Preservation Chicago Unveils the 2020 Chicago 7 Most Endangered...

Jackson Park, South Shore Cultural Center & Midway Plaisance

Bounded by Lake Michigan, 56th, Stony Island and 71st, Chicago

Aerial Photo of Jackson Park, Woman's Garden, Midway Plaisance, Lagoons and Wooded Island with Museum of Science & Industry © Steve Vance

Jackson Park, South Shore Cultural Center & Midway Plaisance

Address: Bounded by Lake Michigan, 56th, Stony Island and 71st, Chicago

Landscape Architects: Frederick Law Olmsted & Calvert Vaux, F.L. Olmsted & Co., Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot with additions by Alfred Caldwell and May McAdams (Jackson Park & Midway Plaisance)

Architects: Benjamin Marshall & Charles Fox, Thomas Hawkes (South Shore Cultural Center)

Date: c.1870s to 1937

Style: Naturalistic

Neighborhood: Hyde Park, Woodlawn, South Shore
Jackson Park, Midway Plaisance and the South Shore Cultural Center have now been part of Preservation Chicago’s Chicago 7 Most Endangered List for a fourth year in a row, noting the threat to one of America’s greatest public parks and boulevards and one of Chicago’s lakefront legacy parks and greenspaces.

We very much welcome the proposed Obama Presidential Center to Chicago’s South Side, but for another nearby site and not on historic public parklands designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, Olmsted Brothers, and with additions by Alfred Caldwell, May McAdams and others of national and world recognition.

The Obama Presidential Center (OPC) has been contentious among residents, citizens of Chicago and elsewhere across the nation because of concerns about gentrification, displacement, and its placement within a historic park belonging to the people of Chicago for more than 130 years. The chosen location is also a lakefront site and subject to ordinances designed to keep the shoreline protected from private development and unnecessary non-public structures—and understood by many citizens to be “forever open and free,” even if this generally applies to lands near downtown in Grant Park. This “forever open and free” idea along Chicago’s lakefront, while revolutionary in concept for a large American city of the 19th and early 20th century, originated in 1836 with the establishment of Lake Park. These values and regulations are challenged and disputed every so often because of political pressures and speculation. It is once again challenged by elected officials who should represent the voice of the people and protect public assets for the public good and not make exceptions for a private development in the city’s parks, lakefront and greenspaces.

The proposed OPC campus is to be sited on about 20 acres of Jackson Park near the Midway Plaisance at 60th and Stony Island Avenue and extending southward. The plans from the very beginning were flawed, with the University of Chicago and the Obama Foundation, along with former Mayor Rahm Emanuel, suggesting and offering the
Chicago lakefront park as a site for a private development in the park. This was an absolutely terrible idea, which has gained traction through political maneuvers and has literally imposed this proposed complex on the citizens of Chicago. Efforts to support this lakefront site in Jackson Park, by the City and officials, have resulted in spending countless taxpayer money – perhaps millions of dollars – in addition to City staff time and resources. This is all occurring when an abundance of nearby vacant land in Woodlawn, the Washington Park neighborhood, and other communities sits idle. The expedited process that saw the City approve the proposed OPC plans was neither transparent nor without controversy. It was simply and essentially a taking of public lands to extend private development on parklands that are considered sacred by the people of Chicago.

Due to this historic park site being selected by the Obama Foundation for the 20-acre Obama Presidential Center and its campus of buildings, this site is part of an on-going Federal Section 106 review process required by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. This is due to the park’s significance and listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It is also subject to a review process through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and to the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery (UPARR) Act administered by the National Park Service. However, we are hopeful that those agencies are clear in their vision and not swayed by political pressures, as some of these agencies have representatives from the City of Chicago leading hearings and thereby perhaps directing decisions.

In any case, negative and adverse effects on Jackson Park by the OPC have been determined by the City and several agencies, which also appear to be resigned to the destruction of Jackson Park, in addition to the loss of hundreds of trees, important landscapes and historic viewsheds. Combine that adverse impact with the consolidation of two historic golf courses into one (with plans to cut hundreds of trees), and the historic landscapes of two important parks and nature center will forever be adversely impacted by these drastic and insensitive proposed changes to Jackson Park and the South Shore Cultural Center.

