

Friends of the Parks

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Chicago, Illinois (May 12, 2015):

Friends of the Parks welcomes the Obama Presidential Library to Chicago. Our city has a “once in a lifetime” opportunity to host the Obama’s Presidential legacy on the south side where the President and First lady have a deep connection to the community.

FOTP is disappointed that the OPL will be built in an existing park. We respectfully urge the OPL Foundation to take any and all necessary steps to ensure the impact on either park is minimal and that any construction fits with the vision of Frederick Law Olmsted's original design. In that respect, we urge the OPL Foundation to conduct a study by outside and independent experts to assess the possible adverse environmental impacts in the construction of the OPL on open land and on the original artistic design of the park. To that end, FOTP hopes to work with the Foundation, the City and the University to find ways to protect and add to parkland and public space and public access, to offset any adverse environmental impacts or loss of open space.

Lauren Moltz, Acting Executive Director FOTP: “We admire President Obama’s record as a champion of the environment. FOTP also has a deep commitment to the protection and preservation of the public’s use of and access to open space. Friends of the Parks looks forward to working with the Foundation, the City, the Chicago Park District and the University of Chicago to protect and promote parkland, public space and public access. We would like to ensure that any impact on historic Jackson/ Washington Park will be minimal and will fit within the vision of Frederick Law Olmsted `s design. FOTP encourages the Obama Foundation and architects to consult with an Olmsted expert and work with the Chicago Park District, environmental groups and the community to preserve the integrity of these parks. The design of the Obama Library should maximize the use of available vacant land and underground space, and be truly “park positive” by adding parkland to the surrounding community. Furthermore, any design should upgrade the park’s facilities and preserve existing recreational uses by the public.”

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We are pleased that unlike the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, the OPL will apparently not be built on any "public trust" land recovered from Lake Michigan. The construction of an enormous new facility on the very margin of Lake Michigan has been and remains unacceptable to FOTP.

Moving forward, FOTP urges the Foundation to work closely with the surrounding community to address community benefit agreements, public access to these parks as well as regular communication with all stakeholders.

Friends of the Parks looks forward to working with the Obama Foundation, the City, the Chicago Park District, the University of Chicago and the community on implementing the recommendations of the open space coalition and as a consulting party for any historic preservation assessments of Washington Park or Jackson Park.

Friends of the Parks is a forty year old nonprofit parks advocacy group whose mission is to preserve, protect, improve, and promote the use of Chicago's parks and public open spaces. We advance our programmatic, educational, and advocacy work with the support of our members, donors and volunteers, and through our governmental, community and environmental partnerships.

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