Where do the Obamas stand?

As the plans for the Obama Presidential Center in Jackson Park move forward, so many of you express your disbelief to us. So many of you knew the Obamas—as neighbors, as colleagues, as friendly faces around Hyde Park—and you cannot believe that the decisions being made actually represent them. You tell us that you think that others are making decisions for them about which the former president and first lady are not aware. You cannot believe that the people you knew—the former organizer who came to Friends of the Parks for advice on increasing green space on the South Side; the local politician you helped propel into office; the former president whose legacy includes protecting public lands—would purposely deface the historic and architectural gem that is Jackson Park or speak to the community the way he did in his most recent public appearance in Chicago in support of the OPC. You cannot believe that the Obamas would not expect some resistance from the highly organized community that is Hyde Park and the South Side of Chicago. You cannot believe they would relate to the community in ways that feel to you like disrespect.

Many of you encourage us to try to correspond with the Obamas directly and try to get a private meeting with them. We remind folks that we sent the Obamas a letter early on in their process of selecting a city, welcoming them to Chicago but encouraging them not to take up public parkland for the library. We received no response.

Early in 2018, however, we met with Obama Foundation Board President Marty Nesbitt, CEO David Simas, and Chief Engagement Officer Michael Strautmanis at their request. They explained to us that the Obamas and the Obama Foundation had seriously considered the Washington Park neighborhood site that we had suggested—on 11 acres of vacant land across the street from the actual park—and had determined that the Jackson Park site would have a more significant, long-term impact on the community. They offered no details as to how they measured that, but they stated that they had looked at a 75-year time horizon for their analysis.

Much more recently, representatives of FOTP staff and board were present at Mr. Obama’s February 27 speech in Chicago to promote the Obama Presidential Center, in which he pushed back against detractors:

“Mr. Obama dismissed some of the concerns as arbitrary and negligible. He said the Chicago media are giving a disproportionate amount of air time to that ‘one person who was unhappy’ with the plans, regardless of ‘what the other 99 people say.’

“There’s going to be some folks who say, ‘Well, you know what, we want the tower moved just to the left,’” Mr. Obama said, mimicking the center’s critics. “Or, ‘You know, I don’t like how those trees are set up there.’ And then there are going to be some folks who say, ‘Well, I just like things just the way they are, so I don’t want you all to do nothing, ’cause it might be noisy if kids might be coming to the park, so I like it empty.’ I’m just telling the truth now.”

“You can never make folks 100 percent happy,” the former president added.” Washington Times, February 28, 2018.

To view the entire speech made by Mr. Obama, please visit the following link:

https://www.obama.org/chicago/

As we write, The Chicago Tribune reports that Tiger Woods acknowledged in a recent interview that Mr. Obama himself invited him to design a new golf course in Jackson Park and South Shore Cultural Center and Park. These golf course changes, along with the OPC campus itself, have been the catalyst the contemplation of a major overhaul of all of Jackson Park, which is embodied in the new South Lakefront Framework Plan vision. The Chicago Park District is scheduled to present this plan to its Board of Commissioners for approval at its April board meeting, though it has little funding committed for most of the components of the plan, as is typically the case with park framework plans.

In follow up, the Obama Foundation is planning to take their latest Obama Presidential Center plan to the City Plan Commission in May while the Chicago Park District also presents plans for a new track and field. The latter is to be paid for by the Obama Foundation because the OPC will displace the existing one.

(continued on p. 6)
Friends of the Parks Honors Our VIPs!

Friends of the Parks is pleased to honor the individuals, community groups, and public employees who make significant contributions to their neighborhood parks at our annual Volunteers-in-Parks Awards Reception. Known as the “VIP” Reception, this beloved event provides an opportunity to celebrate these unsung heroes who work to keep our parks healthy and vibrant. Award recipients are nominated by community members. We celebrated the 2017 outstanding volunteers and public employees at our 2017 VIP Reception on November 5 at Douglas Park Cultural and Community Center. It is an honor to share their stories and recognize their tireless commitment to our green spaces.

