy the City's legal responsibility to replace recreational park space lost in Jackson Park as a result of the construction of the Obama Presidential Center and funded by the federal UPARR (Urban Park and Recreation Recovery) program. The proposed shifting of UPARR assets from an under-served area to Hyde Park promotes disinvestment in underserved communities in contravention of UPARR, and in contravention of Chicago Park District and City policies.
2. The Park District's plan for an inaugural all-inclusive playground is a laudable goal. However, the eastern end of the Midway is unsuitable for a playground given that it is surrounded on three sides by increasingly busy roads and on the fourth side by a railroad embankment carrying Amtrak, freight and Metra trains.
3. The proposed playground location is inappropriate due to a lack of (1) barriers between traffic and children and adults with a wide range of needs and experiences, (2) adequate parking close to the site, and (3) adjacent restroom facilities.

TOPIC 2 – WETLAND

4. The application describes the proposed project as "a new playground, lawn, gardens, and associated utility work." (Part Two, Section VI) The project description is misleading, because the "utility work" is not described. This hides the fact that the "utility work" consists of the draining of an existing wetland.
5. The eastern end of the Midway is designated as a wetland in an Environmental Assessment

published on the City of Chicago's website. The Chicago Park District's proposes to drain the wetland and install water-diverting piping to try to replicate the wetland's natural functions. The preservation and management of this wetland should be the foundation for any planning for the eastern end of the Midway.

6. It is a appalling that a proposal for the drainage of a wetland is being presented on the eve of Earth Day.

TOPIC 3 – THE PROJECT

7. The selection of the eastern end of the Midway as the UPARR replacement site was a top-down designation dictated by the City of Chicago, without any consideration of park-related values. At no time did the public have an opportunity to present, review, or comment on any alternative sites.

8. According to the Park District, the construction budget for the planned so-called improvements to the eastern end of the Midway is \$3,000,000. The Park District has acknowledged that it lacks \$2,700,000 of this funding.

9. In its application to the Chicago Plan Commission, the Chicago Park District identifies itself as the "owner" of the eastern end of the Midway. The eastern end of the Midway is owned by the City of Chicago, as part of the City's boulevard system, and is not owned by the Chicago Park District.

The Chicago Park District also fails to identify itself as the agent of the City of Chicago.

TOPIC 4 - CLOSING

10. Accessibility advocates, park advocates, community residents, and public officials could come together to plan an extraordinary park with inclusive features in an area that is safely accessible and more in need of park space.



Network of Woodlawn

6320 South Dorchester Avenue, Room FC100
Chicago, IL 60637

April 19, 2023

To Chicago Plan Commission Members:

The Network of Woodlawn writes in support of improvements proposed for the East End of the Midway Plaisance. Currently the space is underutilized and uninviting, serving informally as a practice field for soccer and football, but largely neglected and subject to mosquito infestation when water is allowed to pool in May and June. Plans for a universally accessible playground, environmentally-sound infiltration drainage utilizing native plants, renovated bike and walking paths, restoration of the Cheney-Goode Memorial Bench, and attractive landscaping will transform this site into much more functional and enjoyable parkland.

The park will serve many local families, as well as families visiting Chicago. There are currently three elementary schools within a three-block walking distance of the site. and another half dozen within a two-mile radius, and the neighborhoods of Hyde Park and Woodlawn include many families with young children. During public community meetings the Network of Woodlawn voiced support for the improvements since this portion of the Midway Plaisance is close to the homes of Woodlawn residents, and has been only minimally maintained in the past.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support.

D. Bailey, Executive Director



April 18, 2023

Re: Midway Plaisance East End Park Improvements

Dear Chair Flores,

On behalf of the Obama Foundation, we are pleased to support the proposed and in-progress plan for the “Midway Plaisance East End Improvements”. The proposed design appears to strike an effective balance between respecting the history of this specific segment of the Midway Plaisance and applying the more recent practice of “universal design” to expand the opportunities for public engagement and use of the Midway. The planned design appears to complement and add to the recreational amenities already existing in nearby Jackson Park and the future Obama Presidential Center.

The proposed plan also appears to address existing drainage issues at this segment of the Midway that too often render this land unusable for most forms of recreation, and the plan should make this a more welcoming and exciting “gateway” to the Midway and the adjacent Metra station.

