

## **Friends of the Parks 2016 Olympics Park Venue Sites**

Friends of the Parks supports the concept of hosting the 2016 Olympics in Chicago.

Since our inception in 1975, Friends of the Parks has worked as the strongest advocate to protect, preserve, improve and expand the use of public parks in Chicago. We believe that Chicago has been blessed by a great park system with public lakefront parks stretching for 26 contiguous miles. This park system in no small measure has made Chicago the great city it is. Friends of the Parks considers the Olympic 2016 plans from the perspective of the impact on parks and public spaces.

Friends of the Parks believes that the 2016 Olympics Games offer a unique opportunity to serve as a catalyst to revitalize the parks in neighborhoods. The Olympics also offer the opportunity to consider undeveloped land that could be used for venue sites and later converted into new parkland at the culmination of the 2016 Games.

In reviewing the 2016 bid book and the proposed venue sites and legacy projects, Friends of the Parks provides the following comments and recommendations:

### **Washington Park**

In partnership with other environmental groups, Friends of the Parks in 2007 developed Principles for the 2016 Olympic Games in Washington Park. We maintain our support for those principles (attached).

Specifically, we support the removal of the temporary stadium and the restoration of the site to the open meadow with ball fields for the sports activities that are currently being played by children and adults including Little League, Johnny Mack League, softball, hardball, football, soccer and cricket.

The plan to construct the Aquatics Center consisting of two swimming facilities north of the stadium in Washington Park is not a sustainable plan. There are two existing swimming pools located in Washington Park, one outdoor pool south of 55<sup>th</sup> Street and one indoor pool at 51<sup>st</sup> Street in the Dyett Fieldhouse. In addressing the sustainability issue, the Park District has not been able to

maintain the Dyett swimming pool for community use since 2005 due to the lack of funding by the Park District.

Friends of the Parks recommends that the Olympic Aquatics Center be located in a park that is in need of a permanent swimming facility for 2 reasons. First, Washington Park, a National Register of Historic Park site, would be harmed with the construction of inappropriate permanent buildings. Second, we recommend that the Olympic Aquatics Center be constructed in a park with a recognized need for swimming pools, and would, therefore, benefit a neighborhood with a permanent legacy project. Several near south side communities/parks have been identified in the Chicago Park District's Land Policies Plan and the city's CitySpace Plan as having a significant need for a swimming facility. These include: West Lawn Park, Marquette Park, Dawes Park, Rosenblum Park.

### **Douglas Park**

The BMX Track/velodrome is planned for Douglas Park north of the historic Douglas Park Fieldhouse. The velodrome appears to be located in the space of one of the school buildings that constitute Collins High School. What is the correct plan?

The plan calls for leaving the velodrome as a permanent legacy project by converting the velodrome to a mixed use community center. Friends of the Parks believes a second community center in Douglas Park is not sustainable on a land-use policy basis (there are currently 4 buildings in that location, 3 Collins school buildings and the Douglas Park Fieldhouse). Neither, can a second community center be sustained financially by the Park District.

Douglas Park has one existing community center, the historic Douglas Park Fieldhouse. Due to budgeting cuts over the last 5 years, the Park District has already reduced staff at Douglas Park Fieldhouse from 8 to 7 people. With budget cuts the norm, the Park District could not staff and support 2 community centers in Douglas Park. The velodrome should be a temporary facility.

### **Northerly Island Park**

Northerly Island Park is the venue site for canoeing, kayaking, sailing and volley ball. Northerly Island is an excellent site for these sporting competitions. The Olympic Island Sailing Center, Olympic Island Beach Volleyball Stadium are identified as temporary facilities which will be removed at the end of the Games. We support this plan.

However, the Olympic Island Slalom Course is listed as a permanent legacy project. It should be a temporary project. Northerly Island should be completely restored consistent with the natural area plan for Northerly Island. If there is an interest in a permanent white water kayaking venue, it should be constructed where there has been an identified need and only if it is financially feasible for the Chicago Park District to operate and maintain the Slalom Center without cutting other park programs.

### **Grant Park**

Grant Park is the venue location for archery, rowing and canoeing/kayaking. The Grant Park Archery Fields are temporary which Friends of the Parks supports.

The Monroe Harbor plan proposes to remove the diagonal breakwater on the south end of the harbor and construct a new breakwater stretching from the Shedd Aquarium north to Randolph Street. The proposed breakwater would be an improvement to the harbor and would allow for additional mooring slips after the 2016 Olympics.

A basic principle of Friends of the Parks is that the historic designation of Grant Park must have the highest priority. To that end Monroe Harbor should be returned to a mooring harbor and not a slipped harbor. That caveat includes maintaining DuSable Harbor's footprint with no expansion of slips south into Monroe Harbor.

In addition, the concerns for Chicagoans include the long construction period for Monroe Harbor. Monroe Harbor generates \$4 million annually in operating funds to the Chicago Park District for parks throughout the city. If the boaters are not allowed to use the harbor for 4 years for pre and post construction, the Park District and taxpayers stand to lose at current rates \$12 to \$16 million in operating funds that are essential for the entire park system.

### **Jackson Park**

The Jackson Park hockey fields will be located on the western edge of historic Jackson Park. The hockey fields are listed as permanent. If hockey fields can be used for soccer/football/cricket, having them as a permanent legacy project makes sense. If hockey fields can be used only for hockey, they should be removed at the culmination of the Games.

**Lincoln Park**

The Lincoln Park Tennis Center is to be located at Waveland at the current site where 20 tennis courts have been in operation for decades. The Lincoln Park Tennis Center is temporary, which we support.

However, according to the plan, the 20 existing tennis courts will be replaced with 12-14 courts. It is important that at the end of the Olympic Games, 20 tennis courts be returned for the public's use. In addition, the entire entrance/egress from Addison and Irving Parks should be improved. An improved park plan which would widen the narrow bicycle/pedestrian path to the west of the tennis courts by reducing the parking lot should be included in the final legacy plan.

Further, it is essential to protect the Jarvis Bird Sanctuary during pre and post construction as well as during the Games.

**Alternative sites**

Friends of the Parks suggests that consideration be given to the USX site for the proposed 81,000 person stadium or partner with a university that has need for, will use and has the funds to operate a permanent stadium after the Games.

<b>Park</b>	<b>Sports Venues</b>	<b>Permanent</b>	<b>Temporary</b>	<b>Friends of the Parks Recommendation</b>
Washington Park	Olympic Stadium	Festival/small stadium		Remove Olympic Stadium restore historic park

	Aquatic Center	Aquatic Center		Build Aquatic Center i needs swimming pool a legacy project in a n of need
Douglas Park	Velodrome	Yes as a community center		Remove velodrome at Douglas Park
Northerly Island	Canoeing/kayaking Sailing Beach volleyball  Olympic Slalom Center	Permanent	Yes Yes Yes	Remove Slalom Center Northerly Island Park
Grant Park	Archery Fields  Rowing/Kayaking	Harbor construction is permanent	Yes	Create harbor plan the boaters to use Monroe except for during the (
Jackson Park	Hockey Fields	Permanent		If hockey fields can be football/soccer/cricket permanent fields. If n for football/soccer/cric and restore Jackson F
Lincoln Park	Lincoln Park Tennis Center		Yes	Reconstruct 20 tennis Waveland to replace t number of tennis cour used by the communit the Jarvis Natural Are