



## 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](mailto: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 am highly involved with park districts. My undergraduate degree is from University of Illinois in Parks and Recreation. I currently work part time for the Chicago Park District for 27 years in several positions. I worked as a Recreational Leader, Day Camp Coordinator, an Intern, and Special Activities Recreational Instructor. I am currently a Chicago Park District Security Officer working in the Lakefront region.

I am familiar with Friends of the Parks (FOP) organization, its mission and goals. I've also attended several meetings throughout the years. In addition, I constantly get updates from the FOP organization by email and other media outlets. I am also familiar with other Parks organizations that are similar to FOP.

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.

**Response:** The 16<sup>th</sup> ward is located near expressways and public transit, which make it a desirable place to live. However, the ward has been the victim of years of neglect and disinvestment, including in residential homes, apartments, condos, small businesses, and places for leisure and recreational activities at parks and outdoor facilities.

As Alderperson, I will work to include greater parks and recreational opportunities in a redevelopment plan for the ward. I will propose a plan for FOP to ensure that the parks are well kept with newer and safer recreational activities like swing sets and sliding boards. In addition, I would also network with FOP to push for affordable recreational programming offered to the 16<sup>th</sup> Ward because the median income of the residents is at poverty level.



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Having affordable or free recreational programs for the youth, teens and adults may help motivate people mentally, physically and spiritually. By doing so, this initiative may enhance their quality of life by being in a safe environment to cope and socialize with others. Having these programs may also help guide and lead them into a better future.

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?

**Response:** I believe that parks are the modern outdoor forums where people can go to meet, children can be free to follow their imagination in play and recreation, and everyone can enjoy a day out in the good weather, taking a stroll in the sunshine or through a snowfield. These pursuits can only be done if parks are safe and perceived as safe by parents, children and neighbors.

As Alderperson, I will work with the Park District, the Chicago Police Department and community stakeholders to keep parks safe and promote our parks as a destination for neighborly and community activities in the 16<sup>th</sup> ward.

### 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.*

#### 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.



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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:

Yes, I favor creation of an equity plan that promotes diversity and inclusion in the policy and program planning process for the Chicago Park District. The written plan can serve as a roadmap for building cross-class, cross-racial and cross-ethnic coalitions in support of fair and equitable policies and program implementation, especially in underserved communities on the south and west sides, including the 16<sup>th</sup> ward.

### 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?

**RESPONSE:** The 16<sup>th</sup> ward has many vacant properties and unimproved land parcels. I believe the city and Cook County must consider stepping in to buy and redevelop some of the vacant land as public green space. The current tax system treats vacant, unimproved property the same as developed residential property. Both are assessed at 10% of fair market value. I support increasing the tax rate on vacant, unimproved property from 10% to up to 15% of fair market value and use the revenue to fund vacant land purchases by the Cook County Land Bank Authority (CCLBA).

CCLBA was created in 2014 as a quasi-governmental unit of Cook County government. Since its inception, the Authority has acquired, sold, or rehabbed 3,332 foreclosed or vacant properties in Cook County. They have done so with grant funds and property donations. With an increase in funding through higher vacant land taxes, CCLBA will have more funds to acquire, hold, and transfer interest in real property in Chicago for conversion to green space.



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I support creation of a 16<sup>th</sup> ward parks planning advisory council to help determine which vacant lands could be converted to green space. As Alderperson, I will work with community leaders, planning officials, and stakeholders to develop the council.

- 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?

**RESPONSE:** The good news is that more than 90% of Chicagoans live within a 10-minute walk of a public park. However, the amount of acreage dedicated to public parks in Chicago is low, 4.7 acres per person 1,000 residents. Also, the amount of park acreage available on the south and west sides of the city and Latino communities, is far lower than other areas. As Alderperson, I would support expansion of greens pace access in communities that currently have less than average amount of acreage available per person.

- 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?