We need our federal agencies not to falter. However, public opinion may also impact decisions, as the destruction of
Jackson Park could also become part of national headlines in the future. Would New York City or New Yorkers allow such radical changes to or the removal of hundreds of trees from Central Park? Most likely not.

Additionally, there is an on-going lawsuit, and perhaps a series of them looking to the future, to protect Jackson Park and to further encourage another nearby location for the OPC. The legal action by Protect Our Parks, Inc. (POP) is once again before the U.S. District Court of the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, after a prior ruling in favor of the City of Chicago.

A tremendous amount of resources continues to be invested by both the City of Chicago and the Obama Foundation to place this new center and campus of buildings onto a historic Olmsted park and lakefront land where it does not belong. This proposed complex is contrary to Lakefront Ordinances and the public good, acknowledging for this site what has been upheld by Chicago for more than 150 years — that the lakefront should be “public ground. A common to remain forever open, clear and free of any buildings or other obstructions whatever,” with access to all.

In addition, South Lake Shore Drive is proposed to be widened, perhaps removing some of its boulevard characteristics, for modern-day highway standards as a result of removing two historic Olmsted Boulevards – Cornell Drive and portions of Hayes Drive – from historic Jackson Park. In addition, Stony Island Avenue is also proposed to be widened, and this land is to be essentially comandeered from Jackson Park along with a portion of newly restored prairie and countless trees — some old growth trees — lost to these proposed ill-conceived plans.

This proposed Presidential Center to be situated on public lands has also absorbed thousands of hours of City staff time over the past few years, as well as preparation of thousands of pages of documents required for the Federal
Section 106-related hearings and U.S. District Court proceedings. Had the University of Chicago and the Obama Foundation chosen a site that was not historically significant, not on the National Register of Historic Places, and not on public lakefront lands, the time investment would have been significantly reduced. If the OPC were proposed for nearby private lands, the complex would have most likely already been under construction and completed and perhaps likely with significantly less investment of public resources. The City of Chicago and the University of Chicago own significant amounts of land at alternative site locations, and this viable option should be further explored.

Perhaps the most telling sign is the rising levels of Lake Michigan, which have led to the recent destruction of lakefront trails and pathways, seawalls and revetments in some places. The Chicago lakefront parks not only act as our collective green lungs, but they also serve as a buffer zone and at times wetlands and partially submerged land between beautiful Lake Michigan and the City’s built environment beyond. Even Frederick Law Olmsted and the South Park Commissioners in the 1870s thought the land on which Jackson Park exists resembled marshlands and wetlands, with plans proceeding first for the creation of Washington Park and the Midway. It was only later, and with additional funds, that Jackson Park’s partially submerged wetlands were realized as a park. To this day, Jackson Park has a high-water table and its tremendous landscape is lined with many lagoons, harbors and inlets, all bordering expansive Lake Michigan.

Referencing back to our parks and greenspaces as a buffer-zone between Lake Michigan and the built environment of Chicago. In locations where parkland does not exist, or is minimal, at South Shore on the South Side and Rogers Park and Edgewater on the North Side, we see extreme concerns relating to buildings, roadways and lakefront lands being destroyed by the forces of nature—and Lake Michigan. These legacy lakefront parks are important in so many ways looking to the future. They will continue to provide a buffer between Lake Michigan and the built-environment and also allowing for a flood plain or overflow lands if necessary, for water retention in the future. This is much like the lagoons, harbors and semi-marshlands already provide in some areas of Jackson Park and the Chicago Lakefront. The construction of a large 20-acre campus of buildings, will also adversely impact and perhaps further exacerbate water management and retention issues in the parks, with their prominent wetland areas.

