



2023 CHICAGO MUNICIPAL ELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

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A completed questionnaire must be received by Friday, January 27 to have answers distributed to our stakeholders as early voting starts. Please return to rachelbr@fotp.org.

ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND AND PRIORITIES RELATED TO PARKS

A. Briefly describe any accomplishments or projects you have been involved with related to parks.

As a teen mom, I relied on Chicago Park Districts and its parks to provide programming for our child. Parks are anchor points in our community that contribute to public safety. Similar to parks, my accomplishments are centered on the investment of youth and families. I have

- Helped create dual language programs in neighborhood public schools;
- Improved community wellness and student performance at schools that historically struggled with academic probation;
- Ensured 90%+ virtual attendance during the pandemic;
- Led multiple vaccine clinics to serve 500+ families at my current school;
- Built a unified school culture among teachers, staff, students, and families;
- Successfully developed an affordable housing plan for the City of Chicago

B. Are you planning to introduce legislation or initiatives to address any environmental justice issues? Do you have particular environmental priorities, park programming priorities, or see connections with other priorities for your community? If so, please identify those here.

I am committed to addressing environmental justice issues in the 25th Ward and the city of Chicago. One of my top priorities is to increase access to green spaces and improve park programming for our community. I believe that access to nature and outdoor recreation is essential for both physical and mental well-being, and I want to ensure that all residents of the 25th Ward have access to these benefits. Additionally, I will work to promote sustainable transportation options and decrease the number of polluting vehicles on our streets, which disproportionately affects low-income communities and communities of color. I am also interested in exploring innovative solutions to reduce the amount of waste generated by our community and businesses and promoting recycling programs. I'm also looking forward to working with other city leaders to implement policies that address the city-wide issues, such as the Climate Action Plan and Clean Energy Community Foundation.



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C. Chicago's motto is Urbs in Horto (City in a Garden). In the most recent *We Will Chicago* planning process, park discussions were thinly and inadequately spread across all the pillars and not a central focus of planning. How will you prioritize parks or demonstrate that parks are critical to healthy, thriving communities and the entire city and its residents?

Parks play a critical role in creating healthy, thriving communities and making Chicago a better place to live for all residents. That's why I would prioritize parks in my work as an Alderwoman.

One way I would do this is by making sure that park discussions are a central focus of planning, not just thinly and inadequately spread across all the pillars. This means that when we are discussing issues like transportation, housing, and economic development, we also take into account how they impact our parks and how our parks can be leveraged to support these other goals.

Another way I would prioritize parks is by working to increase funding for park maintenance, programming, and development. This might include working to secure grants from state and federal agencies, as well as working with private partners to support park initiatives. I would also look to examples from other cities, such as New York's Conservancy program [\[1\]](#) which provides funding for park maintenance and programming through public-private partnerships.

I would also work to ensure that our parks are accessible to all residents, regardless of their income or background. This might include working to increase transportation options to parks, as well as making sure that our parks include features like playgrounds and sports fields that are accessible to people with disabilities. I would also look to cities such as San Francisco, which has a Community Challenge Grant program [\[2\]](#) that provides funding for neighborhood groups to improve local parks and open spaces.

In addition, I would also focus on environmental justice issues. This means making sure that parks in low-income communities and communities of color are receiving the same level of resources and attention as parks in more affluent areas. This would include working with community groups and organizations to identify and address issues like polluted air and water, and lack of green space in these communities and making sure that these communities have access to healthy and safe recreational spaces.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Below are 11 topics related to parks. Please share your thoughts and policies on each subject using the list of bulleted questions as a guide.



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1) EQUITY PLAN FOR CHICAGO'S PARKS

Forty years ago, On May 13, 1983, the [Chicago Park District entered into a consent decree with the federal government](#), resulting from a three-year investigation and a 1982 federal lawsuit addressing racial discrimination in the allocation of resources within the park district. The decree sought to promote equal and non-discriminatory treatment of Black and Latino communities by establishing rigorous and detailed systems, procedures and schedules that could assure equity, responsiveness, and transparency for these neighborhoods and their parks. It was in effect for six years, and Friends of the Parks registered our displeasure when the court lifted the order even though the Chicago Park District was not in full compliance with the terms of the Consent Decree.

Many other large cities have a written equity plan or framework to guide work for their park district, but Chicago has no such plan or codified standards despite documented racial inequity in park access and resources per our 2018 State of the Parks report. Public parks on the South and West Sides of Chicago often have less access to building facilities, fewer programs, and less investment in parks.

