



2023 CHICAGO MUNICIPAL ELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

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Candidate for Ward #: 1st Ward
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A completed questionnaire must be received by Friday, January 27 to have answers distributed to our stakeholders as early voting starts. Please return to rachelbr@fotp.org.

ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND AND PRIORITIES RELATED TO PARKS

A. Briefly describe any accomplishments or projects you have been involved with related to parks.

Public Spaces and Recreation Highlights:

- Andy's focus on public spaces and recreation helped secure state funds and city approval for a new "Food Truck Triangle" on a formerly blighted city-owned parcel near Milwaukee Avenue.
- Andy also successfully secured approval for city funding to refurbish an underutilized gym and classroom annex at Grace Church to offer expanded programming and community space together with nearby Unity Park.
- When the local Boys & Girls Club decided to close, Andy successfully fought to save the building and ensure a new public park was created as part of the re-development, at no cost to the neighborhood or taxpayers.
- He led a fight against a billboard company that was blighting the old Grace's Furniture building on the square at the center of the neighborhood, facing down a \$750,000 nuisance lawsuit.
- His focus on the culture and history of Chicago neighborhoods led him to develop historic exhibits, save the St. John Berchmans' bell, restore the historic Norwegian Minnekirken, and more.

B. Are you planning to introduce legislation or initiatives to address any environmental justice issues? Do you have particular environmental priorities, park programming priorities, or see connections with other priorities for your community? If so, please identify those here.

Community engagement is a top priority when it comes to addressing environmental justice issues in our ward. I am committed to creating new parks, planting more trees, and developing programming that meets the unique needs of our citizens. I am also focused on reducing heat islands so that all neighborhoods have access to healthy, natural environments. Additionally, ensuring equity is at the forefront of my agenda as these initiatives are implemented. It is my goal to prioritize both environmental and racial justice with every step taken towards improving public spaces and engagements in our community.



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C. Chicago's motto is Urbs in Horto (City in a Garden). In the most recent *We Will Chicago* planning process, park discussions were thinly and inadequately spread across all the pillars and not a central focus of planning. How will you prioritize parks or demonstrate that parks are critical to healthy, thriving communities and the entire city and its residents?

Community engagement is a key factor in prioritizing parks, as it helps ensure that advocate for more parks, and ensures the design reflects the authentic needs of residents. Community forums provide a space for residents to discuss the recreational and entertainment possibilities they would like to see incorporated into their parks, giving opportunities for creativity that park designs can often lack. Community engagement also allows for reflection on the public health limitations posed by insufficient or lacking green spaces, when citizens are given voices in advocating for more parks or better facilities. By connecting people with nature throughout the city, Chicago could improve mental health and create better neighborhoods for healthy living. Furthermore, implementing initiatives that make access available to all communities will help to ensure equitable stewardship of parks in each neighborhood and across the entire city.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Below are 11 topics related to parks. Please share your thoughts and policies on each subject using the list of bulleted questions as a guide.

1) EQUITY PLAN FOR CHICAGO'S PARKS

Forty years ago, On May 13, 1983, the [Chicago Park District entered into a consent decree with the federal government](#), resulting from a three-year investigation and a 1982 federal lawsuit addressing racial discrimination in the allocation of resources within the park district. The decree sought to promote equal and non-discriminatory treatment of Black and Latino communities by establishing rigorous and detailed systems, procedures and schedules that could assure equity, responsiveness, and transparency for these neighborhoods and their parks. It was in effect for six years, and Friends of the Parks registered our displeasure when the court lifted the order even though the Chicago Park District was not in full compliance with the terms of the Consent Decree.

Many other large cities have a written equity plan or framework to guide work for their park district, but Chicago has no such plan or codified standards despite documented racial inequity in park access and resources per our 2018 State of the Parks report. Public parks on the South and West Sides of Chicago often have less access to building facilities, fewer programs, and less investment in parks.

- **What policies do you support to address this inequity and improve the park-going experience in South and West Side neighborhood parks?**

A vital first step in making sure that South and West side parks meet the needs of the community is budget equity. It is important to ensure that resources are equitably allocated throughout all



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neighborhoods. Moreover, budgeting should prioritize active programming in order to serve young people from nearby schools, older park users, and everyone in between. It would be beneficial for parks to also offer access for all abilities while working to provide affordable childcare within the park programming to encourage workforce development with parents. Without these three essential goals – budget equity, quality programming, and accessibility – it will be difficult to create a park-going experience that works for the entire community.