The focus on accessibility for this proposed play area mirrors the planned redevelopment of the Women’s Garden directly across Stony Island Avenue as part of the Obama Presidential Center, which also is being reconstituted and updated to provide access to persons of all abilities and to create a more environmentally resilient landscape by incorporating improved stormwater management strategies.

Sincerely,

Michael Strautmanis
Executive Vice President, External Affairs
Obama Foundation

From: Pamela Tate <pam@pamelatate1.com>

Sent: Sunday, April 16, 2023 10:28 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

Cc: Karen Daiter <karendaiter.phd@gmail.com>; Cynthia Linton <cynthia.linton1@gmail.com>

Subject: Comments on the Park District's application for a playground at the eastern end of the Midway

[Warning: External email]

To: Chicago Planning Commission

I recently learned that The Chicago Park District has applied to use the eastern end of the Midway to replace recreational park space lost in Jackson Park as a result of the construction of the Obama Presidential Center and funded by the federal UPARR (Urban Park and Recreation Recovery) program. While the goal of creating an all-inclusive playground is a good one, I do not think it should not be built at this site for several reasons.

First, this replacement site was chosen without public input. Alternative sites could have been presented and reviewed, but there was never an opportunity for the public to weigh in. I have no doubt that accessibility advocates, park advocates, climate advocates, community residents, and public officials could collaboratively plan a wonderful, inclusive playground in another site that is safer, equally accessible and would not destroy a wetland.

Mention of the wetland leads me to my second huge objection to this proposed project. This application describes the proposed project as “a new playground, lawn, gardens, and **associated utility work.**” (Part Two, Section VI) However, this “utility work” is not described—and I now see that the “utility work” means the draining of an existing wetland. This is extremely disturbing since wetlands are such a critical natural resource for wildlife and for carbon sequestration—and wetlands are being destroyed everywhere for “development”. The eastern end of the Midway is *designated* as a wetland in an Environmental Assessment published on the City of Chicago’s website. Why would the Chicago Park District be proposing to drain this important wetland and then spend all the extra money to install water-diverting piping in an ill-conceived effort to replicate the wetland’s natural functions? This is just appalling! In my view, preserving and managing this wetland should be essential, fundamental, when anything is planned for the eastern end of the Midway.

Third, this site is not ideal for a playground anyway! It happens to be surrounded on three sides by busy roads and on the fourth side by a railroad embankment carrying Amtrak, freight and Metra trains. I have looked at

this site and it is not safe given that there are inadequate barriers between traffic and those who would use the playground, in particular children. Why choose this unsafe site?

Last, according to the Chicago Park District, the construction budget for this project is \$3 million, and so far the Park District has secured only \$300,000 of this money. And I'm sure that a big portion of this un-secured funding is to install the water-diverting pipeline I mentioned above. Why not locate this playground in a site that would be much less expensive and would not involve the cost of draining a wetland? I just do not understand this!!!

Please reject this proposal and ask the citizens and community organizations in the area to work with the Park District on alternative sites. It would be a much better use of money; it would be safer; and it would save an environmental treasure.

Thank you for your consideration.

Pamela Tate

pam@pamelatate1.com

5950 S Stony Island Ave (Hyde Park, 5th Ward - Proposed Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection ordinance application submitted by the Chicago Park District

Patty Iverson <pattywiverson@gmail.com>

Tue 4/18/2023 10:26 AM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

To: Chicago Planning Commission

I recently learned that The Chicago Park District has applied to use the eastern end of the Midway to replace recreational park space lost in Jackson Park as a result of the construction of the Obama Presidential Center and funded by the federal UPARR (Urban Park and Recreation Recovery) program. While the goal of creating an all-inclusive playground is a good one, I do not think it should not be built at this site for several reasons.

First, this replacement site was chosen without public input. Alternative sites could have been presented and reviewed, but there was never an opportunity for the public to weigh in. I have no doubt that accessibility advocates, park advocates, climate advocates, community residents, and public officials could collaboratively plan a wonderful, inclusive playground in another site that is safer, equally accessible and would not destroy a wetland.