David Kostelansky, Stewardship Award. A dedicated advocate for Lake Shore Park in the Streeterville community and PAC President, David has secured grants and volunteers to beautify the park and has helped ensure it is accessible to all.

Sedonia Phillips, Stewardship Award. Sedonia formed the Bell Park PAC and continues to serve as its Treasurer. She has revitalized the park’s long-neglected gardens and even secured a donation of tulips from the King and Queen of the Netherlands!

Perry Starks, Outstanding Chicago Park District Employee Award. A fixture at the Garfield Park Gold Dome Field House, Perry has served the park for three decades. Besides being a Chicago Park District employee, he runs youth hockey programs and is a founding member of the Garfield Park Advisory Council.

LaToya Scott, Outstanding Chicago Park District Employee Award. LaToya’s attention to Pottawattomie Park users is hard to miss. She is dedicated to building trust and respect with the young people who attend programs and visit the park.

Dr. Jeffrey Rogers, Individual Volunteer Award. Jeffrey offers his youth bootcamp-style mentoring program, “BackPacks and Boots,” in Dawes Park, where he is also a PAC member. He gives back to his community and, as he puts it, “ultimately the world.”

Stanley Jones, Individual Volunteer Award. Stanley’s passion and dedication showed through as he promoted, organized, and co-hosted the Dawes Park “Community Family Fun Day Celebration” to help the community heal from a recent loss. As President of the PAC, Stanley spearheaded the 2017 Earth Day event, contributes to the Dawes Park Teen Leadership Connection, and creates opportunities for youth.

Mercedes “Meche” Alvarez, Advocacy Award. Meche, President of the La Villita Park Advisory Council, dedicates her time, resources, and creative ideas to her park, planning fundraisers and events that integrate the park into people’s lives. Due in part to Meche’s leadership, La Villita Park has been violence free for three years and a model of community health.

Jackson Park Watch, Advocacy Award. Spearheaded by Margaret Schmidt and Brenda Nelms, Jackson Park Watch incorporates various strategies to advocate for transparency of park processes and funding. They have been a key part of the local groundswell to affirm that it is legitimate to ask questions and challenge both local informal and formal authorities.

Hamilton Park Advisory Council, Park Advisory Council Award. Formed only three years ago, this PAC works closely with local groups, residents, and other partners to raise awareness of the Hamilton Park Cultural Center, increase program enrollment, and bring physical improvements. More than 250 residents came out for its first fundraiser with an African Pop Up shop and the art work of local Englewood artists.

Resident Association of Greater Englewood (R.A.G.E.) Community Group Award. Since 2012, R.A.G.E. has promoted local parks and developed a resident-led festival for families that has become known for bringing peace and families to the parks. It has transformed public spaces into places of art and activism, showcasing local talents and encouraging residents to reclaim their parks.

Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA), Community Group Award. As a longstanding neighborhood organizing leader and convener of the Logan Square Quality of Life Plan, LSNA has led and supported local efforts around neighborhood parks. LSNA was among the early promoters of the idea that became The 606, and along the way it organized youth and families to engage in planning the trail and its feeder parks.

Here at Friends of the Parks, we know our parks would not be as amazing as they are today without all of the residents, organizations, park employees, and others who support them.
Spring Reflections on the Storms
By Juanita Irizarry, Friends of the Parks Executive Director

This spring marks my two-and-a-half year mark as executive director of Friends of the Parks, and this period has been jam-packed! With two back-to-back “100 year storms” in the form of the Lucas Museum and the Obama Presidential Center, we have navigated turbulent waters. As you know, while maneuvering through executive director transitions, we beat the odds to save Chicago’s lakefront. And now our days are occupied with rebuilding organizational capacity while managing a complex set of strategies and relationships on the ground in the face of the Obama Foundation’s encroachment on public land.