RESPONSE EQUITY PLAN FOR CHICAGO'S PARKS:

2) GREEN SPACE AND CREATING NEW PARKS

While more than [98% of Chicagoans](#) live within a 10-minute walk of green space or a playground, **Chicago lags behind most other high-density cities in park acreage per capita and total city acreage committed to public parkland (9%)**. Residents' access to recreational amenities and facilities they hope to find in their parks is not equitable across the city. The West Side of the city has the least parks or green space. While most parkland is on the city's South Side, these parks receive less capital investment and programmatic funding than North Side parks and much of it is undeveloped or underdeveloped brownfield sites that do not yet support much or any public use. These facts demonstrate that Chicago continues to experience systemic racial inequity when it comes to accessing or creating new green spaces.

- How will you prioritize the creation of new green spaces and parks in your ward? How will you include the community in the planning and development process?

As a community leader, I've prioritized creating and delivering new green spaces and parks that meet the needs of our community. For example, I've secured city funding to refurbish an underutilized gym and classroom annex at Grace Church to offer expanded programming and community space together with nearby Unity Park. Also, when the local Boys & Girls Club decided to close, I successfully fought to save the building and ensure a new public park was created as part of the re-development, at no cost to the neighborhood or taxpayers. This involves engaging stakeholders in the planning process, understanding their learning needs, establishing clear objectives, and implementing a design that is both site-responsive and community-led. I believe it is essential to collaborate with local partners while creating these spaces so that they are delivered successfully in a timely manner. When possible, I will support local businesses or organizations as part of the tendering process to help create lasting economic benefits for our community.

- What metrics or factors will you use to determine which communities should receive new green space? What equity considerations will you include in your assessment?

When deciding which communities should receive new green space, socio-economic measures, public health considerations and assessments of the environment will all be taken into account. Equity considerations must be included in the assessment; this means focusing on areas with higher amounts of



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heat islands, toxic land or high emissions to ensure that those most vulnerable are not left out. Metrics such as air quality, housing circumstances, access to clean water and education standards can all play a part in our decision making process in order to ensure we create green spaces fairly throughout our communities.

- **The 10-minute Trust for Public Land “walk score” mentioned above includes Chicago Park District spaces (parks, playlots, and beaches) and any green space in the city, including Forest Preserves, spaces managed by NeighborSpace, the 19 boulevards managed by the Chicago Department of Transportation, and privately owned public spaces (POPs). With all these various groups stewarding green spaces, coordination and comprehensive planning can be difficult and complex. How will you sort through the different managers to coordinate increasing access to parkland and green spaces in your ward?**

Community engagement is essential to creating successful strategies to increase access to parkland and green spaces in any ward. To successfully coordinate between the various managers in my ward, I plan on engaging a range of stakeholders by working hard to cultivate relationships with neighborhood organizations, government leaders, faith-based organizations, advocacy groups, and more. I will have to work hard to foster these relationships by attending city council hearings and Community Area Network meetings as well as calling constituents and other contacts regularly. Honestly listening and responding with integrity will help me build trust with the people of my ward — an important factor when it comes to finding creative solutions for increasing access to parkland and green spaces.

- **The Illinois state standard is 10 acres of green space for every 1000 residents. As urban planning and development occur in your ward, how will you ensure there is adequate green space for the community to thrive?**

It is my priority to ensure adequate green space to foster community bonds and create a healthy environment. For the last 15 years I’ve been a preservation champion at the forefront of urban planning and development. Ensuring access to green spaces requires both preservation of existing natural areas and engagement with developers that roll out new construction for understanding what resources are available in the immediate community. Through such conversations with stakeholders involved in urban development, I will push for developer accountability by advocating for maintaining 10 acres of green space for every 1000 people in accordance with the Illinois standard. This can be achieved through responsible design and deliberate preservation efforts within a given neighborhood area.

- **Developers and the City have often tried to assert that publicly owned private spaces (POPs) will always be accessible to the public, just as if they belonged to the Chicago Park District. Historically POPs have not always been equally accessible to all residents as the private owner ultimately controls the space. What is your vision for ensuring true public access to new green spaces being created in mega-developments and other planned developments?**



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To ensure true public access to green spaces being created in mega-developments and other planned developments, community engagement must exist at all levels. Developers need to be held accountable to the communities they seek permission from - ensuring that their design decisions not only reflect community values, but promote equity and accessibility. This can be done through various methods such as incorporating community input into designs, reserving a portion of the development space exclusively for community use, and making sure local workers are employed in construction projects. This type of community-focused design can guarantee an equal and equitable future for Chicago's green spaces.