It’s also important to remember and protect “the beauties of nature for its restorative health, stress relieving help” and this will be adversely and negatively affected, with the proposed impact of the OPC. This is simply the wrong
place for such a development and it appears forced on these lands and in this park in every way.

HISTORY

Chicago would not be the city we know and love without its expansive park system and its celebrated lakefront lined with public open space, beaches, parks, harbors and public access. This network of parks, green spaces and lakefront lands should not be compromised in any way by anyone or anything which would cause irreparable harm to these parks, landscapes and features so well associated with the City of Chicago. After all, the city’s motto is “Urbs in Horto” which translates to “City in a Garden.”

Jackson Park, Midway Plaisance and the South Shore Cultural Center are among the greatest historic and natural assets of Chicago’s South Side. The borders of these parks converge at South Shore Drive at 67th Street, and also at Stony Island Avenue and the Midway Plaisance, where Jackson Park connects to Washington Park, another remarkable Chicago treasure, also designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux.

All of the components of the green spaces and parklands are woven into a single brilliant series of ideas by Frederick Law Olmsted and his firm to extend and connect the lakefront and its parks. Tree-lined meadows, lagoons, islands and harbors are an integral part of the cityscape and provide a respite from the dense built environment and urban life. These magnificent parks allow public access to millions of people, both residents and visitors alike, to lush green landscapes situated among old-growth trees and gardens.

The historic significance of Jackson Park, Midway Plaisance and the South Shore Cultural Center are monumental and well known to most audiences, including national and international scholars of architectural landscape design, historic landscapes and cultural heritage. The sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and certain features, structures and buildings of both park sites are designated Chicago Landmarks. These designated Chicago Landmarks within the boundaries of the two parks include the Museum of Science and Industry (MSI) build-
The 500-acre Jackson Park was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, perhaps the most famous landscape designer of the 19th century and widely considered to be the father of American landscape architecture. Jackson Park was also the site of one of the most important events in Chicago’s history and arguably one of the most important cultural events of the 19th century, the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893. Jackson Park is connected via the Midway to Washington Park and then to Chicago’s Emerald Necklace of great parks and boulevards, forming one of the most magnificent networks of urban parkland in the country.

In addition, the proposed site of the Obama Presidential Center in Jackson Park is to be located on the site and adjacent to Sophia Hayden’s Woman’s Building. This was the only building designed by a woman architect in 1893, among an assembled group of prominent male architects from across the nation. It was simply amazing that Ms. Hayden was selected to design such a building to celebrate the accomplishments of women, and this was a very for-
ward idea on the world stage. It was Ms. Hayden’s only building, but it was a massive and impressive structure. It was almost unimaginable at the time for a woman to design such a building for a World’s Fair. This site is also the location of the Woman’s Garden, designed by the Chicago Park District’s first female landscape architect May McAdams, another remarkable achievement in 1937. It’s a beautiful, mature garden, and it is proposed to be destroyed—cut and backhoed for a construction staging ground for the Obama Presidential Center. The Obama Foundation then plans to build a new garden and incorporate it into a water management system. So, the Woman’s Garden would be completely destroyed while nearby private lands, including a University of Chicago-owned asphalt parking lot, remain accessible directly across the street on Stony Island Avenue at 60th Street. Why destroy and lose another important component of a historic landscape dedicated to women?

Additionally, other structures were also located on the site of the proposed OPC, including the Children’s Building, the massive Horticulture Building and a number of other smaller structures. In all, when seven small investigative archeological holes were drilled into this site, it revealed 7,000 items from the Columbian Exposition—the World’s Fair of 1893. It is worthwhile to consider other nearby sites for this proposed private development that will not disturb these items or the seminal landscapes of a legacy lakefront park — a park designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and others of great note, with an amazing history, known and published around the world. Jackson Park is one of the great park landscapes of the United States and belonging to the people of Chicago for more than 130 years. This would potentially be another huge embarrassment to the City of Chicago, for years and decades to come, much in the same vein as the many Landmark buildings and Landmark-eligible structures we have allowed to be destroyed.