While we don’t have a legal path to victory as we did with Lucas, we are deeply committed to calling for a comprehensive and transparent park planning process and the replacement of all green space and amenities displaced by the Presidential Center. Meanwhile, we will not stop saying that we warmly welcome the honoring of President Obama’s legacy in his and the former first lady’s hometown and South Side neighborhood - but not on parkland. Using vacant land across from Washington Park would more fully and appropriately reflect the legacy of the leader who prioritized the preservation of public land during his presidency and had even asked Friends of the Parks for advice on increasing green space on Chicago’s South Side during his days as a community organizer.

I’ve not been alone in reflecting on the flood of challenges we have confronted these last couple of years. Our board of directors is reviewing our history and an environmental scan as part of strategic planning. One thing that has become crystal clear as we analyze the Lucas and Obama struggles is the imperative to raise up a much larger and more diverse cadre of park advocates across Chicago. Many of you were the wind beneath our wings during the otherwise lonely fight to save our lakefront. But it is extremely important that a more broad and diverse cross-section of voices publicly discuss the pros and cons of the public subsidization of the Obama Presidential Center via the usurpation of parkland. As our parks face attack after attack, Chicago urgently needs a stronger team of folks to swim against the tide and to keep our collective eyes on all of these spaces and issues.

Stakeholder input for strategic planning affirmed Friends of the Parks’ unique value as a fierce advocate for our parks. Yet we know that for some, just getting out to enjoy our parks or to coordinate community activities can be the entry point to activating a deeper passion for defending our green spaces. So this year we will organize around the 125th anniversary of the World Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park and the Midway Plaisance as a way to introduce more Chicagoans—including younger generations—to the key role that parks play in the development of this great city.

These themes will inform our conversations and complement a strategic plan presentation at our annual membership meeting, which will take place at our 2nd Annual “Parks as Democracy?” conference. So please mark your calendars for June 8 and 9! The day-and-a-half event will kick off with our annual luncheon, include an evening membership gathering, and offer workshops and other opportunities to discuss what it means for parks to be democratic spaces. We’ll also use the occasion to launch our 2018 “State of the Parks” report. You’re really not going to want to miss this!

Engaging new and old friends in educational visits to parks, lectures about parks, and inspirational conversations on park advocacy will be key to growing our membership and more deeply investing in the future of park advocacy in Chicago. We know you care about that, and we hope you will join us in thinking about ways to collaborate with us. Plus, members get a discount for our don’t-miss conference! So please join us or renew your membership today, and find some friends to come along on the ride with you! To become a member, please use the enclosed envelope or click on the following link: https://fotp.org/get-involved/membership/
Each year, Friends of the Parks partners with Chicago Public Schools to provide educational field trips to 800 to 900 elementary school children, targeting grades 2-5, as that age range is ripe for becoming interested in science and the environment. Programming includes fall, winter, and spring visits, allowing participating classrooms to come just once or once each season to experience nature in different seasons. FOTP staff also offer teachers support in connecting the field trip experience to the classroom science curriculum.

In February, FOTP wrapped up our winter Nature Along the Lake program. It was a fantastic season of connecting young students to their own public natural areas and lakefront assets. Those classrooms not quite ready for a winter adventure along the lake hosted Friends of the Parks in their schools. We conducted nine field trips serving 10 classrooms and visited eight classrooms at four schools.

In addition to visits to Montrose Point, this school year we are piloting trips to Eggers Grove next to Wolf Lake. We formerly had a regular South Side Nature Along the Lake site and discontinued it a number of years ago, though we have continued to serve South Side schools at the Montrose site. This year, we have boosted our efforts to not only recruit to the program additional schools located on the South Side of Chicago but also to find a new site to regularly expose South Side youth to nature and the lakefront in their own front yard. FOTP looks forward to further recruitment and outreach across the city, with an emphasis on the South Side in the years to come.

We often find that about 25 percent of the students we work with have never been to Lake Michigan! This existing programming and expansion of our geographic offerings gels with our priority to further invest in raising up a deep and broad set of next-gen park and lakefront stewards and advocates.

### Photos (from top to bottom)
1. Students from George Washington Elementary School participate in one of the pilot field trips at Eggers Grove.
2. Friends of the Parks’ Nicole Machuca visits a classroom at George Washington Elementary School on Chicago’s southeast side.
3. Students visit Montrose Point for Nature Along the Lake.