- As the Chicago Park District plans construction of new facilities (pickleball courts, basketball courts, fieldhouses, etc.), how will you allocate resources to address the realities of racial inequity in Chicago and historic disinvestment and neglect of some communities? How will you include the community in determining what facilities and amenities are needed?

The Chicago Park District is in a unique position to address racial inequity in the city, public health concerns and heat island effects, and the lack of recreational space for some communities. As part of their plans for construction of new facilities such as pickleball courts and basketball courts, we must ensure that resources are allocated responsibly and equitably. As I always have, I will continue to prioritize public hearings with stakeholders from affected communities to identify their needs so that public funds are directed towards the amenities they prioritize. Additionally, these facilities should help combat public health issues by introducing more green public spaces. By giving a voice to those often traditionally excluded, we can ensure public facilities and parks truly reflect the priorities of all Chicagoans.

- Golf courses count as green space and as park acres for residents, but the use is restricted to those playing a particular sport and paying a fee for service. What initiative do you support to make such spaces dual purpose or to expand usage to more residents?

To make sure that green spaces, particularly golf courses, are utilized by the community, we can start by launching community engagement programs and initiatives focused on programmatic diversity. By surveying activity and land usage preferences of the community, we can ensure that those green spaces are used in a way that is equitable for all residents - regardless of their access to resources or ability to pay fees. Whether that be community gardens or free youth programming, connecting community members with one another in these shared spaces can help foster strong community partnerships and relationships.

- As Chicago deindustrializes and closes former industrial sites, like General Iron and Damen Silos, large swaths of land and former buildings can be re-imagined and re-developed. For example, with the recent closing of General Iron in Lincoln Park and the development of Lincoln Yards, neighborhood advocates have asked for the site to be used as part of a new North Branch Park and Preserve. The preserve could expand access to the river for the whole city and decrease the



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green space deficit the community currently experiences and will get worse with the added residential density proposed for Lincoln Yards. How do you think comprehensively about the opportunity these sites and the transition across the city offers? How will you coordinate a vision across the city using these spaces to increase green space for all communities? How will you prioritize which neighborhoods or communities should experience development of these new de-industrialized green spaces first?

Strategically balancing the development of residential density, such as that proposed for Lincoln Yards, with green spaces like a potential North Branch Park and Preserve is an opportunity to create a more equitable Chicago. Although the addition of green space could decrease the deficit experienced in certain neighborhoods, carefully thinking through how this will be executed is necessary. Involving community members in the process of allocating resources for development can ensure that investment reaches marginalized communities and helps to correct historical injustices. As Chicago works towards balancing density and green space, holistic planning to prioritize which neighborhoods or communities should be first in line for de-industrialized green spaces should also include considerations of environmental justice, access to public amenities, and historic zoning laws. By considering these elements during the decision-making process opportunities for comprehensive sustainable urban growth throughout Chicago is possible.

RESPONSE GREEN SPACE AND CREATING NEW PARKS:

3) LAKEFRONT

Chicago's lakefront is a gem of the city and our city is unique in preserving the lake for all people. Currently, 26 of the 30 miles are publicly available for use and protected for the public, but two miles to the north and south remain cut off from public parks, beaches, and paths.

- What policies do you support to ensure the lakefront remains free and clear for all Chicagoans to enjoy? Please consider both the preservation of space (such as the Lakefront Protection Ordinance and Public Trust Doctrine) and practices that affect use (such as facilities and policing).

As a city, Chicago must continue to prioritize preservation of the lakefront in order to guarantee that it's available for all members of the community--now and for future generations. This means upholding both the Lakefront Protection Ordinance, which restricts development on public lands and the Public Trust Doctrine, which ensures that these public lands stay public. Additionally, policies should be established to ensure facility maintenance and provide necessary policing at no cost to taxpayers so that everyone can take advantage of the benefits from this amazing resource. Lastly, it is important to consider environmental protections, such as minimized impact from excessive activities for preservation of wildlife habitats adjacent to recreational areas like our beloved Lake Michigan shoreline.



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- What efforts do you support to increase access to the city's lakefront by pedestrians, transit riders, cyclists, and people using wheelchairs and other mobility supports?

