

# THE PACT:

THE PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL TRIBUTE NEWSLETTER



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Editor: Nicole Machuca

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## SHAPING BESSEMER PARK:

### THE BESSEMER PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL STORY

**Bessemer Park, 8930 S. Muskegon Ave.  
Written by Sharon Lewis, Bessemer Park  
Advisory Council President.**

Bessemer Park has been a long thriving park nestled between the two communities of South Shore and South Chicago. Its nearly 23-acre site is yet another historical Olmsted Park with a beautifully designed and generously sized, Daniel Burnham fieldhouse. Bessemer offers three gymnasiums; one is a full size boxing gym donated by Muhammad Ali, while the others are full-court and half-court basketball gyms. The outdoor pool is 135-feet long with six swimming lanes and has a depth ranging from 3- to 9-feet. With private picnic groves and gardens, tennis courts and playgrounds, there is something for everyone. Over the years we have had long standing programs in these areas as well as other areas of our fieldhouse and outdoor grounds. Our recreation rooms are plentiful, our kitchen size is adequate, as well as our men's and women's facilities, but all have seen tremendous usage and wear and tear. Park managers past and present have sought, with the help of the Chicago Park District, to keep these things in usable order. Usable is good, and so is adequate, but excellent and great are so much better, and that's where the Bessemer Park Advisory Council comes in.

The Bessemer Park Advisory Council (BPAC) is young, just a little over one year into our purpose. We started out with the intention to shape our park into something that our communities could thrive in for decades to come and be proud of as they enjoy the amenities and open spaces. Rest assured these purposes were shaped into ideas and turned into goals that were then hard fought to implement. Everything comes with a beginning; all of the aforementioned items needed work over the last 12 months. So, in the past twelve months and rising, we had a notable 12 (which is now our lucky number) of our major items completed that includes two new playgrounds, outdoor basketball court resurfacing, three newly repainted gymnasiums, newly painted activity rooms, ventilation upgrades, pickleball courts and new programming.



Our starting point has and always must be advocacy; BPAC is never looking to enhance a personal goal or directive. We formed with the intention to advocate for the betterment of our park, the community it serves, and the park systems as a whole. The formula used to implement our plans had the most valuable dynamics that we would never have succeeded without: teamwork and community partners. **(Continued on page 2 ->)**





(Continued from page 1.) Using the team’s assets and combining resources from Friends of The Parks, the Chicago Park District, community partners, local businesses and charitable organizations, have made all of the difference in what we have been able to accomplish. Creating a cohesive bond with the park manager, Alonzo Dunlap, and area manager, Anita Gilkey — who also work tirelessly to identify areas of need to be addressed in an order that makes the whole getting accomplished more feasible — permits us to move toward a completed goal. The goal that embraces a park that is *Connecting Families... Connecting Communities*.

Page 1, Top: Back to School event. Page 1, Bottom & Page 2, Left: Saturday in the Park.

## FOTP ARCHIVES: 1989 TOURS & CONFERENCE

In 1989, Friends of the Parks teamed up with the Chicago Park District to put on a special tour series titled, “Neighborhood Parks of the Progressive Reform Era: 1900-1925” to highlight why President Teddy Roosevelt called some of Chicago’s parks “...the greatest civic achievement of any municipality in America.” Although we now expect to find park amenities, like fieldhouses, all across the city, 100 years before they were not common at all. It was when Jane Addams founded the Hull House that the model for the historic field houses was spawned and led to the those found in Sherman, Davis Square and Armour Square Parks — the first field houses in the United States.

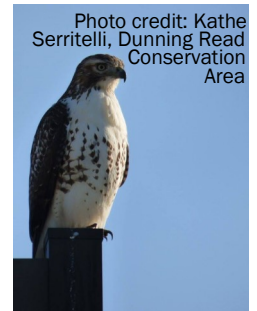


Photo credit: Kathe Serritelli, Dunning Read Conservation Area

Now in 2017, we look back on these moments from the past and are excited to report another tour series offered in partnership with Jane’s Walk Chicago, a project of the Friends of Downtown. Jane’s Walk is a movement of free, citizen-led walking tours inspired by a different Jane, Jane Jacobs. The 5th annual event will include tours organized by Friends of the Parks at Columbus Park, Montrose Beach and the Dunning Read Conservation Area — a state-owned public open space on the northwest side — not to mention many others hosted by other park partners as well! Sign-up for a May 6th or 7th tour at [janeswalk.org](http://janeswalk.org).

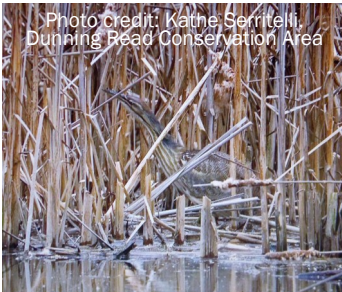


Photo Credit: Kathe Serritelli, Dunning Read Conservation Area

June of 1989 also marked Friends’ third annual conference, which kicked off two years prior. Don’t forget to register for our 30th anniversary of that historic conference at [fotp.org](http://fotp.org).

## FOTP UPDATES: MEET FRIENDS’ NEW DEPUTY DIRECTOR!



Join us in welcoming Sandra Del Toro to the Friends team! Ms. Del Toro joined us last month as our Deputy Director of Programs and Resource Development, where she oversees fundraising, program evaluation, and policy and advocacy strategies. Sandra has over 15 years of experience in non-profit leadership with expertise in development, grant writing, and grant-funded programs. She has additional experience in government and community relations, public policy and advocacy, staff supervision, strategic planning and budget oversight.

Prior to joining Friends of the Parks, Sandra had served in non-profit leadership roles spanning academic and community settings. She previously served as Vice President of Development and Communications for Mujeres Latinas en Accion, the nation’s oldest Latina serving and Latina-led organization. While at Mujeres, she worked with staff and institutional leadership to leverage nearly \$1 million in federal funds for program expansions and new initiatives including the establishment of a play therapy program for child witnesses of domestic violence and programs establishing the institution as a national leader in cultural competency in mental health. As a Senior Education Organizer for the Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP), Del Toro expanded grant initiatives by \$3.7 million and developed school-based programming designed to encourage parental leadership development, teacher quality and retention, and teacher and family engagement.

Sandra received her Master’s degree in Public Policy Studies from the University of Chicago and her undergraduate degree from Stanford University. She was a fellow in the 2012 class of the National Hispana Leadership Institute, which included studies at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and the Center for Creative Leadership. She is bilingual in spoken and written Spanish. Welcome, Sandra!