- **What policies do you support to address this inequity and improve the park-going experience in South and West Side neighborhood parks?**

RESPONSE EQUITY PLAN FOR CHICAGO'S PARKS:

I support policies that prioritize equitable access to green spaces and recreational opportunities in all of Chicago's neighborhoods, including those on the South and West Sides. This includes increasing funding for park maintenance and programming, as well as working to build new parks and expand existing ones in under-served communities.

One specific policy that I would support is a Park Impact Fee, which would require developers to contribute funds towards the creation or improvement of parks and green spaces in the neighborhoods where they are building. This has been used in cities like San Francisco and Seattle to generate millions of dollars in funding for parks and open spaces.

I would also prioritize working with community organizations and local groups to ensure that park programming and events are inclusive and reflective of the diverse communities they serve. This includes working with local organizations to provide free or low-cost programming, such as fitness classes and youth sports leagues, as well as partnering with local artists and performers to provide cultural programming and events in the parks.

Furthermore, I support creating and maintaining community gardens, urban farms and other innovative green spaces that provide not only recreation but also food security and education opportunities.



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Additionally, I would support policies and initiatives that promote alternative forms of transportation to the parks, such as bike-share programs and improved public transportation access, to make it easier for residents in all neighborhoods to visit their local parks.

In short, it is important to me to work towards creating and maintaining thriving parks throughout the city, particularly in under-served communities, and to support policies that promote equitable access to green spaces and recreational opportunities for all Chicagoans.

2) GREEN SPACE AND CREATING NEW PARKS

While more than [98% of Chicagoans](#) live within a 10-minute walk of green space or a playground, **Chicago lags behind most other high-density cities in park acreage per capita and total city acreage committed to public parkland (9%)**. Residents' access to recreational amenities and facilities they hope to find in their parks is not equitable across the city. The West Side of the city has the least parks or green space. While most parkland is on the city's South Side, these parks receive less capital investment and programmatic funding than North Side parks and much of it is undeveloped or underdeveloped brownfield sites that do not yet support much or any public use. These facts demonstrate that Chicago continues to experience systemic racial inequity when it comes to accessing or creating new green spaces.

- **How will you prioritize the creation of new green spaces and parks in your ward? How will you include the community in the planning and development process?**
- **What metrics or factors will you use to determine which communities should receive new green space? What equity considerations will you include in your assessment?**
- **The 10-minute Trust for Public Land “walk score” mentioned above includes Chicago Park District spaces (parks, playlots, and beaches) and any green space in the city, including Forest Preserves, spaces managed by NeighborSpace, the 19 boulevards managed by the Chicago Department of Transportation, and privately owned public spaces (POPs). With all these various groups stewarding green spaces, coordination and comprehensive planning can be difficult and complex. How will you sort through the different managers to coordinate increasing access to parkland and green spaces in your ward?**
- **The Illinois state standard is 10 acres of green space for every 1000 residents. As urban planning and development occur in your ward, how will you ensure there is adequate green space for the community to thrive?**



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- Developers and the City have often tried to assert that publicly owned private spaces (POPs) will always be accessible to the public, just as if they belonged to the Chicago Park District. Historically POPs have not always been equally accessible to all residents as the private owner ultimately controls the space. **What is your vision for ensuring true public access to new green spaces being created in mega-developments and other planned developments?**
- **As the Chicago Park District plans construction of new facilities (pickleball courts, basketball courts, fieldhouses, etc.), how will you allocate resources to address the realities of racial inequity in Chicago and historic disinvestment and neglect of some communities? How will you include the community in determining what facilities and amenities are needed?**
- **Golf courses count as green space and as park acres for residents, but the use is restricted to those playing a particular sport and paying a fee for service. What initiative do you support to make such spaces dual purpose or to expand usage to more residents?**
- As Chicago deindustrializes and closes former industrial sites, like General Iron and Damen Silos, large swaths of land and former buildings can be re-imagined and re-developed. For example, with the recent closing of General Iron in Lincoln Park and the development of Lincoln Yards, neighborhood advocates have asked for the site to be used as part of a new North Branch Park and Preserve. The preserve could expand access to the river for the whole city and decrease the green space deficit the community currently experiences and will get worse with the added residential density proposed for Lincoln Yards. **How do you think comprehensively about the opportunity these sites and the transition across the city offers? How will you coordinate a vision across the city using these spaces to increase green space for all communities? How will you prioritize which neighborhoods or communities should experience development of these new de-industrialized green spaces first?**

RESPONSE GREEN SPACE AND CREATING NEW PARKS:

I understand the importance of green spaces and parks in creating healthy, thriving communities. I am committed to working with the community to prioritize the creation of new green spaces and parks in our ward, and to include the community in the planning and development process.