As a city, we need to ensure that all citizens have access to our lakefront. Bike grids can be implemented to make it easier for cyclists to access and roam around the area safely. In addition, ADA compliance should be taken into serious consideration when developing public spaces so as to encourage access and mobility by people with disabilities or those who utilize wheelchairs and other mobility supports. Lastly, additional investment in CTA funding and increased accountability can help increase safety around the lakefront for pedestrians and transit riders. To further promote safety for these groups, sidewalks should also be improved as well making them easier for pedestrians of various abilities and ages alike.

RESPONSE LAKEFRONT:

4) ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

In February 2020, Chicago declared a climate change emergency in response to severe storms and lakeshore erosion. Lakefront parks and beaches across the city suffer a battering of lake waves and the loss of sand and erosion at alarming rates. It is estimated that the storms of 2020 caused [\\$37 million in damages](#) to beaches and parks. Erosion, intense storms, and the failing of concrete revetments, metal girders and rock barriers installed by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have caused [4 beaches in Roger Park](#) to be washed away and closed; revealed infill at Rainbow Beach as sand was lost; resulted lake water levels reached the top of the stairs at Calumet Park Beach House; and led to the permanent closing of a third of the [Northerly Island walking path](#)—merely a year after it was opened in 2015.

The threat is only going to continue. Concrete, metal and rock barriers push higher water to unprotected places. Lake levels have always fluctuated, but scientists believe lake levels will continue to trend higher. Regardless of lake level, the increased severity of storm surges due to climate change place our [shoreline communities at greater risk](#) of flooding and damage.

Nature-based solutions are a resilient, long-term, cost-effective method to manage the impact of climate change along the lake and across the city. This approach uses natural ecosystems to provide protection such as wetlands for flood mitigation; trees and prairie spaces to combat the heat island effect; and mangroves to reduce the impact of waves, storm surge, and coastal erosion. These ecosystems also soften climate impacts, such as extreme weather, and reduce climate pollution by capturing carbon dioxide from the air and sequestering it in plants and soils.

Parkland and beaches are already a nature-based solution. The sand, soil, and plantings provide buffering and absorption that helps manage the fluctuation in lake levels and more frequent and severe storms. These green spaces furnish lakefront with recreational or contemplative areas and habitats for humans and wildlife to enjoy.



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- How will you support the preservation or expansion of parkland, native plants, and healthy, mature trees and new tree planting across the city to combat climate change impacts that affect the shoreline and inland communities?

As part of our comprehensive strategy for preserving and expanding parkland, native plants, healthy, mature trees, and new tree planting across the city to combat climate change impacts that affect the shoreline and inland communities, we strongly recommend implementation of an aggressive urban forestry plan. This plan should include the development of creative partnerships in civil engineering, arbor care practices, natural resource management, public outreach campaigns and comprehensive maintenance protocols. Additionally, increased community involvement that reflects local needs should be integrated into the overall strategy to ensure success. A comprehensive canopy strategy implemented by a range of professionals can deliver significant environmental benefits while strengthening neighborhoods simultaneously.

RESPONSE ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE:

5) COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARK ADVISORY COUNCILS

About 200 of Chicago's over 600 parks, beaches, playlots, and playgrounds have recognized Park Advisory Councils (PACs), resident groups of committed volunteers who support their parks through volunteerism, fundraising and other activities. Many PACs want influence over programs and maintenance and decisions about how parks will be used, but in reality, many feel left out of those decisions. At times, new permits are handed out for large events or art installations and PAC members or leadership don't find out until the event is underway or changes are being made to the park.

- Across the city there is no required or standard process around public notice and community input for park projects. How will you make sure that the public is informed and engaged in development, capital improvements, urban planning, large event or space rentals, and park planning decisions in your ward?

In order to ensure the public is informed and engaged in park-related decision making in my ward, I believe experience and collaboration are key ingredients for success. I will use my experience as a leader to standardize processes around public notice and community input for park projects across the city, including mandatory community meetings, robust information campaigns through multiple communication channels using creative methods to reach all citizens, and public surveys whenever applicable. To understand the needs of the community accurately, I plan on actively engaging residents through field visits, experience sharing sessions as well as online forums in order to come up with informed decisions.



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- How will you engage with Park Advisory Councils in urban planning, budgeting, funding decisions, considering capital improvement, determining park programming, and deciding what events or installations are placed in parks in your ward?