Mention of the wetland leads me to my second huge objection to this proposed project. This application describes the proposed project as “a new playground, lawn, gardens, and **associated utility work.**” (Part Two, Section VI) However, this “utility work” is not described—and I now see that the “utility work” means the draining of an existing wetland. This is extremely disturbing since wetlands are such a critical natural resource for wildlife and for carbon sequestration—and wetlands are being destroyed everywhere for “development”. The eastern end of the Midway is *designated* as a wetland in an Environmental Assessment published on the City of Chicago’s website. Why would the Chicago Park District be proposing to drain this important wetland and then spend all the extra money to install water-diverting piping in an ill-conceived effort to replicate the wetland’s natural functions? This is just appalling! In my view, preserving and managing this wetland should be essential, fundamental, when anything is planned for the eastern end of the Midway.

Third, this site is not ideal for a playground anyway! It happens to be surrounded on three sides by busy roads and on the fourth side by a railroad embankment carrying Amtrak, freight and Metra trains. I have looked at this site and it is not safe given that there are inadequate barriers between traffic and those who would use the playground, in particular children. Why choose this unsafe site?

Last, according to the Chicago Park District, the construction budget for this project is \$3 million, and so far the Park District has secured only \$300,000 of this money. And I'm sure that a big portion of this unsecured funding is to install the water-diverting pipeline I mentioned above. Why not locate this playground in a site that would be much less expensive and would not involve the cost of draining a wetland? I just do not understand this!!!

Please reject this proposal and ask the citizens and community organizations in the area to work with the Park District on alternative sites. It would be a much better use of money; it would be safer; and it would save an environmental treasure.

Thank you for your consideration.

Patty Iverson

CPD application for the East End of the Midway

Rena Dascal <rdascal@gmail.com>

Tue 4/18/2023 4:50 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

To Whom it May Concern:

I write to extend my full support for the construction of a playground on the eastern end of the Midway Plaisance, as proposed by the Chicago Park District in this application. I couldn't think of a more exciting proposition.

Not only will families coming to the Obama Presidential Center get to use this space, but community residents, both those who live north and south of the Midway, will be able to enjoy it, including my family that lives on 57th at Blackstone!

I do not agree with the position that MPAC has taken in opposition to this playground. The argument that this space should be preserved as "wetland" is ridiculous! It is currently a swamp that is uninviting and frequently inaccessible.

I hope you will approve this application! My boys and I look forward to playing at a new playground in the neighborhood!

Best,
Rena Dascal

// 5950 S. Stony Island Ave. (Hyde Park, 5th Ward) – Proposed Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection ordinance application submitted by the Chicago Park District //

renate gokl <gokl@sbcglobal.net>

Wed 4/19/2023 12:23 AM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

Dear Chicago Plan Commission,

I'm writing to express support of the Midway Plaisance Advisory Council's (MPAC) call to 1) amend the Section 106 MoA that mandates the removal of the Midway's wetland on its East End and 2) demand the City of Chicago and the Chicago Park District identify an alternate location for the UPARR replacement.

I urge the Plan Commission to reject CPD's plan and request a new, inclusive, and transparent planning process for the East End of the Midway. The selection of the eastern end of the Midway as the UPARR replacement site was a top-down designation dictated by the City of Chicago without any consideration of park-related values. At no time did the public have an opportunity to present, review, or comment on any alternative sites.

Replacing parkland with parkland is a net loss on the South Side and does not make any sense. There are underserved areas in desperate need of park and playground investments, and I urge the City to begin to resolve this issue by placing the playground in an area of greater need.

Additionally, it is critically important to consider the park's ecological and historic integrity. The eastern end of the Midway is designated as a wetland in an Environmental Assessment published on the City of Chicago's website. The CPD proposed to install water-diverting piping to try to replicate the wetland's natural functions. Instead, the wetland should be preserved and managed in a way that honors its natural integrity rather than controlling it. This area could become a model for urban wetland preservation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely, Renate Gokl

5950 S. Stony Island Ave. (Hyde Park, 5th Ward)-Proposed Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront protection ordinance application submitted by the Chicago Park District.

Robin Kaufman <kaufmanrjk@aol.com>

Wed 4/19/2023 7:26 AM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

I am writing to object to the use of the eastern end of the Midway to satisfy Chicago's legal responsibility to replace the recreational park space lost in Jackson Park as a result of the construction of the Obama presidential Center previously funded by the federal UPARR program.

This area is unsuitable and inappropriate for the following reasons, among others:

The area is functioning well as it is, without the need of spending millions of dollars to change its current use, which serves the area well.

There are very few children living in this corner of Hyde Park, which is well served by numerous playgrounds. The money would be better spent providing playground space in one of the many Chicago neighborhoods that is in serious need of park space.