**RESPONSE:** As Alderperson, I will support creation of an Interagency Green Space Coordinating Council. The goal of the Council is to improve interagency coordination in administering parks, nature preserves, riverways, and beaches, thereby improving service to Chicagoans and enhancing protection of important green space resources.

- 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?

**RESPONSE:** As Alderperson, I will support creation of a Committee on Public Parks and Green Spaces in Chicago. The Committee will provide oversight of the comprehensive investment and redevelopment plan for vacant and deindustrialized lands, and hold the administration accountable for implementing the plan.

- 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?



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**RESPONSE:** All plazas, arcades, small parks, atriums and other spaces are open to the public regardless of a person's race, sex, national origin, ancestry, sexual or gender orientation, and all other protected classes. No one can be denied access to these spaces.

The owner of the space should be required to post notices stating explicitly that discrimination will not be tolerated or permitted on the site. The notice must include a description on how to file a complaint. Lastly, the city should keep track of these complaints and take all necessary legal action ensure compliance with all public accommodation requirements.

- 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?

**RESPONSE:** I will work with the Parks Advisory Councils to identify facility improvement projects and new amenities for the parks.

- 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?

**RESPONSE:** The Park District needs to work with user communities to develop a plan for sharing public spaces and create a regular schedule of events appropriate for large green spaces. It must be recognized that many Chicagoans like to play golf. The Park District should continue to accommodate the public's desire for a variety of recreational sporting settings, including golf courses.

- 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?



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**RESPONSE:** I believe there needs to be a Task Force on Repurposing Vacant and Deindustrialized Lands. The mission of the Task Force would be to develop a comprehensive plan that includes an analysis of properties that can be converted to green space in low green space acreage communities. The plan would include action steps and identify sources of funding.

The Task Force would draw members from all parts of the city, and would consist of community leaders, parks users, and stakeholders committed to building a better parks system and land use plan for Chicago. As Alderperson, I would support creation of the Task Force.

### 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).

**RESPONSE:** It is not inconsistent to be concerned about public safety and seek to enjoy the great outdoors in Chicago. I am a police officer and dedicated outdoor enthusiast. I know that the mission of the Chicago Police Department, which is to serve and protect, stresses a commitment to protecting Chicago's public spaces, including the lakefront. In addition to their professional commitment, many officers go to the lakefront along with their families to enjoy the beaches, sail out of one of the magnificent harbors, or enjoy a ride on the Ferris Wheel at Navy Pier.

My fellow officers recognize that the lakefront belongs to the people, cannot be sold for private development, nor can any structure or facility be built to carry on any trade, industry, occupation, or activity. I believe these restrictions should be interpreted literally and strictly. I do not support any modifications to the ordinances. I do support having an adequate police presence along the lakefront so that individuals, families, and visitors to Chicago can be always safe.



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- 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:** Chicago is well served by a transportation network that provides access to all major attractions, including the north and south lakefront. Whether by foot, bus, car, bike, or CTA and Metra trains, anyone can access Grant Park and Millennium Park, as well as attractions north and south of downtown.

As Alderperson, I would support creation of a Task Force on Lakefront Accessibility to identify barriers to access and make recommendations for improving access. The City Council should then take the recommendations up for consideration, and base policies on the recommendations.

### 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:

In 2001, the Chicago Park District took beach management in a new and ultimately successful direction. On the northside at Montrose Beach, the District stopped grooming the shoreline to encourage dune formation. As a result, the site now contains beach, foredune, and numerous threatened or endangered plant species. Also, the District created the Montrose Point Bird Sanctuary, which attracts tens of thousands of migratory birds to rest, eat, and shelter each spring and fall. The most famous inhabitants of the Sanctuary were Monty and Rose, who became the first piping plovers to successfully nest within the city limits of Chicago since 1948.

Monty and Rose are gone now, but when they were here, they brought delight to Chicagoans across the city who rooted for them to produce the next generation of piping plovers. Other birds and species will come to Montrose Beach, thanks to the vision of the Park District.