I will engage with the Park Advisory Councils in relation to urban planning, budgeting, funding decisions, capital improvement, programming and events. My mission is to involve citizens within my ward so that their valuable input can inform better policies. In order to harness community input for stakeholder engagement more effectively, I will hold listening sessions and site visits with local municipal bodies so that together we can come up with options that work for the benefit of the neighborhood parks. Going forward these sessions will enable greater decision-making output success by providing feedback on budgeting, programming long-term capital investments and maintenance needs.

- How will you support the formation or the rebuilding of Park Advisory Councils in your ward?

In my ward, I plan to support the formation or rebuilding of Park Advisory Councils by focusing on community engagement through a variety of outreach tactics. I will create an environment in which members can harness their talents and interests, no matter their background. Furthermore, I will prioritize diversity in membership and representation, as well as consistency and reliability when engaging council members throughout the year. Ultimately, I am committed to establishing strong Park Advisory Councils throughout my ward because they enrich communities by advocating for parks and open space.

RESPONSE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARK ADVISORY COUNCILS:

6) PARK PRIVATIZATION AND REVENUE

The Park District generates most of its income from property taxes, and over the last decade, its share of those taxes has declined from 6.1% to 4.7%. The average property tax unit pays \$260 towards the Park District's budget.

To supplement income, the Chicago Park District has increased revenue generating activity – raising fees for harbor and golf courses; issuing permits and renting out parks for private festivals; contracting with more concessionaires or other vendors; adding billboard or advertising; renting space for Amazon lockers; increased renting out park buildings and facilities as special event spaces. Some of these activities close off parkland and public facilities for weeks during the summer and over popular weekends, damage park facilities, and create a distraction for park users who seek tranquility or a natural oasis. While some renters and permit holders repair park damage, it takes months for vegetation to regrow or capital improvements to be finished, impeding park use far beyond the closures.

Some of the most notable examples of these revenue generating activities have been new contracts with Lollapalooza, the NASCAR race planned for 2023, and mega-festivals in Douglass Park. Residents across



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the city cite a feeling that parks have been commercialized and are no longer public, community spaces for people.

- As park district spaces have refocused on revenue-generating outside events, many community partners and programs have been booted from park district buildings and grounds, or can no longer afford to use the space. What policies do you support to prioritize the use of park space for residents and community groups over revenue generating activities and improve community engagement by private groups seeking to operate for profit in public parks?

As park district spaces have increasingly catered towards the private sector, programmatic opportunity has been drastically reduced for many resident and community groups. When considering public parks, it is of utmost importance to maintain a balanced approach that puts equity first and strives to increase programmatic opportunities, while also recognizing the place of revenue generating activities. To do this effectively requires policy that prioritizes programmatic offerings from local community members over outside entities seeking to use the area for monetary gain. Moreover, emphasis must be placed on enacting a structure for equitable access for all programs, both private and resident-driven ones. This can also improve relationships between private groups and the park district by emphasizing meaningful community engagement in decision-making processes related to use of publicly owned park space.

- The income from these events does not go a specific park, but rather to the Park District budget as a whole, leaving some residents to feel their park bears the brunt of the burden without reaping benefits. How do we ensure the impact and benefits of these rental events or fees are spread equitably?

As community leaders, it is essential to weigh socio economic priorities that create true equity while also finding ways to strengthen the parks' income-generating capabilities. As a start, it is necessary to thoroughly evaluate park rental fees and other charges associated with events. Equally important is a commitment to redistributing funds generated from these events throughout all parks in the Park District in an equitable manner. This may require a physical redistribution or investment of resources in parks that have borne the brunt of added burden without being equitably rewarded for these events. Additionally, ensuring that each park has access to resources and visibility for its user groups can help bolster income generating potential across all areas within the Park District.

- In the need to find new funding sources or expand programming, the Park District often balances private or non-profit partners and community programming, users, or needs. At times the interests of these different park users can be at odds. One example is a private baseball program that would like to pay for and install new lights at [Welles Park](#), but some community members are opposed. How will you manage the competing interest of various stakeholders when money is involved?



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Balancing community programming, private or non-profit partners and community user needs is a challenging but necessary task for the Park District. When money is involved and competing interests arise, community members should always be prioritized. Compromises should be made that ensure everyone's concerns are heard and considered. Each situation requires extensive community engagement to ensure all stakeholders' needs are taken into account in order to achieve a better outcome for everyone.

- When permits are issued for large music festivals or events, like the NASCAR race, the Park District does not have to consult alderpeople, but the event requires resources and time from multiple city departments, such as the police department to manage crowds, CDOT to reorganize traffic, and Streets and Sanitation to clean up. What policies do you support to increase coordination between city agencies, community members, and the Park District when determining what large events happen in parks?