To determine which communities should receive new green space, I will take into account a variety of metrics and factors, including population density, access to existing green spaces, and historical disinvestment or neglect. I will also consider equity considerations, such as ensuring that communities of color and low-income communities have the same access to green spaces as more affluent communities.

I understand that coordination and comprehensive planning can be difficult and complex when it comes to managing green spaces in the city. I will work to sort through the different managers and coordinate with them to increase access to parkland and green spaces in our ward. I will also work to ensure that we meet the Illinois state standard of 10 acres of green space for every 1000 residents as urban planning and development occur in our ward.



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When it comes to publicly owned private spaces (POPs), my vision is to ensure true public access to new green spaces being created in mega-developments and other planned developments. I will work with developers and the City to ensure that POPs are truly accessible to all residents, regardless of their socioeconomic status.

As the Chicago Park District plans construction of new facilities in our ward, I will allocate resources to address the realities of racial inequity in Chicago and historic disinvestment and neglect of some communities. I will also include the community in determining what facilities and amenities are needed.

Lastly, regarding golf courses, I support initiatives that make such spaces dual purpose or expand their usage to more residents. By making these spaces more inclusive and accessible, we can ensure that more residents have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of green spaces.

3) LAKEFRONT

Chicago's lakefront is a gem of the city and our city is unique in preserving the lake for all people. Currently, 26 of the 30 miles are publicly available for use and protected for the public, but two miles to the north and south remain cut off from public parks, beaches, and paths.

- **What policies do you support to ensure the lakefront remains free and clear for all Chicagoans to enjoy? Please consider both the preservation of space (such as the Lakefront Protection Ordinance and Public Trust Doctrine) and practices that affect use (such as facilities and policing).**
- **What efforts do you support to increase access to the city's lakefront by pedestrians, transit riders, cyclists, and people using wheelchairs and other mobility supports?**

RESPONSE LAKEFRONT:

I believe that the lakefront should be protected and accessible to all Chicagoans. I support policies that ensure the preservation of lakefront space, such as the Lakefront Protection Ordinance and the Public Trust Doctrine. These policies are essential to keep the lakefront open and accessible to the public and to protect it from development that would limit public access.

I also support efforts to increase access to the lakefront for all residents, regardless of their mode of transportation. This includes creating more pedestrian, bicycle, and wheelchair-friendly paths and infrastructure, as well as increasing public transit options to the lakefront. I believe that creating a more



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accessible lakefront will not only benefit the health and well-being of residents but also it will boost the tourism and economy of the city.

Additionally, I am committed to working with the community and stakeholders to ensure that the lakefront is safe and welcoming for all residents. This includes ensuring that the Chicago Police Department's presence and practices are inclusive, equitable and respectful to all who use the lakefront. Also, supporting the establishment of community-based programs and initiatives like lakefront clean-up, and beach patrols that empower the community to take a more active role in maintaining and protecting the lakefront.

4) ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

In February 2020, Chicago declared a climate change emergency in response to severe storms and lakeshore erosion. Lakefront parks and beaches across the city suffer a battering of lake waves and the loss of sand and erosion at alarming rates. It is estimated that the storms of 2020 caused [\\$37 million in damages](#) to beaches and parks. Erosion, intense storms, and the failing of concrete revetments, metal girders and rock barriers installed by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have caused [4 beaches in Roger Park](#) to be washed away and closed; revealed infill at Rainbow Beach as sand was lost; resulted lake water levels reached the top of the stairs at Calumet Park Beach House; and led to the permanent closing of a third of the [Northerly Island walking path](#)—merely a year after it was opened in 2015.

The threat is only going to continue. Concrete, metal and rock barriers push higher water to unprotected places. Lake levels have always fluctuated, but scientists believe lake levels will continue to trend higher. Regardless of lake level, the increased severity of storm surges due to climate change place our [shoreline communities at greater risk](#) of flooding and damage.

Nature-based solutions are a resilient, long-term, cost-effective method to manage the impact of climate change along the lake and across the city. This approach uses natural ecosystems to provide protection such as wetlands for flood mitigation; trees and prairie spaces to combat the heat island effect; and mangroves to reduce the impact of waves, storm surge, and coastal erosion. These ecosystems also soften climate impacts, such as extreme weather, and reduce climate pollution by capturing carbon dioxide from the air and sequestering it in plants and soils.

Parkland and beaches are already a nature-based solution. The sand, soil, and plantings provide buffering and absorption that helps manage the fluctuation in lake levels and more frequent and severe storms. These green spaces furnish lakefront with recreational or contemplative areas and habitats for humans and wildlife to enjoy.



