



2023 CHICAGO MUNICIPAL ELECTION

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A completed questionnaire must be received by Wednesday, January 25, to have answers distributed to our stakeholders before 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.

Response:

I have walked the talk on environmental justice.

Hilco:

- Led and co-authored a letter to the Chicago City Council, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (ILEPA), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) asking them to address the cumulative impact of pollution in communities on the Southwest Side of Chicago.
- Led other elected officials in filing a formal complaint with the USEPA which led to the involvement of Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul.

I was:

- An early cosponsor of the Green New Deal Resolution
- Voted against the USMCA based on its failure to address the climate crisis

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.



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Response:

As Mayor, I am committed to:

- Creating more **open green space** so that Chicago will not lag behind other world class cities.
- **Green Infrastructure and Energy.** The *Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Bill* which I proudly advocated for is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build a new economy that will provide excellent wages for long-term careers. It will take hard work and creativity to take advantage of this opportunity, and I am committed to making that happen. This new economy will not only utilize the influx of significant federal dollars but also will leverage substantial funding that is available through Illinois' *Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA)*.
- **Green Jobs.** The new economic investments from the federal and state government and required utility funding constitute a generational opportunity to develop a workforce that is prepared to take advantage of and thrive in the Green economy. Chicago under my Administration will create a comprehensive and inclusive Green Jobs Program that serves Chicagoans of all ages, abilities, skills, education, races, ethnicities, places of origin, gender, veteran-status, and justice involvement, and in all places. .
- **Establish the Chicago Green Municipal Bank (CGMB).** This will use funds from the federal government, pension fund portfolios, the Illinois Climate Bank, philanthropy, and other institutions to create innovative financing products and bring the green economy to Chicago's historically underserved neighborhoods.

c. Chicago's motto is Urbs in Horto (City in a Garden). In the most recent



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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?

Response:

Parks are a huge priority. I am committed to creating more **open green space** so that Chicago will not lag behind other world class cities.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Below are 12 topics related to parks. Please share your thoughts and policies on each subject using the list of bulleted questions as a guide.

- EQUITY PLAN FOR CHICAGO'S PARKS
- GREEN SPACE AND CREATING NEW PARKS
- NEW BUILDINGS IN PARKS
- LAKEFRONT
- ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE
- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARK ADVISORY COUNCILS
- PARK PRIVATIZATION AND REVENUE
- BUDGET PROCESS AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION
- PARK ACCESSIBILITY, FACILITIES, & AMENITIES
- PARK PROGRAMMING
- SAFETY
- PARK DISTRICT OVERSIGHT

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



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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?

A site specific budget analysis should be conducted to demonstrate the investment gap. Ideally, the district would conduct a community engagement process detailing this analysis and ask impacted communities what park amenities would most resonate with the neighborhood and determine a capital improvement plan to address the needs over time.

RESPONSE EQUITY PLAN FOR CHICAGO'S PARKS:

2) GREEN SPACE AND CREATING NEW PARKS

While more than [98% of Chicagoans](#) live within a 10-minute walk of green



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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 across Chicago? How will you include the community in the planning and development process?

The City of Chicago needs to conduct community engagement generally on infrastructure spending, including the use of green space and investment in neighborhoods. Since the district is a sister agency of the city, the city would need to partner with the district to include its land in a citywide infrastructure engagement or host one itself. Getting feedback on public land use or investment needs directly from the community is a goal of my administration with transparency of the information collected from the public and then the decisions that result from that engagement.

- 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?

Environmental factors such as flood prevention and mitigation and the need for community space for recreation should be considered in the assessment. Creating a Department of Environment would help the city evaluate these community and environmental needs in the infrastructure planning process.



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Additionally, examining the permit approval process to ensure that land use that could impact green space access to the community is considered will be a priority as well. In an ideal situation the district would conduct properly scoped racial equity impact assessments that evaluate the impact of green space on communities and have the community inform the green space needs locally.

- The Trust for Public Land’s 10-minute “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 the city?

Coordination among these stakeholders is indeed a challenge, and one that my department of environment will need to address in partnership with the department of planning and development and the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities. After an analysis is completed by the district to identify priority investment areas, convening leadership from all impacted stakeholders should be conducted to see how we can address those gaps. City resources can assist in this aim, and coordinating with sister agencies is a must to make strategic investments to address the green space gap between neighborhoods.