### Photos (Page 5 from top to bottom)
1. South Shore community members participate in a mapping exercise to imagine what they would wish for in their parks in the southeast coastal zone.
2. South Chicago and East side residents gather in the Calumet Park Field House to discuss park developments on the southeast side in December, 2017.
Park Planning in the Calumet bears fruit for the Last Four Miles

Two years ago, Friends of the Parks set out to refresh our Last Four Miles Initiative vision for uninterrupted public access to Chicago’s lakefront. The ultimate goal remains the same, but a number of years had passed since we conducted charrettes and launched the plan. So we set out to re-establish and deepen relationships with Last Four Miles stakeholders, with an emphasis on the south east side. This strategic choice was derived from the intersection of a number of internal and external priorities: a desire to make sure we are in tune with the needs and desires of South Siders; a new 10th Ward alderman who is friendly with FOTP; a new emphasis in Chicago on activating our rivers—including the Calumet—via the City’s Great Rivers Chicago vision; growing momentum around improving South East Side amenities in light of the Obama Presidential Center; and a change in ownership of and new energy around potential development of the former South Works site.

Listening Tours and Southeast Coastal Zone Planning Meetings. Some who have heard of our Last Four Miles vision have wondered why the area needs more parkland; they deem the existing South East Side green and blue space to be underutilized. This informed our effort to reach nearly 200 residents through Listening Tours and Planning Meetings over the last year-and-a-half to promote environmental stewardship, connect with the State’s Illinois Coastal Management Program (ICMP) priorities, support the ICMP goal of preserving, protecting, and enhancing the resources of the Illinois Lake Michigan Coastal area for this and future generations, all while assessing and fostering interest in the Last Four Miles Initiative. Our listening and planning meetings in South Chicago, South Shore, East Side, and Hegewisch—many in collaboration with the Alliance for the Great Lakes—have helped residents articulate their desires for Coastal Zone parks, beaches, and open space, and set the stage for formation and/or enhancement of Park Advisory Councils (PACs).

Calumet Connect. In follow up, Friends of the Parks has become part of Calumet Connect, a community-led planning project flowing from the Great Rivers Chicago vision and funding through the collaborative Our Great Rivers fund. Calumet Connect is facilitated by the University of Illinois at Chicago Great Cities Institute and the Alliance for the Great Lakes. Other collaborating organizations include Chicago Public Arts Group, Claretian Associates, Major Taylor Cycling Club of Chicago, NeighborSpace, South Chicago Chamber of Commerce, Southeast Environmental Task Force, and UIC College of Nursing. The project seeks to further capture the vision of Southeast Side residents, businesses, community organizations, and other stakeholders in South Chicago, Veterans Park, South Deering, and East Side, along the Calumet River. Calumet Connect is working with residents to organize cultural and arts events to activate sites along the river, including Steelworkers Park, as well as Calumet Park and Clara Schafer Park. We are leading efforts to organize stewardship groups to manage community open spaces and to form PACs for new parks. Activating riverside sites ties into both FOTP’s Last Four Miles agenda and our neighborhood parks agenda as we work with parks and park partners located at the confluence of the Calumet River and Lake Michigan.

New Parkland. All of this work builds on and enhances important strides we have made over the last handful of years to garner more public parkland on the south lakefront. The Chicago Park District gained 78 acres of public parkland from McCaffery Interests, the former owner of the old South Works steel mill site, for two new lakefront parks for South Chicago residents. Steelworkers Park in the 10th Ward has been created but is underdeveloped. Recently the Chicago Park District has applied for a permit to construct a watercraft launch at the site of a dilapidated stone revetment there that will include an ADA compliant ramp and staircase. CPD also has plans for a climbing wall at the site of the current ore wall, water fountains, park benches, and fencing. Friends of the Parks has also supported 7th Ward community planning for nearby Park 566, which is yet to be activated.