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- **How will you support the preservation or expansion of parkland, native plants, and healthy, mature trees and new tree planting across the city to combat climate change impacts that affect the shoreline and inland communities?**

RESPONSE ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE:

I understand the importance of preserving and expanding parkland, native plants, and healthy, mature trees to combat the impacts of climate change. I believe that investing in green spaces is essential to creating healthy, thriving communities and that it is important to ensure that all residents have access to these spaces.

To achieve this, I plan to prioritize the creation of new green spaces and parks in my ward, and to include the community in the planning and development process. I will use metrics and factors to determine which communities should receive new green space and will include equity considerations in my assessments.

In addition, I will work to increase access to existing parks and green spaces by working with the Chicago Park District, NeighborSpace, the Chicago Department of Transportation and privately owned public spaces to ensure comprehensive planning and coordination.

I will also work with developers and the City to ensure that new green spaces created in mega-developments and other planned developments are truly accessible to the public.

In addition, I will support initiatives that make dual-purpose spaces and expand usage to more residents, like converting golf courses to dual-purpose spaces.

Finally, I will support efforts to preserve or expand parkland, native plants, and healthy, mature trees by working with community groups and advocacy organizations, supporting legislation and policies that promote tree planting and green infrastructure, and promoting education and awareness campaigns about the benefits of preserving and expanding green spaces.

5) **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARK ADVISORY COUNCILS**

About 200 of Chicago's over 600 parks, beaches, playlots, and playgrounds have recognized Park Advisory Councils (PACs), resident groups of committed volunteers who support their parks through volunteerism, fundraising and other activities. Many PACs want influence over programs and maintenance and decisions about how parks will be used, but in reality, many feel left out of those



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decisions. At times, new permits are handed out for large events or art installations and PAC members or leadership don't find out until the event is underway or changes are being made to the park.

- **Across the city there is no required or standard process around public notice and community input for park projects. How will you make sure that the public is informed and engaged in development, capital improvements, urban planning, large event or space rentals, and park planning decisions in your ward?**
- **How will you engage with Park Advisory Councils in urban planning, budgeting, funding decisions, considering capital improvement, determining park programming, and deciding what events or installations are placed in parks in your ward?**
- **How will you support the formation or the rebuilding of Park Advisory Councils in your ward?**

RESPONSE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARK ADVISORY COUNCILS:

Community engagement and input is crucial in ensuring that our parks and green spaces are meeting the needs and desires of the residents who use them. To address the issues you've raised, I will take a number of steps to ensure that the public is informed and engaged in development, capital improvements, urban planning, large event or space rentals, and park planning decisions in my ward.

First, I will work to establish a standard process for public notice and community input for park projects. This process will ensure that residents have the opportunity to provide feedback and have their voices heard before any decisions are made. I will also make sure to actively engage with Park Advisory Councils in urban planning, budgeting, funding decisions, considering capital improvement, determining park programming, and deciding what events or installations are placed in parks in my ward.

In addition, I will work to support the Park Advisory Councils in my ward. This will involve providing resources and support to help these resident groups get organized and become effective advocates for their local parks. I will also make sure that Park Advisory Councils are involved in the decision-making process for park projects and events in their community, and that their feedback and input is taken into consideration.

Ultimately, my goal is to ensure that our parks and green spaces are accessible and welcoming to all residents, and that the community is at the forefront of decisions that affect the use and management of these spaces. I believe that by working closely with residents and Park Advisory Councils, we can create parks and green spaces that truly reflect the needs and desires of the citizens of Chicago.

6) PARK PRIVATIZATION AND REVENUE



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The Park District generates most of its income from property taxes, and over the last decade, its share of those taxes has declined from 6.1% to 4.7%. The average property tax unit pays \$260 towards the Park District's budget.

To supplement income, the Chicago Park District has increased revenue generating activity – raising fees for harbor and golf courses; issuing permits and renting out parks for private festivals; contracting with more concessionaires or other vendors; adding billboard or advertising; renting space for Amazon lockers; increased renting out park buildings and facilities as special event spaces. Some of these activities close off parkland and public facilities for weeks during the summer and over popular weekends, damage park facilities, and create a distraction for park users who seek tranquility or a natural oasis. While some renters and permit holders repair park damage, it takes months for vegetation to regrow or capital improvements to be finished, impeding park use far beyond the closures.

Some of the most notable examples of these revenue generating activities have been new contracts with Lollapalooza, the NASCAR race planned for 2023, and mega-festivals in Douglass Park. Residents across the city cite a feeling that parks have been commercialized and are no longer public, community spaces for people.