The parking in that area is very limited, and putting a special-needs park there at the same time as eliminating 300 parking spaces in Jackson Park, and building the Obama presidential center, will unnecessarily tax parking in the area.

The Park District should work with the community to enhance the natural area as a place to sit, have free play and picnicking, while enjoying the wetlands, rather than spending money it doesn't have. They should be providing park space in a needier area such as West Woolawn.

Finally, as a disabled parent, the design I saw looked very unappealing. While there were a few activities for the disabled, there appeared to be more activities that were appealing but inaccessible to all. What is needed is universal design, where all the activities are suitable for everyone to play—and watch— together.

Thank you for your time.

Robin Kaufman
773-793-5116 After 1 pm.

Sent from my iPhone

Chicago Pak District Near Midway

Tom Coleman <thomas.f.coleman@outlook.com>

Mon 4/17/2023 2:01 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

To: Chicago Planning Commission

I recently learned that The Chicago Park District has applied to use the eastern end of the Midway to replace recreational park space lost in Jackson Park as a result of the construction of the Obama Presidential Center and funded by the federal UPARR (Urban Park and Recreation Recovery) program. While the goal of creating an all-inclusive playground is a good one, I do not think it should not be built at this site.

This replacement site was chosen without public input. Alternative sites could have been presented and reviewed, but there was never an opportunity for the public to weigh in. I have no doubt that accessibility advocates, park advocates, climate advocates, community residents, and public officials could collaboratively plan a wonderful, inclusive playground in another site that is safer, equally accessible and would not destroy a wetland.

Wetlands are a critical natural resource for wildlife and for carbon sequestration—and wetlands are being destroyed everywhere for “development”. The eastern end of the Midway is *designated* as a wetland in an Environmental Assessment published on the City of Chicago's website. I do not feel the Chicago Park District should be proposing to drain this important wetland and then spend all the extra money to install water-diverting piping in an ill-conceived effort to replicate the wetland's natural functions? In my view, preserving and managing this wetland should be essential, fundamental, when anything is planned for the eastern end of the Midway.

Thomas Coleman
Chapter Chair
Climate Reality Project Chicago Metro

Agenda item = 5950 S. Stony Island Ave. (Hyde Park, 5th Ward) – Proposed Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection ordinance application submitted by the Chicago Park District

Tom Tresser <tom@civiclub.us>

Tue 4/18/2023 5:37 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

Cc: bronwynnich@gmail.com <bronwynnich@gmail.com>

[Warning: External email]

Dear Members of the Chicago Plan Commission:

I am a long-time civic educator and public defender who has seen a fair share of bad plans for the use of public assets and resources. In 2008 I help create Protect Our Parks and we successfully sued the Chicago Park District and the Latin School to stop the privatization of Lincoln Ark at Stockton Drive. In 2009 I was a co-leader of the No Games Chicago campaign to deny Chicago the bid for the 2016 Summer Olympics – which, had we awarded them, would've destroyed and privatized hundreds of acres of public park land.

Now I wish to voice my opposition to another Park District plan which has contravened common sense as well as the well-established rules for siting new park facilities. I stand with the good people of the Midway Plaisance Advisory Council in their opposition to plans for the Midway Plaisance East End regarding the UPARR replacement. We call for a halt to the current plan being put forward by the Park District and a new, inclusive, and transparent planning process be put in place – one that sustains the area's historic and ecological integrity.

Tom Tresser

Civic Educator. Public Defender.

tom@tresser.com – 312-804-3230

To: Chicago Plan Commission
Re: Chicago Park District application 777,
Property address: 5950 S. Stony Island Avenue
Date: April 17, 2023

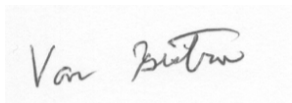
I oppose the construction of a playground at the east end of the Midway for the following reasons:

1. The site is a natural wetland and should be preserved in that form. Proposed draining of the wetland would require on-going, expensive maintenance and likely fall into disrepair.
2. The site is not adjacent to any neighborhood with concentrations of children who would use it.
3. The site of the proposed project is noisy and dangerous, surrounded by multi-lane, high traffic roads and busy railroad tracks. This is not a suitable site for children to play.
4. There is no proposed parking adjacent to the project area, leaving children and caregivers with only dangerous choices to avoid traffic.

The funds for this project would be much better spent if it were in an actual *neighborhood* with less traffic, pollution and noise and with safer, adjacent parking options.