- The Illinois state standard is 10 acres of green space for every 1000 residents. As urban planning and development occur, how will you ensure there is adequate green space for the community to thrive?

As a goal, this should inform a strategic plan at the Park District. City



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agencies should assist the district in analyzing needs in partnership with sister agencies, and together a plan should spell out commitments for all stakeholders going forward.

- 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 and City accountability mechanisms have been lacking. What is your vision for ensuring true public access to new green spaces being created in mega-developments and other planned developments?

Any future megadevelopments that include green space should be required to have open public access unless there is a demonstrated safety reason for limiting access. The city should develop criteria to ensure there are guidelines in determining the validity of limiting access with a goal of preserving public value of public space.

- 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?

We would like to maintain all existing facilities to respect the value they provide to the community in an efficient manner, but any new investment should prioritize disinvested community areas. The department of environment should work with the district in redirecting spending priorities.



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- Golf courses count as green space and as park acreage for residents, but the use is restricted to those playing a particular sport and paying a fee for service. What initiatives do you support to make such spaces dual purpose or to expand usage to more residents?

Chicago lags behind in open green spaces. My administration would prioritize increasing the availability of those spaces. Additionally, the fee structure should be examined and its revenue purposes clearly described.

- As Chicago 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?

The city has many natural amenities that are underutilized. Future use of these sites should be open to the local residents as the primary community with accommodations for citywide residents and visitors that preserve the character of the neighborhood and respect the ecology of the area.

RESPONSE GREEN SPACE AND CREATING NEW PARKS:



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3) NEW BUILDINGS IN PARKS

Chicago Park District spaces often share land with schools, museums or other public institutions. Most of the museums in parks are housed in a building or on the footprint of a former structure that already stood on the land—as opposed to new construction in a park. At times, new construction or renovations occur. Often city museums consult Friends of the Parks about these changes.

- What do you think about building new structures in Chicago parks?

The district should require any proposed structure be evaluated for its ecological impact and forecasted human use and a business case that is environmentally friendly should be proposed before any construction moves forward.

In 2022 an unpermitted, unapproved building project was undertaken in a non-democratic process, using state funds, by the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture in historic Humboldt Park next to the landmarked former stables building (and office of Jens Jensen). Please disclose any formal or informal leadership roles in the community that you have held or currently hold that relate to the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture and their plan to develop structures on public parkland.

- What did you know about or how were you involved with this project before construction was halted in September 2022?

I was unaware of plans to build the structure.

- How will you offer leadership to remedy this situation?

I will ensure community stakeholders are engaged for future construction.



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RESPONSE NEW BUILDINGS IN PARKS:

4) 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).

I support both the Lakefront Protection Ordinance and Public Trust Doctrine. Safety along the lakefront is also a challenge for the city, and a comprehensive strategy for safety management during warm months with ecological preservation in mind should be developed.

- 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?

Maintaining and expanding accessible infrastructure is key to providing all Chicagoans and visitors with access to the lakefront. As part of the infrastructure engagement related to Parks, getting community input on the needed and desired accessibility infrastructure will be helpful in maintaining and expanding access.

RESPONSE LAKEFRONT:



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5) 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 [four beaches in Rogers 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.



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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 the lakefront with recreational or contemplative areas and habitats for humans and wildlife to enjoy.

- 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?

Working with preservation-oriented organizations, the department of environment, the department of planning and development and the district will develop a strategy for ecological preservation of our tree canopies, plants, water resources and wildlife, with climate resilience as a focus. All hands on deck are needed to make Chicago resilient to climate change.

- In 2022, a [community ballot referendum](#) in the 5th, 7th, and 10th Wards asked the city to stop cutting down trees in Jackson Park and the area



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surrounding the South Shore Cultural Center passed by 82%. The trees are at risk due to the construction of the Obama Presidential Center and the proposals to merge Jackson Park and the South Shore Cultural Center golf courses into a new PGA golf course. As Mayor, how will you work to support the community's preference to save the trees in Jackson Park, the South Shore Cultural Center, and the surrounding community areas?

Going forward, conservation and remediation of the natural assets surrounding South Shore will be a priority, and any proposed project will have to develop a plan for preservation, as well as increasing public access to green space and increasing public green space. I am committed to increase use and access to green spaces and new uses as appropriate.