- **As park district spaces have refocused on revenue-generating outside events, many community partners and programs have been booted from park district buildings and grounds, or can no longer afford to use the space. What policies do you support to prioritize the use of park space for residents and community groups over revenue generating activities and improve community engagement by private groups seeking to operate for profit in public parks?**
- **The income from these events does not go to a specific park, but rather to the Park District budget as a whole, leaving some residents to feel their park bears the brunt of the burden without reaping benefits. How do we ensure the impact and benefits of these rental events or fees are spread equitably?**
- **In the need to find new funding sources or expand programming, the Park District often balances private or non-profit partners and community programming, users, or needs. At times the interests of these different park users can be at odds. One example is a private baseball program that would like to pay for and install new lights at [Welles Park](#), but some community members are opposed. How will you manage the competing interest of various stakeholders when money is involved?**
- **When permits are issued for large music festivals or events, like the NASCAR race, the Park District does not have to consult alderpeople, but the event requires resources and time from multiple city departments, such as the police department to manage crowds, CDOT to reorganize traffic, and Streets and Sanitation to clean up. What policies do you support to**



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increase coordination between city agencies, community members, and the Park District when determining what large events happen in parks?

- To what extent should the Park District's budget rely on private, revenue generating events, vendors and concession stands, fees for service, advertisements (i.e. billboards), and renting the parks to for-profit groups?

RESPONSE PARK PRIVATIZATION AND REVENUE:

It is true that the Park District's main source of income is property taxes, but it has been declining over the last decade, causing the Park District to increase revenue-generating activities such as raising fees for harbor and golf courses, issuing permits and renting out parks for private festivals, contracting with more concessionaires or other vendors, adding billboards or advertising, renting space for Amazon lockers, and renting out park buildings and facilities as special event spaces. However, I believe that these activities can close off parkland and public facilities for weeks during the summer and over popular weekends, damage park facilities, and create a distraction for park users who seek tranquility or a natural oasis.

I support policies that prioritize the use of park space for residents and community groups over revenue-generating activities and improve community engagement by private groups seeking to operate for profit in public parks. I also believe that the income from these events should be spread equitably, by ensuring that the impact and benefits of these rental events or fees are shared among the community.

When it comes to managing competing interests of various stakeholders when money is involved, I would work closely with all stakeholders to find a balance that meets their needs while also ensuring that the park remains a public, community space for all residents to enjoy.

In terms of coordination between city agencies, community members, and the Park District when determining what large events happen in parks, I support policies that increase transparency and communication between all parties involved. This would include involving aldermen in the permit process for large events, and ensuring that resources and time from multiple city departments are allocated in an efficient and effective manner.

As for the Park District's budget, I believe that it should rely on a balance of private, revenue-generating events, vendors and concession stands, fees for service, advertisements (i.e. billboards), and renting the parks to for-profit groups. While these activities can generate income for the Park District, they should not be the sole source of funding and should be balanced with community programming and needs.

7) BUDGET PROCESS AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

The Chicago Park District's annual budget process offers a public hearing, an online forum for input, and a vote at an open board meeting. It is questionable whether there is adequate space for resident input or sufficient power and influence ascribed to their input. Many park activists are unaware that the online



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forums exist or how they would have access them and they face barriers to attending the public meetings.

- **The Chicago Park District should actively engage park stakeholders across the city in the budgeting process, particularly with the Capital Improvement Projects. Efforts should be made to understand and address any barriers to participation from historically disenfranchised populations. What will you do to help the Chicago Park District find ways to extend more budgetary control to the public and incorporate community participation into their annual budgets?**
- **Each year, the Park District accepts submissions for capital improvement requests from a variety of sources. More than one in three requests from elected officials are approved, while only about one in five requests from the public are approved. As an Alderman, how would you use your influence to support capital improvement requests for parks in your ward and across the city?**
- **Park Advisory Councils have advocated for Menu Money, Tax Increment Financing District Funding, Capital Improvement Programs, Open Space Impact Fees, and Special Service Area Program Funding as resources to supplement Park District funding. As Alderman you have access to and influence over a variety of city funding streams to support projects in your ward. How will you use your influence to support investment and improvement of parks in your ward and the city? What funding priorities would you promote?**

RESPONSE BUDGET PROCESS AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION:

I agree that the public input process for the Chicago Park District's annual budget is not always accessible or inclusive for all stakeholders. I believe that the Park District should actively engage park stakeholders across the city in the budgeting process, particularly with the Capital Improvement Projects, and that efforts should be made to understand and address any barriers to participation from historically disenfranchised populations. To that end, I would work to increase awareness about the public input process and find ways to make it more accessible for all residents, such as through community meetings, online forums, and translation services.