Please reject this project.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Van Bistrow". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Van Bistrow
5421 S. Ridgewood Ct.
Chicago, IL 60615
vbistrow@gmail.com
773-667-1808

Midway East End Project

Vera Mccurry <commissioner751@icloud.com>

Wed 4/19/2023 7:23 AM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

Thank You Chicago Planning Commission for the opportunity to communicate with you. It is my honor to support the Chicago Park District's Midway East End Project. I am a mom, daily Midway and Jackson park user, and a community youth sports coach, referee, and advocate for community members to "come out and play" in our parks.

1. I support the revitalization of the open playing fields there. Thousands of children have played sports there in my 55 years living adjacent to the parks. I have spent hundreds of hours in the last 33 years cleaning up, painting Soccer practice field lines, and coaching practices on our Park District permitted open youth soccer fields there. I have supported and cheered on our Wolf Pack youth football practices on these fields. I have supported the many community schools teams who have used these fields for softball, track, football, and for Little League practices. These teams were made up of our children from local Woodlawn, Hyde Park, and South Shore schools. Parent volunteers from these teams cleaned up and maintained these Midway East End Fields for their children's teams. I have also participated in multiple community charitable runs and walks using this field that were composed of community members from Woodlawn, South Shore, and Hyde Park. These Midway East End Fields are large enough for two team practices at the same time, have free street parking, multiple benches for parents and visitors and accessibility by bus, bike, and wheelchair accessible paths. These fields brought our communities together. to socialize and support our children. Our diverse communities health, fitness, and social connections have improved by playing together on these Midway East open fields.

I am also proud to support the addition of this new inclusive play area allowing side by side play for children and adults who are differently abled with their "normal" peers. It is a beautiful and inclusive design that allows children, parents, and families of all physical and cognitive abilities to play here together. It will become the model of inclusion for play areas in parks around Chicago. I am honored that our communities of Woodlawn and Hyde Park have been chosen to host this inclusive play area.

It is also my honor to support the revitalization of the deteriorated walking and biking paths here. This will enable more diverse families to walk wheelchair, or bike safely here and also use these paths to connect safely from Woodlawn, Washington Park, and Hyde Park to the Lakefront trails.

Finally, it is my honor to support the revitalization of the Cheney-Goode women's memorial here. Multiple other memorials have been constructed on the Midway honoring men. This was one of the few early Chicago memorials honoring women. This memorial honors community members Flora Sylvester Cheney and Katherine Hancock Goode. Both were active organizers in the struggle to gain the right to vote for women. Both were founding members of the Illinois League of Women Voters. Both were among the first women to run for election to public office. Both were elected and served in the Illinois senate seat representing our local sixth Senatorial district. This rare early memorial to women was completed in 1933 and then severely vandalized, and left in repaired soon after its dedication. I am

proud to support the revitalization of this Cheney-Goode women's memorial so important to the women of our community and to the women of Chicago.

This Midway East End Project is going to inspire and encourage more community members to "come out and play" together and benefit from our improved Chicago Parks.

Thank you,
Louise McCurry, 50 year daily user of Midway and Jackson Park.

"5950 S. Stony Island Ave. (Hyde Park, 5th Ward) – Proposed Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection ordinance application submitted by the Chicago Park District".

wpaj@mac.com <wpaj@mac.com>

Tue 4/18/2023 12:16 PM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

To whom it may concern:

Please count my voice as insisting on a REVISED UPARR planning process for the East End of the Midway - one that subscribes to TRANSPARENCY.

The Midway is both a repository of ecological goodness, as well as a historically significant treasure-trove for the City.

Why anyone believes that Hyde Park needs further playground enrichment is beyond me. The funds that will be wasted on this soggy Bit of real estate should be reallocated to underserved South Side Communities. It would make great sense for an alternate site to be in a location (unlike this one) where the community welcomes its presence and there has been adequate planning for parking. Providing safe access for children crossing streets, would also probably be a good idea.

The present plan is not wanted by those deeply concerned with maintaining the integrity of the Midway. The fact that there have been no provisions made for parking raises a very real problem for the surrounding community. There is SO MUCH vacant land nearby - why select this particular location?

So, who is behind this ill formed plan and who stands to benefit from its realization? Certainly not the local community. Smells like politics as usual in Chicago.

How very sad.

Wendy Posner
50 year + Hyde Park resident