More recently, a new, environmentally-friendly owner of the South Works steel mill property is casting a vision to develop a “green” community with 20,000 homes and additional park land. As this property is public trust land and adjacent to several lakefront parks, we are pleased to be in conversation with the developers and others stakeholders about the future development of this site to ensure these parks meet the needs of both current and future South East Side residents.

New Southeast Side PACs. Most recently, FOTP hosted a mixer in the 10th Ward to introduce residents to local park opportunities and PACs, with 25 people attending. Several now are working toward forming PACs for Clara Schafer Park, Steelworkers Park, and Park 566. This is one of the many great results of the year-and-a half long process of intentionally engaging stakeholders on the Southeast Side through Listening Tours and one-to-one meetings.
PARK PLANNING & POLICY

Taking a Stand For Green Space in the South Parks (continued from p. 1)

The Obama Library Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) Coalition, of FOTP is an “ally,” is now demanding that the Chicago City Council pass a CBA ordinance before the Obama Presidential Center plans are reviewed by the City Plan Commission, since Mr. Obama himself has said repeatedly that he will not entertain conversations with the community about a CBA.

Though Friends of the Parks and others have appreciated that the Obama Foundation and the Chicago Park District have made some improvements in their process, schedule, coordination, and transparency in response to our repeated calls for such, we remain concerned that the stated timeframes for moving forward are too ambitious to account for the required Section 106/National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and Urban Park and Recreation Recovery (UPARR) federal reviews. Experts say the process should take two years, but it’s on a 1-year timeline. In response, Obama Foundation staff assured us at a meeting in early April that they intend to honor the Section 106 process. Obama formerly was in charge of the federal government’s review processes, after all. Yet the Obama Foundation intends to break ground this fall, even if all approvals are not in place.

Where does Friends of the Parks stand?

Some of you express your disbelief in Friends of the Parks. You cannot imagine why we are not suing like we did over the Lucas Museum. You share your disappointment that we are not standing in the way of the desecration of Jackson Park. You cannot fathom that we would take this encroachment lightly.

Let us ensure you that we do not take it lightly. We stand firm in our commitment to principle; we do not believe that parks are an appropriate site for real estate development, even a presidential center of a favorite son of Chicago. We have told the Obama Foundation so, and we say it every time we sit down with them.

But we do not see a legal path to victory in this case. The public trust doctrine tool will not win the day this time.

That said, we don’t want to just walk away because we disagree and can’t find a legal means to get our way. We have chosen to stay in the game and try to get as much benefit for our parks as possible, seeking what is called a “park positive” outcome, which would include the replacement of all green space and recreational amenities displaced by the Obama Presidential Center.

We stand on the sides of people and the environment and balanced economic development. Though we are again being called racists for standing up against encroachment on public lands, we believe that all of those things can abide on the same side.

In an April meeting with the Obama Foundation, we called on them to join us in pushing back against the siting of a baseball diamond on the east end of the Midway, we had already been saved from a garage. Apparently, the National Park Service recommended that site as a potential location for a required replacement of the baseball amenities that will be displaced by the track and field that is being moved to accommodate the OPC. The Foundation agreed that a community-inclusive process to decide what improvements might be made to the Midway would be preferable, and we will work with the Midway Park Advisory Council to promote that.

Our strategy to promote the best interests of Jackson Park in light of all OPC-related changes shifts often with the latest developments. So please see our website for our most recent stand on specific items.
Projects along the Chicago River are booming, and the river is emerging as a new priority for park planning and activation, per the City’s new Great Rivers Chicago vision. It is moving very quickly, especially through activities stemming from redevelopment of industrial corridors. For example, the 760-acre North Branch Industrial Corridor is the first of 26 industrial corridors to be rezoned for non-industrial use. Sterling Bay, LLC is now poised to proceed with a nearly 40-acre development at the former Finkl Steel plant. Plans are to convert the site to high-density, mixed-use buildings with trails and other open spaces abutting the river. However, it is uncertain how much of this riverfront parkland will be contiguous and/or publicly accessible unless advocates insist on proper park planning.