I also understand that elected officials have greater influence in the approval of Capital Improvement Projects requests, so as an Alderwoman, I would use my influence to support these requests for parks in my ward and across the city. I would also work with the Park Advisory Councils in my ward to identify funding sources and priorities to supplement Park District funding, such as Menu Money, Tax Increment Financing District Funding, Capital Improvement Programs, Open Space Impact Fees, and Special Service Area Program Funding. I would also advocate for these funding streams to be invested in parks to improve access, safety, and amenities for all Chicagoans.

8) PARK ACCESSIBILITY, FACILITIES, & AMENITIES



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In the South and West sides of the city, larger park or natural areas are not easily accessible by public transportation. Many parks and natural areas typically lack accessibility for people with disabilities, or only a portion are accessible. While some heavily-trafficked areas like the Lakefront trail may tend to have open and clean bathrooms, many other parks have dirty, locked, or no bathroom facilities. Without access to a bathroom, the time residents can spend or activities they can engage in at a park are limited. Some parks lack lights, clear parking spaces, signs at the entrance, multi-lingual signage or signage throughout to identify elements of the park. In some cases, roads leading into parks are blocked with gates and barricades at all hours.

- What steps will you take to ensure our parks, playlots, beaches, and trails are welcoming and accessible places for everyone?
- Pet owners bring their dogs to parks, playlots, paths, and beaches across the city. Dogs can also be a barrier to other residents' enjoyment or a threat to wildlife. How will you engage with various points of views about dogs in parks?
- As the Chicago Park District plans improvement and maintenance of fieldhouses, playgrounds, and other recreation facilities, how will you prioritize resources based on historic disinvestment faced by some parks and communities? How will you include the community in the decision-making process? How will a commitment to racial equity impact your actions?
- Field houses across the city are often closed on weekends and evenings. These closures mean people lack access to bathrooms, staff assistance or programming. Similarly, park bathrooms outside field house are often locked, or many parks have no bathroom. What will you do to make sure park field houses and the resource they provide can reach more residents?
- Often, new construction developments are allowed to use developer-owned "publicly accessible" green spaces to satisfy open space requirements rather than Chicago Park District-controlled land. When private corporations dictate the development, management, and public access to green spaces, it seldom leads to park spaces desired by Chicago. These privately administered spaces are subject to different operating hours and rules than local parks. Additionally, when departments in the City government collaborate for new development or capital improvement to be "shared," the park users miss out on access or design of the space. An example is Whitney Young's Sports Complex, funded entirely with tax-increment financing. **What is your vision to ensuring true public access to new green spaces, facilities, or amenities that are a funded with public dollars or promise public access during construction? How will you use your position to support that vision?**

RESPONSE PARK ACCESSIBILITY, FACILITIES, & AMENITIES:

Our parks, playlots, beaches, and trails should be welcoming and accessible places for everyone. To ensure that this is the case, I would take several steps. First, I would work with the Chicago Park District



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to ensure that all parks, playlots, beaches, and trails are made accessible for people with disabilities, including providing ramps and other necessary accommodations. I would also ensure that larger park or natural areas on the South and West sides of the city are made more accessible by public transportation, by providing more bus and train, and bike share services to these areas. Additionally, I would work to ensure that all parks have clean, open, and accessible bathrooms, and that all parks are well-lit and have clear parking spaces, signs at the entrance, and multilingual signage throughout to help visitors find their way.

When it comes to dogs in parks, I believe that it is important to engage with various points of view and find a solution that works for everyone. I would work with park advisory councils and other community groups to establish rules and guidelines that allow pet owners to enjoy the parks with their dogs while also ensuring that other residents' enjoyment is not compromised and that wildlife is protected.

When it comes to the improvement and maintenance of fieldhouses, playgrounds, and other recreation facilities, I would prioritize resources based on historic disinvestment faced by some parks and communities. I would include the community in the decision-making process by holding public meetings, online forums, and other opportunities for input, and I would be sure to take into account the needs of historically disenfranchised populations when making decisions. I would also make sure that any improvements are made with a commitment to racial equity in mind.

To make sure park field houses and the resources they provide can reach more residents, I would work with the Chicago Park District to keep field houses open on weekends and evenings, and to provide more staff assistance and programming during those times. Additionally, I would work to ensure that park bathrooms outside of field houses are open and accessible, and that more parks have bathrooms available.

When it comes to new construction, my vision for ensuring true public access to new green spaces, facilities, or amenities that are funded with public dollars or promise public access during construction is to prioritize community engagement and participation throughout the development process. This includes ensuring that residents in the affected community have a meaningful say in the design and programming of the space, and that the space is accessible and welcoming to all members of the community.