The Mediterranean Revival-style South Shore Cultural Center, situated at 71st Street and the lakefront, was originally designed as the South Shore Country Club by the notable Chicago architectural firm of Marshall & Fox and landscape designer Thomas Hawkes. It is one of the most grand-scaled and recognizable landmarks on Chicago’s South Side. In its more recent past, it was the site of Barack and Michelle Obama’s wedding reception.

The transformation of the site and buildings from an exclusive private club to a public park and golf course is a major community preservation success story. In 1975, South Shore, Hyde Park and Woodlawn neighborhood residents...
CENTRAL ENTRANCE TO THE WOMAN'S BUILDING.—The central features of the East and West Facades of the Woman’s building which are similar are the entrance porticoes. These are two-stories in height, and are brought forward 14 feet from the main walls. The arches of the lower order form the entrance, Ionic columns being substituted for pilasters. The second story is an open balcony surmounted by Corinthian columns which supported a pediment evolved from the second story cornice. This pediment is decorated with a bas-relief representing the occupations of women, and was designed and modeled by Miss Alice Rideout of San Francisco. Connecting the entrance porticoes to the end pavilions are open arcades which form balconies to the second stories. The end pavilions have a frontage of 80 feet and are 200 feet deep forming the north and south sides of the building. To these a third order was added in the form of a screen of small columns and caryatids, which surround the roof gardens which were such an attractive feature of this edifice. The walls of the central hall rise above the surrounding roofs, and are pierced with clear story windows. The Oriental detail of this building were modeled after classic and Italian renaissance types, and on account of the comparative small size and scale of the building were more delicate and refined than those of the other main structures of the Fair. The architect of the Woman’s building was Miss Sophia G. Hayden of Boston, Mass.

View of Central Entrance at Woman’s Building at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park © Beautiful Scenes of the White City and the Fabulous Midway Plaisance, Farewell Edition, Laird & Lee Publishers, 1894
and activists famously rescued the former private South Shore Country Club from demolition. The Chicago Park District and City of Chicago had the foresight to purchase the grounds from the failing country club, but they had planned to demolish and clear the club and ancillary buildings. After a lengthy community preservation advocacy effort and under intense community pressure, the Chicago Park District relented to broad public outcry and decided not to demolish the historic buildings and in time renovated and restored the buildings. Ultimately the Chicago Park District supported the Chicago Landmark designation of most of the former country club structures and reversed a previous course of action that would have been as disastrous and heavy-handed as current plans for both Jackson Park and the South Shore Cultural Center landscapes.

The creation of the South Shore Cultural Center as a public facility open to all visitors represents a victory for diversity and inclusion over the South Shore Country Club’s legacy of exclusion.

In 2017, a handful of local community groups came forward to advocate for changes to the proposed development plans for both the OPC and the proposed golf course reconfiguration. The number of organizations has grown exponentially, expanding well beyond the local stakeholders to include advocates from around the city and nation. Community organizations leading the advocacy effort include Jackson Park Watch, Save the Midway, Midway Plaisance Advisory Council, Coalition to Save Jackson Park, Blacks in Green, The Hyde Park Historical Society and Friends of the Park.

**THREAT**

Jackson Park and the South Shore Cultural Center are intertwined in a host of new proposals which endanger the Olmsted-designed Jackson Park and the historic Cultural Center’s grounds and Nature Sanctuary. The proposed 20-acre Obama Presidential Center in Jackson Park and the proposed redesign and merging of two historic century-
Preservation Chicago and other advocacy groups remain concerned about the level of influence by privately held organizations in the management of public parkland, including the Obama Foundation, the Chicago Parks Golf Alliance, Project 120, and Smith Group JJR. As non-profits and private companies, they serve their respective boards of directors and owners and have their own priorities and objectives which may not align with those of our public and governmental agencies. These private organizations do not directly serve the public and have no obligation to include the public in the planning process. However, Preservation Chicago acknowledges that the Obama Founda-
tion has hosted a series of public and consulting party/stakeholder meetings that have allowed public comments to be provided to the design team. The central challenge is that the control of public lands is being relinquished to private entities.

Without rigorous oversight, the protection of historic landscapes and structures can be significantly compromised. Last year, Preservation Chicago joined a wide consortium of advocacy groups, neighborhood organizations and community leaders in calling for a transparent, comprehensive and thoughtful planning process from the City of Chicago, Chicago Park District, Obama Foundation, Chicago Parks Golf Alliance and Project 120.

Additional threats to Jackson Park include the removal of the Olmsted-designed Cornell Drive, a widening of South Lake Shore Drive and a widening of Stony Island Avenue to accommodate a privately run museum complex. The proposed widening of South Lake Shore Drive will likely impact both Jackson Park (with the removal of more mature landscapes and trees) and the lakefront, along with access to Lake Michigan, the harbors, 57th Street Beach and 63rd Street Beach.

The OPC as proposed is a center and museum as opposed to a more traditional presidential library. The Obama Foundation chose to forgo the associated rules and regulations imposed by Congress on managing a presidential library on the site. Presidential libraries have specific requirements that regulate and limit the square footage and size of these institutions, specifically so they do not become too large and monumental to maintain. There are also strict financial requirements and obligations associated with funding presidential libraries. All of these rules and ideals set forth by Congress have been essentially ignored, and that is also troubling and perhaps a reflection of the future.

In lieu of an official presidential library, a Chicago Public Library branch is included in the OPC plans. This facility will be much like the 79 existing branch locations throughout Chicago’s 77 community areas. It is our understand-
ing that this branch library is completely unrelated to President Obama’s documents, and it will be operated by Chicago’s library system and supported by taxpayer revenue. This appears to be a murky plan with essentially a notation of library attached to a “Presidential Center” yet not a true presidential library by any means, which was different than what was promised at the onset of the presentation proposal. The other question remains about what happens to all of the original presidential documents, which under normal circumstances would be included in a more traditional presidential library and archive? Those records will be digitalized and perhaps end up elsewhere in New York or Hawaii, as the former president once noted, as a branch of the Chicago center.

Additionally, several plans from the private for-profit design and planning contractors Smith Group JJR, also known as Project 120, have reappeared in some of the Chicago Park District’s South Lakefront Framework Plans. These include a proposed Jackson Park visitor’s center, large-scale music pavilion and other plans, which will completely and unequivocally destroy and change the character and design of this world-renowned park. Make no bones about these proposed changes to Chicago’s Olmsted-designed parklands — they will alter and both negatively and adversely impact the landscape, destroy huge volumes of trees and gardens, interfere with migratory paths of wildlife and impact broad viewsheds, both in and around the park.

These park projects are all heavy-handed design plans. If implemented, they could lead to the consideration of a delisting of Jackson Park and perhaps the South Shore Cultural Center from the National Register of Historic Places. This would be much like what occurred at Soldier Field, another Chicago Park District re-visioning project with the City of Chicago. So many adverse modifications were made to Soldier Field in 2002-2003 that it had to be dropped and removed from the National Register. If this same impact and loss occurred at Jackson Park and/or the South Shore Cultural Center, it would be a significant loss to the Woodlawn community, the City of Chicago and supporters around the country and world.

These are sacred spaces, coveted lands and landscapes that should be protected in perpetuity as an asset to the citizens of Chicago. This history and character should not be modified and manipulated over the decades until all that is left is a shell of what once was.

To realize how important our parks can be, look no further than the success of Millennium Park, a major tourist
engine for Chicago which opened in 2004. Or consider the Museum Campus including the Field Museum, Shedd Aquarium and Planetarium. These valued downtown assets were once railway and freight yards. We should consider for the OPC a location on underutilized land that does not negatively harm our cherished landscapes and public parks.

Without thorough oversight, the protection of historic landscapes and structures can be seriously compromised. Over two years ago, Preservation Chicago joined a wide consortium of advocacy groups, neighborhood organizations and community leaders in calling for transparent planning that allows ample opportunity for community voices to be heard and valued. Those efforts, led by the Midway Plaisance Advisory Council and Save the Midway, were successful in redirecting the planned multi-story parking garage on the Midway Plaisance to another location.

Multiple rounds of community input and design updates have shown key constituent requests largely dismissed to accommodate the programmatic priorities of the Obama Foundation and Chicago Parks Golf Alliance, casting doubt on the good faith and transparency of the public process.

Beyond minor and incremental changes to the plans, specific threats to the historic park landscapes remain. According to the Obama Foundation, more than 300 trees (many of which are old-growth) would be clear-cut on the narrowly defined footprint of the Center buildings, and a major regrading of the site would be undertaken for the construction of the OPC. The number of trees removed will be significantly higher if the impact of all the proposed road changes is implemented. An additional 2,000 trees would be clear cut and major regrading undertaken for the new fairways of an expanded golf course.
On September 20, 2018, the Chicago City Council passed an ordinance that approved the 99-year lease of 19.3 acres in Jackson Park for a total of $10. Jackson Park Watch co-founder Margaret Schmid said, “The idea of leasing invaluable, irreplaceable public parkland to a private entity for $10 for 99 years is astounding in this era when public lands and natural resources are under attack in so many places. Besides, Chicago’s finances are extremely precarious.” (Sweet, Chicago Sun-Times, 9/18/18)

As part of this lease deal, the City agreed to reimburse the Obama Foundation for environmental testing of the development site. These testing costs were capped at $75,000. However, in the final language of the approved Ordinance, the taxpayers of the City of Chicago and State of Illinois are now fully responsible and liable for all costs related to any environmental remediation required or resulting from the construction of the OPC in Jackson Park. This language includes no cap for the total cost. Estimated remediation costs are not yet available, but it can be expected that the final remediation costs for this blank check will be substantial.

The City of Chicago and State of Illinois have also agreed to cover the cost of $175 million in discretionary road changes in Jackson Park. The oft-repeated argument is that the ultimate cost burden will be borne by taxpayers – both state and federal. Federal funds for road improvements are limited, and those resources should be awarded first to desperately needed roadwork and crumbling infrastructure elsewhere in Chicago.

While Preservation Chicago is not a party to the on-going lawsuits and future litigation by Protect Our Parks, we submitted an Amicus Brief along with the community-based organization Jackson Park Watch. The Brief clarified that most of Chicago’s institutions in the parks were built upon the footprint of former buildings and institutions within the parks, had reused or repurposed existing historic structures, or were constructed buildings on lands used for other purposes (e.g. railway yards). The parks have grown around these institutions over time. This is an important precedent as no Chicago parklands were given to a new campus of buildings — contrary to assertions by the
City of Chicago and Chicago Park District.

The Art Institute of Chicago, by architects Shepley Rutan & Coolidge of 1893, was constructed on the former site of the Interstate Industrial Exhibition Building by W.W. Boyington at the same location from 1873-1892. The Museum of Contemporary Art, designed by German Architect Josef Paul Kleihues, was constructed on the site of the old Chicago Avenue Armory which was designed by architects Holabird & Roche. The Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, designed by Ralph Johnson of Perkins & Will, was built on the site of the old Lincoln Park/North Shops buildings.

The Museum of Science and Industry is housed in the former Palace of Fine Arts building from the Columbian Exposition or Chicago World’s Fair of 1893 in Jackson Park. It is the only large-scale building of great magnitude in Jackson Park. Olmsted also redesigned Jackson Park around this structure following the World’s Fair, so this building has been part of the landscape of Jackson Park for 126 years.

The DuSable Museum of African American History is housed in the former South Park Commissioners Building in Washington Park, designed by Daniel Burnham and his firm D. H. Burnham & Company. The DuSable Museum has continued to expand its facilities over time near its site, including a recent renovation and restoration of the former Washington Park Stables Building by architects Burnham & Root.

The National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture is housed in the restored and repurposed former Humboldt Park Horse Stables in historic Humboldt Park, designed by architects Fromman & Jebsen in 1895. The National Museum of Mexican Art reused and reconfigured former buildings in Harrison Park for this amazing institution.
The Field Museum of Natural History, the John G. Shedd Aquarium and the Adler Planetarium were all mostly built upon former railway lands, which had been part of on-going landfills over time. Burnham Park and Grant Park grew and extended around these institutions following their construction. Finally, the Chicago History Museum, originally called the Chicago Historical Society, was built upon a corner of the city’s old public cemetery at a commercial corner of Lincoln Park near Clark Street and North Avenue. This section of what was to become Lincoln Park still holds the remains of at least several individuals, including the mausoleum of Ira Couch and the grave of David Kennison, said to be the last survivor of the Boston Tea Party.

Preservation Chicago is also concerned about the redesign and co-joining of the historic Jackson Park Golf Course (18 holes), the oldest course west of the Alleghany Mountains, and that of the nearby South Shore Cultural Center (9 holes). This reconstituting will substantially impact the historic landscape, some features designed by architect Alfred Caldwell and Olmsted & Vaux, and remove and cut several thousand old-growth trees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Preservation Chicago joins the fervent support of the Obama Presidential Center locating in Chicago. It just should not be in Jackson Park. The Obama Foundation’s drawings for a site west of Washington Park would be a great location for the OPC. The University of Chicago, along with the City of Chicago, has been assembling acreage adjacent to Washington Park, and that area has great access to public transportation. This location is targeted for redevelopment and is adjacent to the Garfield Park “L” stop for the Green and Red Line trains. The OPC located there would be an extraordinary asset to the community, and the City and would make this remarkable monument to President Obama’s legacy more accessible to people throughout the area. In solidarity with the residents of the area, Preservation Chicago calls on the Obama Foundation to enter into a binding Community Benefits Agreement for this alternate site to ensure that promises made are kept to avoid displacement and provide more jobs.

The City of Chicago and the Chicago Park District need to develop plans that reflect the full range of stakeholders in this process and balance the interests of their constituents with the interests of private developers. They should prioritize an open and transparent process in determining the future of our public lands and green spaces. In the process, they should protect the historic integrity of these nationally and locally significant landscapes, structures
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and buildings so they may remain accessible assets for the people of the South Side, Chicago and the world for generations to come.

To help restore the area, the City of Chicago and the Chicago Park District should consider narrowing the Olmsted-designed historic parkways instead of closing and removing them completely and retaining South Lake Shore Drive, with its current proportions and winding lakefront boulevard characteristics. This would render unnecessary the proposed widening of the other roadways and perhaps save hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars.

Preservation Chicago reaffirms its commitment to providing a constructive, preservation-oriented voice in this large and complex conversation. As a consulting party in the federally mandated Section 106 review process, Preservation Chicago will continue to strongly advocate for the importance of protecting historic features, including the world-renowned Olmsted landscapes. We continue to work to ensure that any construction in the historic parks will be conducted with sensitivity to historic features, historic structures and historic landscapes. This includes archaeologically important sites such as the foundations and remnants of the Women's Building designed by Sophia Hayden, the only female architect who designed a building for the Exposition; the Children's Building; and other important structures and features from the World Columbian Exposition in 1893, likely hidden below the soil line. Also, this proposed construction would impact the Woman's Garden, also known as the Perennial Garden in Jackson Park, designed by May McAdams in 1937, a noted female landscape architect.

We remain hopeful that the federal review process mandated by the National Historic Preservation Act will reinforce the importance of protecting the historic features of the park and minimizing the adverse effects of new construction. Specifically, we want to insure that the South Shore Cultural Center be included in the Section 106 process already underway or that a new Section 106 process be initiated specifically for the golf course expansion project at both Jackson Park and the South Shore Cultural Center.
A formal survey of Jackson Park and South Shore Cultural Center trees, detailing type, age and caliper, should be conducted along with an assessment of which trees are planned to be cleared. The findings of this survey should then be released to the public for comment and discussion before any work begins. Also, while an inventory of historic structures in Jackson Park has been approved, there are a number of critical needs for historic buildings that require urgent repair to stabilize and return them to public use.

Preservation Chicago will continue to push for a written agreement from the Chicago Park District that some percentage of the many millions of dollars to be invested in these potential projects will be earmarked instead for the badly needed maintenance and rehabilitation of existing historic park structures. These include the South Shore Cultural Center main building and stables, as well Jackson Park improvements to the Comfort Station, the Iowa Building, the Columbia/Darrow Bridge, public paths and meadows, and ball fields.

There is significant Chicago history buried underground at Jackson Park. Archaeological explorations from seven borings on the site were shared at one of the Section 106 meetings. They revealed nearly 10,000 objects from the 1893 World’s Columbia Exposition. We understand that permanent concrete foundations for all the temporary buildings are also located below the soil line, and it is our opinion that these features should remain intact and should not be destroyed by heavy equipment, which will backhoe the site. The Women’s Garden, the approximate site of Sophia Hayden’s Woman’s Building during the World’s Columbia Exposition, should also not be disturbed. This was the only building designed by a woman architect for the 1893 Fair, which highlighted great strides and accomplishments by women all housed in a magnificent building, on scale with many of the large structures of the Fair. The garden honoring Ms. Hayden’s Woman’s Building, designed by a woman landscape architect, should remain intact.

**SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Relocate the Obama Presidential Center to a nearby site outside of Jackson Park. Land just west of Washington Park provides great public transportation access, and a good deal of this land is already owned by the City of Chicago and the University of Chicago.
2. Repair and restore the existing Jackson Park Golf Course and the South Shore Cultural Center golf course. These currently serve the public well, but they are in need of some long-deferred maintenance.

3. Move the proposed TGR Golf Course concept for Jackson Park and the South Shore Cultural Center southward to the new South Lake Shore Drive Extension, and extend it to the site of the former and now demolished United States Steel factories in the South Chicago neighborhood. This would be an economic boost to the South Chicago and East Side neighborhoods of Chicago, and it would result in three separate golf courses for a major city like Chicago. A large 18-hole golf course on the former U.S. Steel site, suitable for hosting PGA Championship games, would “green” this former industrial site as part of on-going efforts to retain publicly accessible parks and green space along the extraordinary and expansive Chicago lakefront.

4. Repair and Landmark the South Shore Cultural Center’s and Jackson Park’s existing historic buildings, structures, paths, meadows, and bridges (including the Columbia/Clarence Darrow Bridge—closed for almost a decade for safety reasons). These structures have suffered through enough long-deferred maintenance. One of the historic structures, the modest one-story Comfort Station at 67th Street and South Shore Drive, which is in terrible disrepair, had a partial roof collapse in the past year or so.

5. Narrow the Olmsted-designed roadways and parkways to their historic pre-1960s dimensions. The 1960s widening project was considered a misstep by the general public at that time and was part of numerous protests. A substantial number of trees were lost during that widening project. A narrowing of Cornell Drive, in lieu of total closure, could provide a correction of these missteps and help to again restore a tree-lined boulevard through the park. Everyone should be able to enjoy the pastoral setting of Jackson Park by various modes – walking, jogging, biking and driving.

6. Retain South Lake Shore Drive’s current proportions and winding lakefront boulevard characteristics, and retain the current proportions of Stony Island Avenue without unnecessary expansions.

7. The entirety of Jackson Park, the Midway and Washington Park—the Olmsted & Vaux parks, should be considered for a Chicago Landmark designation.

8. In its entirety, the Chicago Lakefront Park System should be considered as a National Monument or National Park. This would be much like the recent honor further recognizing the Indiana Dunes as a National Park, or the Pullman Historic District of Chicago as a National Monument. This would protect our valuable public lakefront parks from further attempts at parceling them out to private developers and would provide additional resources for maintenance and rehabilitation. This could be an amazing partnership if implemented with the National Park Ser-