We are pleased to have been invited by local residents, regional groups, and elected officials to join efforts to push the City to make firm commitments to significant contiguous parkland, including space for recreational amenities, along the river. We have been consulting with aldermen, residents, and other industrial corridor advocates to strengthen organizing opportunities. In the most recent development in this ongoing process, we have been invited to collaborate both with Alderman Brian Hopkins’ Community Advisory Committee for the North Branch Planned Development Process and Aldermen Scott Waguespack and Michele Smith’s North Branch Park Preserve coalition calling for 24 acres of parkland along the river, noting that this poses a once in a lifetime opportunity to add parkland in a park-poor area.

So far, the modernization plan does not sufficiently correct that deficit, which will only grow worse as more residents move into the newly developed area. Indeed, according to preliminary estimates, the proposed development will add upwards of 50,000 people to the 88,500 residents in the area. Because this is such an urgent and strategic opportunity for park planning and may set the precedent for green space requirements in other redeveloping industrial corridors, FOTP is elevating this work to high priority.

You can view the North Branch Park Preserve document and sign on as a supporter here: https://www.northbranchparkpreserve.org/

**Parks Under Attack**

As of late, we are confronted with a recurring theme of lack of transparency and appropriate process on the part of the Chicago Park District and the City of Chicago when it comes to park planning and policy. And because of Friends of the Parks’ heightened profile garnered through the Lucas Museum battle and the Obama Presidential Center negotiations, an increasing number of Chicagoans call on us to respond to local and lakefront park issues. As we reorganize to ramp up our watchdog efforts further amidst a seemingly growing number of encroachments on park land, we really depend on you to lend your eyes and ears. We must band together to keep our government accountable to ensuring transparent and democratic processes in park planning. Please share with us what information you hear about the following issues. (You can send comments and photos to info@fotp.org).

- Attend a Chicago Park District Board of Commissioners Meeting to share your concern. And plan to come discuss these and related systemic challenges at our 2nd Annual “Parks as Democracy?” conference on June 8 and 9, discussed further on page 9.

**Encroachments on Lakefront Land**

The extremely popular stretch of lakefront from Fullerton to North Avenue lends itself to revenue-generation strategies for the Chicago Park District, and this activity seems to be accelerating with inadequate public input or oversight.

**Theater on the Lake**

While the rehabilitation of the Theater on the Lake seems like a good thing, we are not sure whether the Chicago Park District is being forthcoming with us about challenges at the site. In our regular meetings with them, they assured us that the renewed venue would remain on the same footprint. And they repeatedly have told us that parking for the site is across Lake Shore Drive at the lots that serve the Notebaert Nature Museum and/or the Lincoln Park Zoo. Yet concerned community members continue to write and call FOTP with evidence of the valet company parking cars on site in the new valet loading zone and on the sidewalk as well as on the grass north of the building, including various eyewitness reports of more than 50 cars parked at the site. While we await resolution of this issue—as the Chicago Park District staff has assured us they actively are working on—please send us reports and photos at info@fotp.org if you witness this activity. (Continued on Page 8)
Parks Under Attack (Cont’d from Page 7)

New high-end concession venue near North Avenue

Last summer we received reports from lakefront users that the former “temporary” roller hockey rink on North Avenue beach quickly was being de-converted and a more permanent structure of some kind was being installed. Our visit to the site while the construction crew was working on a newly poured concrete pad confirmed the concern. Chicago Park District did not discuss this conversion with us in advance and acted as if they didn’t know it was going on when we confronted them about it. Soon thereafter, a new high-end concession venue appeared just in time for the Air and Water Show. We continue to receive complaints both about the lack of engagement of the public about such changes on Lakefront Protection Ordinance-protected land as well as how crowded with concessions on that stretch of lakefront has become.

North Avenue Beach Boathouse Concessions Parking Lot

The Chicago Park District recently renewed the concessions contract at the North Avenue Boat House, which includes a significant renovation and expansion of the site. It is slated to include more outdoor dining space around the structure, not just on the roof as is currently the case. In addition, the Chicago Park District confirmed to us their plans to approximately double the parking lot serving North Avenue Beach. We have expressed to them that we find it extremely problematic for them to take away existing green space east of Lake Shore Drive to accommodate more vehicles. While we understand that there is an important, delicate balance required to ensure user access to our parks and lakefront, we do not support this plan (though Friends of the Parks previously supported an additional 31st Street Beach parking lot, since it was located west of Lake Shore Drive and did not displace existing park land.)

