



January 17, 2023

Name
Title
Address

Dear Candidate,

I write to you to request you complete Friends of the Parks' 2023 municipal questionnaire. We hope to collect responses from all candidates. *We will distribute the results broadly to our stakeholders before early voting starts, so please complete the questionnaire by Wednesday, January 25, to have your responses included.*

There are over 600 parks, playlots and playgrounds, almost 9,000 acres of green space, and 26 miles of public lakefront in Chicago managed by the Chicago Park District. Chicago is unique in having parks spread out across all 50 wards encompassing 77 community areas. Friends of the Parks has parktivists, stakeholders, and partners connected to each. These spaces give Chicagoans access to nature, thousands of programs and activities, culture, environmental education, and a chance to be outside. Our parkland includes beaches, riverfront, playlots, community parks, and paths and trails across the city.

This questionnaire builds on our 2018 [State of the Parks report](#). Our research revealed challenges to democracy, transparency, and equity in the way the Chicago Park District operates. It highlighted disconnects between the Chicago Park District's investments and the needs of underserved communities. Parkland, amenities, and programs continue to be unequally distributed across Chicago. The approval rate of capital requests suggests significant class and race inequities. Chicagoans lack much of the power for meaningful democratic participation with the park district that is available to residents of many other cities across Illinois and the country. Throughout our 2018 report, we endeavored to provide a fair perspective on the district's work while laying bare some challenging and difficult truths.

Friends of the Parks' 2023 municipal questionnaire is grounded in the historic pursuit of democracy and equity in and for Chicago's parks. This survey lifts up concerns that Chicagoans have brought to us as we have done our day-to-day business of supporting park advisory councils, park stewards, and other park partners. Additionally, we conducted a "Listening Tour" and stakeholder engagement sessions to inform the content of this survey. This questionnaire aims to ensure that the themes and concerns raised in these discussions are inserted into the public dialogue. This questionnaire informs candidates about and asks for their vision of healthy parks for a healthy Chicago.

Thank you for answering our questionnaire. ***The completed questionnaire must be received by Wednesday, January 25, to have responses shared with park leaders, community members, and residents across Chicago as early voting begins. Please return to rachelbr@fotp.org.***

Sincerely,

Rev. Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger
Director of Policy and Advocacy