- What will you do to support vulnerable shoreline communities from the threat of flooding, erosion, and the impact of climate change?

As the effects of climate change continue, shoreline maintenance will be an increasingly burdensome investment, but one that literally protects our city from damage. The Chicago Shoreline Project was recently completed, but a reevaluation needs to be done to determine additional work. I am committed to protecting and expanding the shoreline to improve city safety and increase accessibility to our beautiful shores.

- A toxic dump occupies 50 acres of shoreline on one of the last critical pieces of land on the South Side to complete Daniel Burnham's vision of a park system spanning the entire Chicago lakefront. The [Chicago Area Confined Disposal Facility \(CDF\)](#) sits on Lake Michigan between the Calumet River and Calumet Park in the 10th Ward. The land is owned by the Chicago Park District but leased to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



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to store dredge until full. In 2022, the CDF maxed out the storage space and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has asked to expand the facility 25 feet vertically to keep it open.

The site, built in the 1980s, is a legacy of previous industrial uses of the river, the only industrial or toxic site on Chicago's shoreline, and is leaking into the Calumet River and Lake Michigan--leaking that could worsen with rising water levels and storm surges fueled by climate change, further allowing for the leaching of toxins into our drinking water. Chicago residents have waited almost 40 years for the land to be returned and created into a public park. As Mayor, what next steps do you support related to the CDF?

Protection of Chicago's water resources, especially in the wake of climate change, are of paramount importance. I would implore the Army Corps of Engineers to explore alternatives to expansion and to describe the forecasted need of the facility into the future to ensure the most environmentally friendly solution is identified for the region.

RESPONSE ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE:

6) 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 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.



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- 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 across the city?

The department of environment should create a standard decisionmaking and notification process that allows all stakeholders to weigh in on safety, maintenance, environmental and traffic issues to ensure decisions meet the needs of local residents and the city at large.

- 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 across the city?

Budget and infrastructure engagements will collect feedback on priorities from the city. The district should partner with the city or host its own engagement activities to understand community needs as well, and the department of environment in collaboration with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities can provide partnership support in that endeavor.

RESPONSE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARK ADVISORY COUNCILS:

7) PARK PRIVATIZATION AND REVENUE

The Park District generates most of its income from property taxes, and



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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 human and animal 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 recent 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 to the point that they threaten their role as 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?



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The district has to balance revenue generation with access. Some parameters or fund earmarking on corporate events would ideally be defined to demonstrate the local value of corporate events to residents. Every effort should be made to maintain access to the parks by community organizations. Property tax increases are limited under state law, so concessions and rentals are the most direct way to raise revenue to meet spending needs to increase investment in the parks system. As Mayor, I will explore every opportunity to invest in parks in an equitable manner.

- 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?

OMB and the Department of Environment need to propose a framework for investment equity for this purpose. There are many ways of approaching equity, and options should be explored and shared with public stakeholders.

- 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 wanted to pay for and install new lights at [Welles Park](#), but some community members successfully opposed it. How will you manage the competing interests of various stakeholders when money is involved?

Community engagement and private/not-for-profit partnerships are



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tricky and must be facilitated carefully. We want investment but the details and observable benefits require transparent scrutiny. An exploration of all alternatives and a grounded discussion on the benefits and burdens of these decisions should be explored at the site level. A racial equity impact assessment and public engagement effort should be done by the district in the impacted area to inform the discussion.

- When permits are issued for large music festivals or events, like the NASCAR race, the Park District does not have to consult aldermen, 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 increase coordination between city agencies, community members, and the Park District when determining what large events happen in parks?

That includes police overtime, costs to restore parks and streets — but also lost revenue from tourists who normally come downtown every Fourth of July weekend but now may stay away

- 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?

Chicagoans already feel significantly burdened by regressive property taxes. I’ve called for a comprehensive review on how to more equitably and fairly distribute the burden of paying for essential services like parks and schools. I’ve also proposed that the city look more internally at revenue options, but as a home rule unit, tax-related options are more varied than what are available to the Park District absent action by



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Springfield. These are great questions city departments should raise in infrastructure and budget engagements. It is indeed a delicate balance, and the benefits and burdens need to be discussed.