Proposed Aerial Tram Along the River Walk

Friends of the Parks joins Friends of the Chicago River, Openlands, the Streeterville Organization of Active Residents, and others in opposing a proposed aerial tram connecting Navy Pier to the Riverwalk. A dormant proposal for this tram has recently been revived and is quietly being promoted by the developer and tourism boosters. It would soar up to 17 stories over the Chicago Riverwalk with 200 glass pods ferrying 3,000 people hourly, day and night, above the river between Navy Pier and Wacker Drive at Franklin Street. Steel tower platforms 10- to 18-feet thick at the base would support the cars, cables, and infrastructure with at least 15 foundations for the poles and three embarkation stations staged along the Riverwalk. We imagine negative impacts to the new Polk Bros. Park at Navy Pier, the future DuSable Park, and park land at the confluence of the Chicago River and the lakefront. Long lines of folks waiting to board at Polk Bros. Park and pillars on parkland and the Riverwalk would likely mar river, park, and lakefront experiences and views. River advocates rightly point out that such a project would detract from all of the City’s and small businesses’ recent investments in activating the river. Please call Alderman Brendan Reilly and the Mayor’s Office to express your concern.

Brooks Park roller hockey rink proposal

Last year, neighbors of Brooks Park on the far northwest side reached out to Friends of the Parks to express their concern that the Chicago Blackhawks, the Chicago Park District, and their alderman had a plan to locate a new roller hockey rink at the site with little community input. Concerned residents are Blackhawks fans and roller hockey enthusiasts but disagree with the siting of the rink at a spot in the small Brooks Park that they fear would exacerbate existing storm water management problems and illegal parking impacting immediate neighbors. They also express frustration about the abrupt removal of 12 healthy trees—some of which were memorial trees dedicated to deceased loved ones before the project was fully approved; the Park District’s disinterest in neighbors’ suggestion to locate the rink in a different part of the park; and the potential costs to taxpayers for infrastructure improvements to accommodate the project. They also point out that nearby Norwood Park has a dilapidated roller rink that should be prioritized for refurbishment instead. They and others have suggested that legitimate issues are being overlooked in an effort to honor a donor’s request without sufficient public process. In the meantime, some Brooks Park neighbors have reported that they and their homes have been threatened for voicing their concerns about the proposed Brooks Park location. While FOTP has provided advocacy advice to the concerned neighbors as they testified at Chicago
fencing, but they may have to come up with some kind of barriers to im-pede potential car-bombing vehicles from driving up into the park. Meanwhile, the City’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events recently announced new security measures for all concerts at the Pritzker Pavilion. All concert-goers will have to enter through a security check point and have their bags checked. Outside alcoholic beverages will be dis-allowed on a few specific dates. These discussions were brought to our attention, before they were made public, by some who were concerned that though these developments are being framed around security needs, this may actually be an attempt to boost concessions revenue within Millennium Park. Owned by the City rather than the Park District, Millennium Park is not subject to the same public accountability as the rest of Grant Park and other Park District parks as there is no public board meeting where one can testify about Millennium Park. As such, FOTP is addition-ally concerned about the transparency of recent Millennium Park-related decisions, including that of closing all of it off to the public (except for the Park Grill) on St. Patrick’s Day.

Please send us your thoughts and pictures about these and related park advocacy topics at info@fotp.org.

**Photos** Concerned residents sent Friends of the Parks staff images of cars parked on the grass north of Theater Along the Lake.

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**“A Black and White Party for the White City”**

**Dinner Dancing Cruise Aboard the Odyssey**

**September 20, 2018**

**Reception 6:00 pm**

Depart Navy Pier for cruise promptly at 7:00 pm

Arrive at Navy Pier at 9:30 pm.

