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May 16, 2018

(SENT VIA EMAIL)

Mr. Martin Cabrera, Jr. Chair
Chicago Plan Commission
City of Chicago,
Department of Planning and Development

RE: Matters related to the Inter-Agency Planning Referral Act and the Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection Ordinance and/or The Chicago Zoning Ordinance for the Obama Presidential Center

Dear Chairman Cabrera and Members of the Commission,

Landmarks Illinois is writing to provide its comments regarding the proposed Obama Presidential Center (OPC). Landmarks Illinois is a membership-based nonprofit organization serving the people of Illinois. We inspire and empower stakeholders to save historic places that matter to them by providing free guidance, practical and financial resources and access to strategic partnerships. Landmarks Illinois is serving as a consulting party to the federal National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 review process currently underway due to the OPC's and the Chicago Department of Transportation's (CDOT) requested road changes that will impact Jackson Park, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Landmarks Illinois respectfully requests the Chicago Plan Commission acknowledge that the outcomes of the ongoing 106 process, and future National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review, may require changes to the site and roadway plans before you. We ask that your approval be conditional upon the resulting federal reviews to accommodate future mitigation measures that may alter the OPC site and roadway plans.

In regards to the current OPC proposal before the Commission, Landmarks Illinois has the following comments, which have been raised during the Section 106 process:

Proposed Road Changes

Key features of Frederick Law Olmsted's historic landscape design remain throughout Jackson Park, including berms, roadways and plantings that can and should be retained. Particularly important is the Midway Plaisance roadway plan that established a ceremonial connection between the Midway with Jackson Park. Consistent with Olmsted's plan, the Plaisance terminates on the east in mirrored, arching roadways. The OPC plan eliminates the remaining southern roadway for the Center's tower. In conversations with the

Obama Foundation, Landmarks Illinois raised the opportunity to retain and incorporate the roadway plan as part of the foot and bike path system, which would require the Center's tower move minimally to the south.

- Cornell Drive, also an Olmsted feature, can and should be recognized and retained as a roadway or pathway following the historic configuration.
- Due to Marquette Drive's proposed closure, Hayes Drive is projected to have increased traffic volume. CDOT has proposed widening lane capacity by removing parking lanes, adding concrete Jersey barriers to separate two-way traffic, and adding a traffic signal in the vicinity of The Statue of the Republic. The Center provides an opportunity to reconsider traffic through Jackson Park, which currently acts as a rapid thoroughfare to the Chicago Skyway. We urge adopting traffic calming design measures that reflect the pastoral intention of Olmsted's design, not a highway-like treatment. For example, the compromise may be removing parking from Hayes Drive to accommodate greater traffic, but finding a separation safety barrier that is less obtrusive in design and material. The location of the new signal should not obscure views of The Statue of the Republic, a visual centerpiece of the park connecting to the World's Columbian Exposition.

Important Historic Resources in Jackson Park

- The Perennial Garden (also referred to as the Women's Garden) is an important WPA-era historic feature of Jackson Park. The Obama Foundation now plans to recreate this feature and incorporate its important history through on-site interpretation. LI celebrates its incorporation, but in its original material and form. The Perennial Garden is planned to serve as the construction staging area, which will destroy the historic material. This is not acceptable and we object to this aspect of the plan.
- The Jackson Park Field House was built in 1957 and designed by Ralph Burke, a municipal engineer who designed major infrastructure projects for the City, including the master planning for O'Hare International Airport. The Field House is an historic feature and should be incorporated into the OPC recreation plan, not eliminated.
- Several historic structures in Jackson Park are in significant need of maintenance and renovation. Landmarks Illinois urges that the following buildings and structures be included in the overall planning for the OPC and infrastructure improvements:
 1. Restoration of the 1932 Cheney-Goode Memorial on the Midway Plaisance honoring early women leaders elected to public office in Chicago;
 2. Rehabilitation of the Iowa Building;
 3. Retention and repair of the Cecil Partee golf shelter;
 4. Retention and repair of the D.H. Burnham & Co.-designed golf shelter on the ninth hole.

- While archeological excavation did not provide new information on the World's Columbian Exposition, information about the 1893 fair, and fair buildings located on the current OPC site, is an opportunity to provide context about historic Jackson Park.

Potential Project Impact in Woodlawn

As part of the identification of the Area of Potential Effect for the Section 106 process, Landmarks Illinois identified that all of the Woodlawn neighborhood should be included in OPC planning, as residents may experience speculative development and displacement. Our recommendation was not included, as it was determined that the entirety of Woodlawn will not experience defined effects from the project. However, Landmarks Illinois contends that the risk of displacement and historic property demolition is possible, if not probable.

We have previously noted the comparison to The 606 trail on Chicago's northwest side. While The 606 is a valued and accessible amenity, it has caused documented displacement of low-income residents through speculative development. As LI previously stated, there is an opportunity to plan ahead to assure that the OPC does not have the same unintended impact of displacing existing Woodlawn residents that want to continue living in the community. With measures in place, the OPC can instead strengthen the existing mixed-income community and create opportunities for its existing residents to remain and invest. Landmarks Illinois requests the Plan Commission consider recommending existing city programs that could mitigate displacement as part of its approval process.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

Bonnie McDonald

Bonnie McDonald
President & CEO, Landmarks Illinois

Cc: Michael Strautmanis, Obama Foundation
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