RESPONSE PARK PRIVATIZATION AND REVENUE:

8) 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 forums exist or how to 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?

I am committed to participatory budgeting and infrastructure engagements as part of the budget process throughout my tenure. I would encourage partnership with the district in this endeavor, or would offer support to the district to help them with their own facilitated engagement.

RESPONSE BUDGET PROCESS AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION:



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9) PARK ACCESSIBILITY, FACILITIES, & AMENITIES

In the South and West sides of the city, larger parks 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 on activities they can engage in at a park are limited. Some parks lack lights, clear parking spaces, signs at the entrance, multilingual 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?

Inclusive design principles for human infrastructure should be identified for all signage and pedestrian infrastructure in our public spaces. An inventory of this infrastructure should be developed at each site in order to ensure sites are accessible to everyone. The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities will stand-in as a collaborative partner with the Park District

- 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?



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Dog friendly spaces should be identified through park guidelines. Signage that alerts the public to proper dog management in the public interest should then be incorporated throughout the site.

- Many 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 houses are often locked, or many parks have no bathroom. What will you do to make sure park field houses and the resources they provide can reach more residents?

A wider discussion on the role of amenities and public safety needs to occur. A partnership with the district, the Department of Family and Support Service and the police department need to develop a strategy for access and maintenance of these facilities.

- 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?

The budget and infrastructure engagements should inform the decision making process. Facility condition assessments and priority areas of investment should be provided by AIS and OBM with guidance from OERJ to inform the discussion.

- Homeless encampments appear in parks across the city. For example,



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[Touhy Park](#) has seen an encampment in the park for almost 2 years. The Park District has moved some activities to neighboring parks. The Police Department and the City has a policy not to evict people staying on public land. What policies and actions do you support to address encampments that will manage the needs of the various people involved?

I have proposed a plan to address the needs and challenges of people who are unhoused. The Department of Housing and the Department of Family and Support Services should support the district in developing and communicating support options for encampment inhabitants.

- 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 ensure true public access to new green spaces, facilities, or amenities that are funded with public dollars or promise public access? How will you use your position to support that vision?

Standard public access hours as defined by the city should be applied to any publicly funded project. Otherwise, a different option should be explored.



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RESPONSE PARK ACCESSIBILITY, FACILITIES, & AMENITIES:

10) 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?

Sites should be in tune with their community, and community engagement should be a part of their mission. I would offer city departments



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to assist the district in developing annual programming plans that go through a local engagement process to ensure programming meets community needs.

- What will you do to support residents and community groups to have access to park space and programming for no or low cost?

There are different needs for affordability across the city, and the district should provide a framework for sites to consider. City departments can be a partner in that effort.

- 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 across Chicago, keeping in mind the historic underinvestment in West and South Side parks?

Assessment of present allocation, engagement, and budget response for infrastructure investment and programming dollars as described above.

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

Community engagement will inform programming annually as described above. Public safety concerns should be included in the engagement.

RESPONSE PARK PROGRAMMING:



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11) 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 a 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?

Safety is the responsibility of all Chicagoans and visitors. While I do not support banning communities from access, responsible utilization of public spaces is a necessity for access and safety for all. Large groups as defined by the park district in partnership with police should provide some guidance on acceptable use of the space for safety, and dispersal of persons not adhering to guidelines should be pursued by authorities.



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- How would you ensure residents of all ages can access public amenities while balancing concerns for public safety?

Amenities that cater to several different groups should be provided in our larger spaces as informed by the community with the design of said amenities with safety in mind.

- 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?

Ensuring there are clear sightlines and emergency notification posts are a strategy for larger areas, but a safety strategy should inform each site based on the amenities offered and community safety needs. Funding for safety infrastructure should be a priority and explicitly discussed in engagements.

RESPONSE SAFETY:

12) 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?**



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Some basic and preferred qualifications should be defined for Commissioner members, and orientation/training should be required to ensure appointees are stewards of our public assets.

- How will you use your role to provide oversight to the parks, playlots and beaches in the Chicago Park District as whole?

Appointment power is the main way the Mayor can ensure oversight of the parks, and regular consultation with Commissioners and through departments will be a specific way to weave the park district with city services.

RESPONSE PARK DISTRICT OVERSIGHT: