



## 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:

Although I am an advocate for and supporter of our parks, I cannot take credit for any organizing projects involving parks. I visit our parks, have talked with city park supervisors about their concerns (mainly staffing, it seems), and believe that parks are one of our most important resources that must be protected and nurtured.

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:

Yes, regarding legislation or initiatives to address environmental justice issues, I want to create a resident committee to approve new development and zoning changes in the ward with environmental and traffic impact studies done for any new developments. I want to increase regulations on corporations in our ward, including ongoing monitoring of air, soil, and water pollutants and enforcing penalties and fines to the corporations responsible to fund remediation. Additionally, I want to increase funding for public transportation and ensuring more regular, reliable bus and train services and expand services to underserved communities, explore reduced fares, free fares, and incentives for continued CTA use with threshold models, e.g. the program in Washington, DC for establishing monthly passes when riders spend more than the cost of the monthly pass on transit, increase safe biking and pedestrian infrastructure in the ward, and market the CTA - "fare holidays" on high-traffic weekends, free/no swipe boarding for riders leaving major events like concerts/sporting events. I want to increase the tree canopy in the ward by adding trees on public land, subsidizing residential/sidewalk tree planting, and explore mandating trees in new/existing developments to bring down the heat index, and invest in staffing the department of forestry to maintain all public trees, retrofit our schools to be more energy efficient and ensure the air we breathe and water we drink in those schools is clean, explore making our schools energy independent with solar power have proactive air, soil, and water testing across the ward for lead



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and pollutants, proactively connect gardeners with subsidized water barrels through the city program in their primary language, have ward cleanup program with opportunities for youth and rewards for participants, and add public trash cans along major streets in the ward. I also want to take back our public utilities and put them under municipal control with progressive rate structures and oversight over energy efficiency, including our electric grid and internet services, divest city funds from fossil fuels and polluting industries, re-establish the City Department of Environment, and hire staff needed to carry out our work, work to modernize current industry to align with the Chicago Sustainable Development Policy and a future vision of clean energy, work with representatives at all levels of government to establish a city, state, and national Green New Deal with a just transition to help workers employed in polluting industries find good, green, public sector union jobs to decarbonize the economy, and address the city's failure to replace all lead pipes in Chicago as planned.

Regarding local Parks programming, I want to connect Bubbly Creek trails & advocate for building a pedestrian bridge across the river, use TIF dollars to improve the local public built environment, make our major streets beautiful, welcoming and ADA accessible with street widening, landscaping, art, and by adding trash cans and benches, create a dog park, become a Ward leader in realizing Our Roots Chicago's goal of 75,000 new, equitably distributed trees, and investigate the feasibility of pedestrianizing certain streets so that cars are not allowed at certain or all times. I want to put forward more Youth Programming money for parks district/schools locally and city wide, have more community events sponsored by the ward office to bring more public activity, and create Public Neighborhood Community Centers. I want to increase after school public events/activities and increase funding for the summer jobs for youth program with targeted outreach to enroll more employers and youth in the program, steering them towards jobs that will involve youth in improving the local community.

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: The 11th Ward is home to some of Chicago's greatest parks: Palmisano, Ping Tom Memorial, #571. But outside of these Oases, our ward is also home to some of the more industrial, concrete-clad areas of the city.

In my campaign, I have organized community education initiatives that highlight the importance of parks to creating healthy, thriving communities. For example, we organized a "Parks and Infrastructure Bike Ride", where we biked a route through the Ward's notable parks and infrastructure sites (both good and bad), and combined expert testimony with generative discussions by attendees on how they would improve the parks and infrastructure issues affecting their neighborhoods. We talked about the conundrum of beautiful parks that are hard to access safely but foot, cycling, or transportation, and the history of industry polluting the Bubbly Creek that we are still trying to recover from while pollution



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continues to be spewed heavily in our region to this day. Continuing this practice in office, I will organize park teach-ins, clean-ups, and other events in the parks that combine education and activity while building relationships between residents and their parks. This will in turn increase community investment in our parks, raising advocates' (including my advocacy from within the office) power to pressure city, state, and national officials to improve, expand, and make our parks equitable.

Racial and class justice are central to the worldview of the movement I represent, and the inequities in our parks system are even more dire in many of our working class neighborhoods and neighborhoods of color. Contrary to the dismissal of the Consent Decree, structural inequality has obviously not been fixed in our parks citywide. I will advocate in city council to expand our parks, give more funding to the Chicago Parks District, and continue to work in coalition with environmental justice organizations that are fighting for their communities.

### 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.

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

I will advocate among the Mayor and the Committee on Special Events, Cultural Affairs and Recreation for candidates for commissioner that have a proven commitment to racial and class equity in the parks, and will advocate publically for parks commissioners to create such an equity plan among current parks commissioners. I want to make sure we have adequate and equitable staffing across the city, but particularly in the South and West side neighborhood parks, to maintain the facilities and to ensure we have programming that is relevant to the communities they serve.



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### RESPONSE EQUITY PLAN FOR CHICAGO'S PARKS:

#### 2) GREEN SPACE AND CREATING NEW PARKS

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

I want to take a proactive approach and create a public inventory of land use in the ward, that can be used to help identify new potential spaces for green space and parks in the ward. I want to create a number of community boards for decision making, including development and zoning, but also a youth board and a non citizen board to ensure we have voices from all the communities who live here and not just those who can vote.

- 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?

I would be very open to suggestions from Friends of the Parks and community members, but I would like to consider how close other parks or green space are to new considered land, how close that land is to polluting factories or businesses, how close it is to protected bike lines/pedestrian space, how close it is to dense housing, how close it is to schools, public transportation, or other amenities, what needs that community area has that are not currently being filled, and finally looking at census tract information about racial, age, language, and income demographics to ensure we are adequately serving all of our communities.

- 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?



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I would like to have managers of various park and green space attend regular public meetings to hear input from community members and give updates to community members about opportunities available. I'd like to integrate this information into a public infrastructure database, and track our communication with the various managers via a spreadsheet or database management system. I'd like to bring all of the relevant managers together to see where there is overlap in work, and where there may be gaps.

- 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?

I'd like to try and make sure we keep track of green space in dense communities especially, where it may be harder to find, and get creative with the space we have. Really, keeping up to date public infrastructure database available by location within census tracts and the populations of those census tracts will be key. Our plans for community-based decision-making for development will give us the opportunity to push developers for publicly accessible green space.

- 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?

Get it in writing! If they're avoiding putting it in ink, they aren't going to do it. I'd like to get some Community Benefits Agreements that include public access to new green spaces being created in mega-developments and other planned developments, and to look at the plans to make sure there aren't things like gates, locked doors, etc physically discouraging public use, and appropriate signage to alert residents to the space being available. I'd like to work on hosting ward events in spaces such as that so residents can be more aware of their existence. That said, I would not want to rely on POPs toward the count of acres of green space per residents in an area, and would be committed to ensuring truly public, publicly-owned facilities.

- 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?

I would have a community advisory board help make these decisions, and ensure appropriate racial representation. I'd like to take a survey of what residents want to use that they do not have, and make sure this is a proactive survey in various languages so it is not just people who



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already are aware of ward services and park services responding. I'd especially like to go through Chicago Public Schools and area senior homes to make sure families are engaged in the process.

- 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?

I am very open to suggestions about this, but in the winter opening the spaces for free use of space for sledding, having library passes available for free entry for residents, school passes available for field trips, community space reservations free or fee reduced for events, using the space for school sports teams, and open fee free days of the month for the community.

- 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?

I think spaces like these offer an enormous opportunity for remediation of the environment, green space, and learning centers about what industry was there, how it effected the environment, how it effected the health of neighbors and workers, and how the new space came to be. I think an interconnected green space and learning space would be very useful to make sure we do not forget what was there and what harms the industrial sites played on the area. I think this could be a great destination for school field trips while offering retreat space for the communities around them. I think we need to prioritize neighborhoods based on areas that are low income, minority races/immigrant communities, and the environmental and health impacts exacerbated on the area. I have made it a priority especially locally to push for connecting the various trails along the river and creating pedestrian bridges over the river near Ping Tom and over Bubbly Creek between Bridgeport and McKinley Park. My dream is to have connected public paths along the river that extend from the Bridgeport Art Center all the way up to Ping Tom Park.

### RESPONSE GREEN SPACE AND CREATING NEW PARKS:

#### 3) LAKEFRONT



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

- What policies do you support to ensure the lakefront remains free and clear for all Chicagoans to enjoy? Please consider both the preservation of space (such as the Lakefront Protection Ordinance and Public Trust Doctrine) and practices that affect use (such as facilities and policing).
- I believe we need to preserve our lakefront from erosion and the effects of climate change and must prioritize fighting the effects of climate change on our lakefront. We should explore moving DSLSD underground or mitigate the effects of having a major highway along the lakeshore like other major cities to expand the green space along the lake. We should make sure that private businesses opening along lakeshore in the greenspace have community benefits agreements regarding jobs, community access/free days, and that they give back to the community in the form of beach and green area clean up, trash removal and recycling, and do not further pollute our lakefront. We need to make sure all residents feel they can access the lakefront and do not feel they are not welcomed there by overpolicing along the lakefront determining who can and cannot enjoy the trails and beaches. I would also be in favor of a public museum along the lakefront documenting the history of Lake Michigan and the Great Lakes, the labor movement involved in the lake front, and the environmental impacts the lake feels from climate change and erosion.
- 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?
- I support increasing access by pedestrians, transit riders, cyclists, and people using wheelchairs and other mobility supports by ensuring adequately paved sections of the lakefront, benches for rest spots along the lakefront, bike racks, more bus lines making it to dedicated stops along the lakefront that go far enough south and incentives for taking public transit to the lakefront like fare reduction at the lakefront. We also need to make sure we have public bathrooms available readily along the lakefront, and trash cans so we can have everything clear of debris.

### RESPONSE LAKEFRONT:

#### 4) ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

In February 2020, Chicago declared a climate change emergency in response to severe storms and lakeshore erosion. Lakefront parks and beaches across the city suffer a battering of lake waves and the loss of sand and erosion at alarming rates. It is estimated that the storms of 2020 caused [\\$37 million in damages](#) to beaches and parks. Erosion, intense storms, and the failing of concrete revetments, metal



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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.

- 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?

I would support the expansion of parkland, native plants, and healthy new tree planting to combat climate change impacts on the shoreline that considers appropriate spaces to rope off for not public use for a specific period of time to make sure we can reverse some erosion impacts and make sure we have education materials available around the area to help the public understands why it is not accessible. These spaces should be regularly occurring up and down the shoreline and gaped out so that there is still accessible space to the public but that we are not abandoning any areas to feel the effects of climate change.

### RESPONSE ADDRESSING 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





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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?

I would utilize community boards to communicate with the PACs and public town halls about development, capital improvements, urban planning, large event or space rentals, and park planning decisions in your ward. I would like to keep notices going out over email and social media, but I would also like to utilize some funds to mail information to people in a certain radius of projects, and to get volunteers to knock doors or make phone calls to people in the area so everyone is informed of projects and town halls about the projects.

- 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?

I would stay in communication with PACs about urban planning, budgeting, funding decisions, considering capital improvements, determining park programming, and deciding what events or installations are placed in parks in my ward. I'd like for them to work with volunteers to invite the community into informational sessions about these decisions so the full community understands what is happening.

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

I would advertise to the community when there are vacancies or non-existent PACs and include them in regular ward newsletters (both over email and mail), and ward nights so the community feels connected and understands what the PACs are and how they can get involved. I'd like to see them integrated well with the LSCs at schools near the parks as well, so families can have input over these decisions as well. We currently have a crisis with our beautiful Palmisano where there are not enough people on the board.

### RESPONSE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARK ADVISORY COUNCILS:

#### 6) PARK PRIVATIZATION AND REVENUE



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

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

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

- As park district spaces have refocused on revenue-generating outside events, many community partners and programs have been booted from park district buildings and grounds, or can no longer afford to use the space. What policies do you support to prioritize the use of park space for residents and community groups over revenue generating activities and improve community engagement by private groups seeking to operate for profit in public parks?

I would prioritize use of park space for residents and community groups over revenue generating activities, and would advertise opportunities for community members to use the park district and rent space at the field houses, with programming available, and with potential equipment rental as well. I think we need to increase the funding the parks receive from the government, but would also encourage PACs to explore grant options to help with special projects so the parks do not need to rely on private revenue generating activities.

I believe that for-profit festivals like Lollapalooza and other concerts should be held on private property. Union Park is an example of a park that residents can hardly enjoy because it is so frequently closed off for expensive private events and its landscaping is trashed from constant abuse.

- 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?



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We should look at the community members and numbers being served by a park to consider how much of the overall budget they are getting, but overall we should really be looking for one dedicated space that hosts festivals and isn't a neighborhood park that a community feels slighted out of for specific weekends.

- In the need to find new funding sources or expand programming, the Park District often balances private or non-profit partners and community programming, users, or needs. At times the interests of these different park users can be at odds. One example is a private baseball program that would like to pay for and install new lights at [Welles Park](#), but some community members are opposed. How will you manage the competing interest of various stakeholders when money is involved?

For issues like that, we should have townhalls where people can make their cases, and also find common ground and where there can be some compromise, such as for this example lights not being used beyond a certain time of night, having a certain level of brightness to the lights, and perhaps infrastructure to keep the light going to the park but not into people's bedroom windows. Overall, for things like this I would like to have community votes taken of people within a certain radius of the park or who are members of clubs at a park, but would encourage negotiation and compromise where possible, and understanding the hardline most important things to the communities and make sure the community is safe and not disrupting someone's life.

- 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?

Overall, I'd like to see one main festival space exist so there is a dedicated space that is not disrupting a community's daily life. Event organizers should pay for the services provided by the city for events that require public service that they are profiting off of. They should also have a community benefits agreement regarding times of operation, jobs available, and more. I think there should be communication between the alderpeople in the areas impacted, the mayor's office, and the various city agencies alongside the parks district and PACs, community boards, and hosting town halls for community members to understand what is happening and for them to give input over what can improve the experience for community members.

- 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?



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Ideally, the Park District should not rely on these events for its budget. We should explore what funds can exist out of city and county budgets and what grants may be available, alongside what fundraising the Parks can do for programming that does not rely on private events. Millions of dollars of TIF money should be going to our parks as opposed to private companies like Pepsi and Vienna Beef (recent recipients of 6.5 million dollars from TIF).

### RESPONSE PARK PRIVATIZATION AND REVENUE:

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

Canvassers, phonebankers, and mailer should go out to community stakeholders in their primary language to engage them in plans. Community meetings with advertisements about them and notice in papers would also help, including local multi-lingual papers.

- 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?

I would open submissions as alderman of what the community wants, and submit those as my requests. I would ask for input on a survey, ask community members to rank the importance to them of different projects, and if they have another project we did not think of that should be up there. I would seek input from PACs, via newsletters, social media, via canvassing, and community boards.

- 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



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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?

I would support using menu money, TIF money, etc to supplement Park District funding. I would seek input from the community about priorities for those spending, and would ask colleagues if they have advice or tips on streamlining funding and projects.

### RESPONSE BUDGET PROCESS AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION:

#### 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?

We believe strongly that our parks and recreation areas must be accessible to people regardless of their race, language, neighborhood, and ability. As part of meeting with community members and advocates, I would listen to those who are articulating a gap in service accessibility, and proactively conduct research to identify problem areas preventing our residents from fully accessing our parks and green areas. I believe strongly in increasing staffing so that we can keep our facilities and bathrooms clean and open across the city. As an Alderman representing diverse linguistic communities, it is a top priority to ensure that all written materials related to parks including signage, websites, and print matter are translated into all of the languages spoken by our residents.

- 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?

In the 11th Ward in particular, we don't have a dog park. Residents have been organizing for the creation of a dog park for many years. Because of a historic lack of proactive leadership in the ward, the problems surrounding safety, waste, and wildlife are a persistent source of friction



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among ward residents. By creating a dog park, like 11th Ward dog owners have asked for repeatedly, we will better serve both our dog owning and non-dog owning communities.

- 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?

I think this has been answered in other questions, so I won't go into it here.

- 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?

I will seek out sources of funding for the Chicago Park District to fund positions that will maintain the access and cleanliness to our fieldhouses. In terms of bathrooms, we should find the money to build bathrooms. The search for funding includes seeking out grant funding, entering into staffing partnerships with Chicago Parks District, and public advocacy for parks funding.

- 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?

I believe in a future where regular people control the destiny of their neighborhoods, streets, schools, workspaces, and parks. I am 100% opposed to corporate control of green space. These parks belong to the people of Chicago and should be under democratic management. I believe that all parks or facility design should include residents at every step. When developers *are* using "publically accessible" green space, it is my responsibility as an Alder to defend our rights to this commons and hold these developers accountable for ensuring access.

### RESPONSE PARK ACCESSIBILITY, FACILITIES, & AMENITIES:



## 2023 CHICAGO MUNICIPAL ELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

### 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?

I will invest in and promote culturally relevant programming by the Parks District in my Ward. In City Hall, I will support legislation that seeks to rectify these historic and ongoing injustices. By establishing constituency advisory boards, like for example a youth council, I will ensure that residents have a pathway to alert their Alderman if there is an issue with programming inequity – and give them a platform to organize from. Power concedes nothing without a demand, and I will use my office to uplift and empower constituents who are organizing for equity and justice in parks programming.

- What will you do to support residents and community groups to have access to park space and programming for no or low cost?
- Parks across Chicago do not have the same access to sufficient, culturally relevant, and affordable programs or have space maintained to meet the needs of the community. What will you do to ensure equity in park programming and resources (facilities, maintenance, etc.) for parks in your ward and across Chicago, keeping in mind the historic underinvestment in West and South Side parks?
- How will you include the community in program design and program offering in their parks to make sure it is sufficient, relevant, and affordable and to proactively account for external community problems related to public safety and violence?

**RESPONSE PARK PROGRAMMING:**



## 2023 CHICAGO MUNICIPAL ELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

### 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?

I disagreed with the actions the mayor took that limited access to parks for youth - what we need is more supervised programming for youth to create structured ways for them to enjoy our parks. We need our parks to be alive with activity that is open to the public - daylight brings safety.

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

I believe we can address safety without limiting access to public amenities for broad groups of people, which is a discriminatory act.

- 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?

I believe that increasing public activities and programming in these areas and having them well-staffed with park employees will go a long way in improving safety.

### RESPONSE SAFETY:

### 11) PARK DISTRICT OVERSIGHT





## 2023 CHICAGO MUNICIPAL ELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

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

This is a problem that extends to our entire city government, where we put people in positions with huge responsibilities that they have no relevant experience with. Across the board I want to see departments staffed by experts from relevant fields, and would be interested in pursuing policies that state that as an ideal to pursue in selection.

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

I want to build relationships with local park supervisors, board members, and staff. That's something I've already been working on during the campaign trail. I will make it part of my job to know what is going on at each of the parks in the area (not just my Ward, but the local Parks District as a whole) and provide whatever assistance is afforded by my position.

### RESPONSE PARK DISTRICT OVERSIGHT:

## 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?

### 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.



## 2023 CHICAGO MUNICIPAL ELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

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?

### 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?

### 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.
- What did you know about or how were you involved with this project before construction was halted in September 2022?
- How will you offer leadership to remedy this situation?

### 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?

### 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?