As Alderperson, I will gladly support further efforts to make the lakefront and inland communities a haven for wildlife and natural habitats that preserve, protect and enrich our green space and combats climate change.

### 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 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?

**RESPONSE:** The Chicago Park District must provide information to the public in a format that they can understand. The formats include newsletters, public notices in community media, public hearings, public reports, such as Budgets-in-Brief, Popular Annual Financial Reports, or





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performance reports, Web sites and Dashboards and individual or group emails, phone calls, and in-person contact.

As Alderperson, I will work with stakeholders to ensure that the communications strategy of the Park District leads to the dissemination of timely, accurate, and complete information.

- 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?

**RESPONSE:** While they don't have managerial and budgetary authority, the PACs can influence the decision-making process by rallying constituents in support of or against a specific initiative. Also, they can be an independent voice in raising awareness about issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in Park District programming.

As Alderperson, I will work closely with the local PACs, especially during budget season, to assess and evaluate funding proposals for Park District capital and programming projects.

- How will you support the formation or the rebuilding of Park Advisory Councils in your ward?

**RESPONSE:** I believe that the Parks Advisory Councils should be restructured, possibly along the lines of the new Police District Councils in Chicago. Starting this year, 66 newly created positions on the Police District Councils will be contested in the February 28 election. Whoever is elected will have a vital role in monitoring police practices and engaging with the public. Among the responsibilities of the Councils are to

- Building stronger connections between the police and the community at the district level, where the community is a true partner in making the neighborhood safer.
- Collaborating in the development and implementation of community policing initiatives, and
- Holding monthly public meetings, where residents can work with the police on local initiatives rooted in community concerns and priorities.

Let's create a similar structure for the Park District. As Alderperson, I will support such an effort.

### 6) PARK PRIVATIZATION AND REVENUE

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.



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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?

**RESPONSE:** The permitting process should not have a disparate impact on public access to public facilities. Alderperson, I will demand the Park District's Office of Inspector General conduct a full audit of the permitting process and its effect on public access across Park District properties. Based on the findings and analysis, the City Council and Park District Board of Commissioners may need to take remedial, appropriate actions.

- The income from these events does not go 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?

**RESPONSE:** Democracy lives in sunshine, not in darkness. Transparency is critical for establishing a bond of trust between the people, elected officials and the bureaucracy that exists to administer government. The Park District needs to be transparent, too by issuing reports and p data about revenue generating activity at each park. The reports would include information on the number of event permits requested, the amount raised from events, and the organization(s) that were granted permits. These reports can help determine if the award process is fair and equitable.

- 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



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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?

**RESPONSE:** When private funding becomes disproportionate, disagreement about policies and programs can be expected. It is natural for disputes to emerge when private group activities in the parks have the effect or are perceived to have the effect of excluding and marginalizing other residents. The Park District should be required to work with local PACs to listen to all sides of an issue, mediate disputes, and work out compromises..

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

**RESPONSE:** One of the joys of living in Chicago is attending large public events. They are fun and bring in much-needed revenue to the city. Since the events have wide appeal and major impacts on city agencies, they should be reviewed and approved by the City Council.

- 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:** The Chicago Park District is mostly funded through property taxes, which are subject to tax caps under law. As a result, I would support a public referendum to increase property tax allotted to the Park District. The referendum would be modelled on the recently passed referendum to increase funding for the Cook County Forest Preserve District.

### 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 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



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budgetary control to the public and incorporate community participation into their annual budgets?

**RESPONSE:** According to the prestigious Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), for a public engagement strategy to succeed, the government must define a tangible purpose or objective that needs to be addressed. (See <https://www.gfoa.org/materials/public-engagement-in-the-budget-process>) Among the most common purposes and goals are:

- Improving performance by better understanding what the public wants and expects from its government.
- Adjusting service levels more closely to citizens' preferences in the context of limited resources
- Differentiating among the expectations of a jurisdiction's various demographic groups in policy and service design, and
- Understanding priorities in planning, budgeting, and managing services, especially when revenues are not sufficient, new services are required, or in disaster recovery situations.