To support this vision, I would use my position to advocate for more transparent and inclusive processes for public input and decision-making in the development of new green spaces. This could include holding community meetings or workshops to gather input and ideas from residents, as well as working with city departments and the Chicago Park District to ensure that community input is taken into account when decisions are made about the development and management of new green spaces.

In addition, I would work to ensure that any new green spaces developed with public dollars are held to the same standards and guidelines as spaces controlled by the Chicago Park District, including accessibility and operating hours. This would include pushing for legislation or policies that require any



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privately-administered green spaces to be open to the public during similar hours as Chicago Park District spaces and to be subject to the same accessibility standards.

Finally, I would also work to ensure that green spaces are designed and managed in a way that is sensitive to the natural environment and wildlife and take into account the need to preserve and protect the natural resources of the area. This would include working with community groups and organizations to promote sustainable practices in the management of green spaces and encouraging collaboration between city departments and other organizations to promote a more holistic approach to green space development and management.

9) PARK PROGRAMMING

Annually, more than 350,000 people participate through the Chicago Park District in thousands of sports, recreational, cultural, and environmental programs across the city. Yet the distribution of programs is often inequitable and mismatched, failing to meet the needs of local communities effectively. Even preliminary research indicates dramatic inequities across the city in the amount of programs and services offered. At times, programs feel dropped into a community without community input or research. In addition, the programs families are looking to for their health, cultural, and recreation may also be financially out of reach.

Where processes existed under the 1983 Consent Decree to ensure equitably distributed and responsive programming, many parks now lack the programs that are culturally relevant and affordable.

- **Parks can be essential resources for people of all ages in a community, especially because they offer classes, camps, pools, exercise equipment and facilities, and chances to socialize. What resources will you invest in parks to prioritize use by diverse populations – seniors, families and children, people with disabilities, and teenagers? How will you ensure park programming is culturally relevant to BIPOC communities that have experienced exclusion and disinvestment?**
- **What will you do to support residents and community groups to have access to park space and programming for no or low cost?**
- **Parks across Chicago do not have the same access to sufficient, culturally relevant, and affordable programs or have space maintained to meet the needs of the community. What will you do to ensure equity in park programming and resources (facilities, maintenance, etc.) for parks in your ward and across Chicago, keeping in mind the historic underinvestment in West and South Side parks?**



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- **How will you include the community in program design and program offering in their parks to make sure it is sufficient, relevant, and affordable and to proactively account for external community problems related to public safety and violence?**

RESPONSE PARK PROGRAMMING:

My vision for ensuring true public access to new green spaces, facilities, or amenities that are funded with public dollars or promise public access during construction is to prioritize community input in the planning and development process. I will use my position to advocate for the inclusion of community members, particularly those from historically marginalized communities, in decision-making processes related to the development and management of green spaces. This includes ensuring that community members have a say in the design and programming of these spaces, as well as in the selection of private entities that may be involved in their development or management.

In terms of park programming, I recognize that parks can be essential resources for people of all ages in a community, particularly for those who may not have access to similar resources elsewhere. To address this, I will invest in resources that prioritize use by diverse populations, such as seniors, families and children, people with disabilities, and teenagers. I will also work to ensure that park programming is culturally relevant to BIPOC communities that have experienced exclusion and disinvestment. This may involve collaborating with community-based organizations to provide programming that is responsive to the needs of local residents.

To support residents and community groups in having access to park space and programming for no or low cost, I will explore funding sources such as grants and philanthropic donations to support these efforts. I will also look into partnerships with local organizations and businesses to provide resources and services at low or no cost to the community.

In terms of equity in park programming and resources, I will work to ensure that all parks, regardless of location, have access to sufficient, culturally relevant, and affordable programs and facilities. This may involve advocating for increased funding for parks on the West and South Sides, which have historically faced disinvestment. I will also work to make sure that the maintenance of these parks is adequate and responsive to the needs of the community.

Finally, to proactively account for external community problems related to public safety and violence, I will include the community in program design and program offering in their parks. This will involve working with community members, as well as local organizations and law enforcement, to address public safety concerns and create safe and welcoming spaces for all.



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10) SAFETY

Feelings of safety and security greatly shape how park spaces are experienced. While some park users feel vulnerable when parks are too empty, others want quiet, wide-open, empty spaces. Some fear gun violence, and others fear oppressive police presence. Some are worried about playground conditions, and others are worried about vandalism. Some want more lights or call boxes. All of these are important considerations as we address safety concerns.