Join us for a boat cruise aboard the Odyssey, leaving from Navy Pier and cruising down to Jackson Park, weather conditions permitting. It will be a celebration of the 125th anniversary of the World Columbian Ex-position. Black and white elegant attire is requested.

Please contact Sandra Del Toro

at 312-857-2757, ext. 1 or DelToroS@fotp.org

for sponsorship information and ticket pur-chases for all of these events.

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**“Parks as Democracy?” Annual Luncheon and Conference**

**June 8 and 9, 2018**

**Location at Roosevelt University**

Join Friends of the Parks, Park Advisory Councils, and more than 250 people on June 8 & 9 at Roosevelt University for our annual “Parks as Democracy?” conference. The event will kick off with our luncheon, include an evening membership gathering, and offer workshops and other opportunities to discuss what it means for parks to be democratic spaces. We’ll also use the occasion to launch our 2018 “State of the Parks” report.

Highlights include:

- Keynote speech by Dick Simpson UIC Political Science Professor, former Chicago alderman and author of The Good Fight: Life Lessons from a Chicago Progressive
- Workshops on Signature Projects
- Annual Membership Meeting and Reception
- Presentation of Strategic Plan and Introduction of New Board Members

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**Save the Date!**

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**Save the Date!**
Friends of the Parks Donors at $250 and above (October 1, 2017—March 31, 2018)

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Barbara Parson
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**In Memoriam**

**A Lost Gem: Tribute to David Solzman**

David Solzman, long-time Chicago resident, astronomer, and avid park aficionado, passed away February 19, 2018. An accomplished photographer, Friends of the Parks has made a permanent installation of more than 50 of his photographs in The David Solzman Gallery, funded by Joan and Robert Feitler and located within the offices of the Friends of the Parks.

David had an early interest in astronomy – founding Omaha’s first planetarium at age 16 in his family’s basement. Educated at the University of Chicago, David served as an astronomer at the Adler Planetarium and became faculty at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where he taught geography, meteorology, and astronomy from 1965 to 2000. He received the prestigious Silver Circle Award five times. David also taught courses at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, Rutgers University, Concordia College – Chicago, The University of Chicago, Roosevelt University-Chicago, and The School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

David was known for 45 years of guided tours of the Chicago River that he offered on behalf of the University of Chicago, University of Illinois at Chicago, Mercury Cruise Lines, and Augustana College. David authored “The Chicago River: An Illustrated History and Guide to the River and its Waterways” and served as a member of the board of the Friends of the Chicago River for 23 years. In fact, this is how he came become a supporter of Friends of the Parks. At Friends of the River he served alongside longtime Friends of the Parks board member Bryan Whitehead, who introduced him to the organization.

“David was a gem,” commented Friends of the Parks Board President Lauren Molz. “Smart, curious, and talented, his generous donation of photos to Friends of the Parks captures the essence of our parks and reminds us of the vital role that parks play in the life of our city.”

Please contact Friends of the Parks to schedule a viewing of The David Solzman Gallery.

David Solzman (center) greeted attendees of the reception as they gathered to enjoy his gallery of Chicago park photos at the Friends of the Parks office.
Friends of the Parks

We’re on social media!
Facebook: @friendsoftheparks

We’d love to hear from you!
17 North State Street, Suite 1450
Chicago, Illinois 60602
Phone: 312-857-2757
Email: info@fotp.org

Friends of the Parks is a 42-year-old non-profit organization whose mission is to preserve, protect, improve, and promote the use of parks in Chicago for the enjoyment of all residents and visitors.

Special Earth Day Appeal Inside!

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Gift of Membership

Already a member? Consider giving the gift of membership to a fellow park lover. Memberships make great gifts for birthdays, graduations, and other special events!

The new member will receive our quarterly newsletter, as well as periodic email updates on important park advocacy issues and volunteer opportunities. Members also receive invitations to special events, such as our annual Parks Ball and our free Netsch Lecture series, as well as discounted rates on park tours.

For more information, please contact Sarah Hess at HessS@fotp.org or 312-857-2757 ext. 3.