As Alderperson, I will work with Park District stakeholders to structure a public engagement strategy based on these four principles.

- 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?

**RESPONSE:** The City Council represents the will of the people in all 50 wards. The Council is in a good position to understand the will of the people regarding capital improvement project priorities. Consequently, the City Council must establish the position of liaison to the Park District Board of Commissioners to let them know what capital projects the people are expecting.

- 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?



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**RESPONSE:** I support using TIF funds to supplement funding of public services.. I would allow TIF funds to be granted to a developer if they agree to bring in community-oriented services, such as retail stores, major grocery chains, or pharmacies, as well as renovating public facilities, such as CTA transit stations and bus stops or Chicago Park District field houses and outdoor recreation attractions.

### 8) PARK ACCESSIBILITY, FACILITIES, & AMENITIES

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?

**RESPONSE:** Users have a right to know the status and conditions of their public facilities, including accessibility. The Park District must be required to publish their facilities maintenance schedule so that users will know where a problem such as filthy bathrooms exists and when will be fixed. Users need this information for the comfort and safety of all parties, especially if they are planning an outing with young children or persons with disabilities.

- 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?

**RESPONSE:** The Park District has an obligation to ensure that disagreements about animals are handled in a timely and efficient manner. To start, signage must clearly state the regulations on dogs and other permissible animals, as well as a number to call to report violations and suspicious behavior by an animal. The signs must be placed in visible positions at parks and playlots in particular. More importantly, the Park District must ensure that a process is in place to resolve conflicts between residents about shared public spaces. The Park District should work with local PACs to listen to all sides of an issue, mediate disputes, and work out compromises.



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- 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?

**RESPONSE:** The 16<sup>th</sup> ward is more than 95% Black. We have seen up close how negligence by city leaders has led to a decline in our population over the last 20 years and a reduction in services. The city must invest in communities, not neglect them.

As Alderperson, my goal is to advocate forcefully for equitable distribution of resources that will make the 16<sup>th</sup> ward safe, secure, prosperous and thriving.

- 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?

**RESPONSE:** As I mentioned above, I will require property developers who seek TIF funding to finance renovations of fieldhouses and other public facilities, such as bus stops in the 16<sup>th</sup> ward.

- 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:** The city must do a better job of negotiating the terms of a TIF agreement with developers. As Alderperson, I will support an ordinance that requires developers of privately owned public spaces to guarantee the same or comparable opening hours as if the space were publicly owned and provide adequate safety measures.



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### 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?

**RESPONSE:** It is critical to seek committed and conscientious residents of the 16<sup>th</sup> ward to serve on the Park Advisory Council. As Alderperson, I will work to identify and recommend volunteers who are culturally sensitive to the diverse voices in the ward to serve on the councils.

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

**RESPONSE:** it is important to consider the budgetary impact of fee reductions before making a commitment to lowering fees. As Alderperson, I would request a report from the Department of Revenue that models the impact of different cost and revenue reduction scenarios. Based on the results, I will work with stakeholders to devise a fee schedule that promote access for underserved communities.

- 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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**RESPONSE:** I will work with other Alderpersons representing wards with a significant history of disinvestment, as well as community leaders and other stakeholders to craft an agenda for parks administration and programming at the Park District that promotes equity and inclusion.

- 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:** As Alderperson, I will work with the Park District, the Chicago Police Department and community stakeholders to keep parks safe and promote our parks as a destination for neighborly and community activities in the 16th ward.

### 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?

**RESPONSE:** Our young people are simply looking to have a good time with friends. However, at times, they may be exposed to unsafe situations. It is up to the city to keep them safe. Rather than imposing curfews, the city should employ more human-oriented interactions, including providing crisis and violence intervention specialists, mental health counselors, and public safety officers to respond to spontaneous gatherings of young residents so that they remain safe and secure.