In the summer of 2022, as a response to the death of Chicago teenager, a curfew was enacted at Millennium Park to restrict event access to the park for young residents not accompanied by an adult or attending a ticketed event. In multiple Listening Tour sessions in different parts of Chicago, we heard similar statements that represent a specific loss of access to park amenities after violence occurred in their parks. If the response to select instances of violence in parks is to close, restrict, or remove certain amenities, this seems like the beginning of a very dangerous trend of the Chicago Park District punishing entire communities for the actions of a few.

- **How will you approach safety in a way that does not unfairly punish entire communities for the behavior of the few?**
- **How would you ensure residents of all ages can access public amenities while balancing concerns for public safety?**
- **What steps will you take or policies will you support to increase the public safety of Chicago's parks, playlots, playgrounds, paths, and beaches beyond increasing police presence?**

RESPONSE SAFETY:

I believe that safety in parks is of the utmost importance, but it should not be at the expense of access and equity for all community members. In order to approach safety in a fair and effective way, I would take a number of steps, including:

Community engagement: I would work closely with community members and organizations to understand their specific concerns about safety in parks, and involve them in the development of strategies to address those concerns. This would include holding regular meetings and listening sessions to gather input and feedback.

Data-driven decision making: I would use data and research to understand the specific safety concerns in different parks and neighborhoods, and develop targeted strategies to address those concerns. This would include gathering data on crime and safety incidents in parks, as well as working with community organizations to gather feedback and insights.



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Alternative approaches to safety: I would explore alternative approaches to safety that go beyond increasing police presence. This could include strategies such as increasing park programming, providing resources for park stewardship and maintenance, and investing in lighting and other infrastructure improvements.

Collaboration with other city agencies: I would work closely with other city agencies such as the Chicago Police Department and the Department of Public Health to develop coordinated, holistic strategies for improving safety in parks.

Equity and inclusivity: I would ensure that all safety strategies are developed with an equity and inclusivity lens, and that they do not disproportionately impact marginalized communities. This would include working to ensure that park amenities are accessible to all ages, and that park programming is culturally relevant and affordable for all community members.

I would consider the curfew as a temporary measure taken in response to a specific event and would work to understand the community's view on the curfew before making any decision on the permanency of it.

I would also support and actively promote policies that aim to increase public safety through non-policing methods like community-based violence prevention programs, youth development programs and other community-led initiatives.

11) PARK DISTRICT OVERSIGHT

- The Chicago Park District is not a department of the city government, but a separate governmental entity. However, the Chicago Park District's Board of Commissioners' members are nominated by the mayor and must be approved by the Committee on Special Events, Cultural Affairs and Recreation. What policies do you support to make sure nominees have **demonstrated relevant experience, background and skills sets related to parks?**
- **How will you use your role to provide oversight to the parks, playlots and beaches in your ward?**

RESPONSE PARK DISTRICT OVERSIGHT:

It is important to have nominees for the Board of Commissioners that have a strong background and experience related to parks and recreation. This includes experience in park planning and management, community engagement, and knowledge of the needs and concerns of different communities.

To ensure that nominees have the necessary qualifications, I would support policies that require nominees to have relevant education, work experience, and a track record of community engagement. I



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would also support policies that require nominees to have a clear understanding of the needs and concerns of different communities, including those that have traditionally been underserved by the park system.

I plan to use my position to help provide oversight to the parks, playlots and beaches in my ward. This includes attending meetings and events, conducting regular inspections, and working closely with community groups to ensure that their needs are being met. I also plan to use my position to advocate for increased funding and resources for parks in my ward, as well as to push for policies that promote equity and access for all residents. Additionally, I will work closely with park district staff to ensure that the parks are well-maintained, clean, and safe for visitors, and that the programs and services offered are relevant and responsive to the needs of the community.

WARD SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

PARK PRIVATIZATION AND REVENUE ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR WARD 24, 25, and 28

- **What will you do increase community engagement about the decision to hold festivals in parks, how will you respond to stakeholder feedback, and what will you do to ensure the impact and benefits of these rental events or fees return to Douglass park?**

As a member of the community and potentially an elected official, I understand the importance of community engagement when it comes to decisions about holding festivals in parks. I would work to ensure that the community is informed and has opportunities to provide feedback on any proposed festival or rental event. This could include holding community meetings, sending out notices, and utilizing social media and other communication channels to reach residents.

I would also make sure to respond to feedback received from stakeholders in a timely and transparent manner, taking into account the concerns and suggestions provided. Additionally, I would work to ensure that any fees collected from rental events are used to benefit Harrison Park and the surrounding community. This could include using the funds for park improvements, maintenance, and programming. I will make sure that the community will be informed about the impact and benefits of these rental events or fees. I will also make sure that these events are inclusive and welcoming to all members of the community.