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

### **RESPONSE:**

All people have the right to access public amenities, parks, and recreational opportunities of their choosing safely. The city must convene a task force of cultural and educational institutions, entertainment entrepreneurs, community leaders, Chicago Police Department leaders and elected officials to devise a comprehensive public safety plan for public parks, facilities and events. The plan should be made publicly available for all residents of Chicago to see.

- 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:** It is important to have community support for a public safety plan, as well as engage the community in active efforts to keep our young people safe. There is a need for dedicated individuals to serve as mediators, violence interveners and conflict resolution specialists, and work with our young people. As Alderperson, I will work with leaders in the faith, educational, social service and business community to identify people to serve in those roles.

### **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 City Council. What policies do you support to make sure nominees have demonstrated relevant experience, background and skills sets related to parks?

**RESPONSE:** The Park District is a separate entity from the City of Chicago. To accurately reflect the organization of Chicago government, I support splitting the Committee on Special Events, Cultural Affairs and Recreation into two committees, one for parks and recreation alone and the other for cultural affairs and special events. The City Council can provide better oversight of each function and concentrate on staffing and personnel issues at the Park District more closely.

- How will you use your role to provide oversight to the parks, playlots and beaches in your ward?

**RESPONSE:** The 16<sup>th</sup> ward is an inland community with parks and playlots. I will work closely with community stakeholders, Parks Advisory Councils, and residents to identify any concerns with the condition of parks and playlots in the 16<sup>th</sup> ward, the availability of culturally sensitive



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programming, safety and vandalism problems, and other issues. Together, we will find solutions and implement improvements and action plans for change.

### WARD SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

#### ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR **WARD 5, 7 AND 10**

- In 2022, a [community ballot referendum](#) in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Wards asked the city to stop cutting down trees in Jackson Park and the area 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 Alderman, how will you work to support the community's preference to save the trees in Jackson Park, the South Shore Cultural Center, South Shore Nature Sanctuary, and the surrounding community areas?

**Response:** I am running for Alderperson in the 16<sup>th</sup> Ward, not the 5, 7, and 10<sup>th</sup> Ward.

#### ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR **WARD 10**

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 10<sup>th</sup> ward. The land is owned by the Chicago Park District but leased to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 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.

- Chicago residents have waited almost 40 years for the land to be returned and created into a public park. As Alderman, what next steps do you support related to the CDF?

**Response:** I am running for Alderperson in the 16<sup>th</sup> Ward, not the 10<sup>th</sup> Ward.

#### 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?

**Response:** I am running for Alderperson in the 16<sup>th</sup> Ward, not the 25, 25, and 28.



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### NEW BUILDINGS IN PARKS **WARD 26**

In 2022 an unpermitted, unapproved building project was undertaken in a non-democratic process with 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 National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture and their plan to develop structures on public parkland.

**Response:** I am running for Alderperson in the 16<sup>th</sup> Ward, not in the 26<sup>th</sup> Ward.

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

**Response:** I am running for Alderperson in the 16<sup>th</sup> Ward, not in the 26<sup>th</sup> Ward.

- How will you offer leadership to remedy this situation?

**Response:** I am running for Alderperson in the 16<sup>th</sup> Ward, not in the 26<sup>th</sup> Ward.

### ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR **WARD 48 & 49**

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

**Response:** I am running for Alderperson in the 16<sup>th</sup> Ward, not in the 26<sup>th</sup> Ward.

### PARK ACCESSIBILITY, FACILITIES, & AMENITIES ADDITIONAL QUESTION **WARD 49**

- [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 this encampment that will manage the needs of the various people involved?

**Response:** I am running for Alderperson in the 16<sup>th</sup> Ward, not in the 26<sup>th</sup> Ward.