Given the impacts of large music festivals and events, mandatory engagement policies and processes that include all stakeholders are needed to help ensure coordination between city agencies, community members, and the Park District when determining what large events can occur in parks. Such a policy should consider equity and allow affected communities to provide input on how they want their parks used. This process should be transparently communicated and understood throughout the entire city. Furthermore, support networks should be created with resources available to event organizers so that any high-impact events held in public space are managed responsibly.

- To what extent should the Park District's budget rely on private, revenue generating events, vendors and concession stands, fees for service, advertisements (i.e. billboards), and renting the parks to for-profit groups?

The Park District should take a balanced approach when allocating its budget, prioritizing public funds while considering the potential sources of income from private, revenue generating events, vendors and concession stands, fees for service, advertisements (i.e. billboards), and renting the parks to for-profit groups. It is important to tread carefully with these strategies in order to ensure fairness, promote equity among citizens and visitors alike, and remain connected to the local community. Decision makers must look at the entirety of the puzzle pieces before making financial commitments; that way all relevant information impacting the budget can be taken into account.

RESPONSE PARK PRIVATIZATION AND REVENUE:

7) BUDGET PROCESS AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

The Chicago Park District's annual budget process offers a public hearing, an online forum for input, and a vote at an open board meeting. It is questionable whether there is adequate space for resident input or sufficient power and influence ascribed to their input. Many park activists are unaware that the online



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forums exist or how they would have access them and they face barriers to attending the public meetings.

- The Chicago Park District should actively engage park stakeholders across the city in the budgeting process, particularly with the Capital Improvement Projects. Efforts should be made to understand and address any barriers to participation from historically disenfranchised populations. What will you do to help the Chicago Park District find ways to extend more budgetary control to the public and incorporate community participation into their annual budgets?

To ensure better outcomes and equity in the Chicago Park District's annual budgeting process, participatory budgeting should be more actively implemented. This method involves engaging park stakeholders from all over the city, particularly those from historically disenfranchised populations, to shape decisions about how funds are allocated for Capital Improvement Projects. I would strive to understand any obstacles that inhibit participation in the participatory budgeting process by offering various avenues for input (such as surveys and workshops) that are easy for people to access, and creating educational materials that educate on participatory budgeting dynamics. Furthermore, I would promote communication between the public and decision-makers so that stakeholders understand their influence in budgetary decisions. By using participatory budgeting, I believe we can provide a platform where everyone's voice is heard and create lasting policy impacts derived from collaboration.

- Each year, the Park District accepts submissions for capital improvement requests from a variety of sources. More than one in three requests from elected officials are approved, while only about one in five requests from the public are approved. As an Alderman, how would you use your influence to support capital improvement requests for parks in your ward and across the city?

I would understand the importance of utilizing my influence to support capital improvement requests for parks in my ward and across the city. To engage all stakeholders and amplify community voices, I would focus on transparent processes, strategic advocacy plans, and equitable resources distribution. My role would also be to guarantee that these requests are taken seriously within our government structure and given a priority treatment where possible.

- Park Advisory Councils have advocated for Menu Money, Tax Increment Financing District Funding, Capital Improvement Programs, Open Space Impact Fees, and Special Service Area Program Funding as resources to supplement Park District funding. As Alderman you have access to and influence over a variety of city funding streams to support projects in your ward. How will you use your influence to support investment and improvement of parks in your ward and the city? What funding priorities would you promote?



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As Alderman, I understand the importance of green space. I would use my influence to ensure that resources and funding are supporting green space improvements, especially for our parks. Park Advisory Councils have already advocated for several potential sources of additional funding, which I would actively pursue. Including but not limited to; Menu Money, Tax Increment Financing District Funding, Capital Improvement Programs, Open Space Impact Fees and Special Service Area Program Funding. My priority when it comes to investing in parks is to reduce heat islands and provide equitable green space distribution throughout the city in order to make green spaces more accessible and inviting to promote public health. I would work on developing new green spaces where possible as well as engaging with concerned citizens current green spaces through Advisory Councils and local engagement forums.

RESPONSE BUDGET PROCESS AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION:

8) PARK ACCESSIBILITY, FACILITIES, & AMENITIES

In the South and West sides of the city, larger park or natural areas are not easily accessible by public transportation. Many parks and natural areas typically lack accessibility for people with disabilities, or only a portion are accessible. While some heavily-trafficked areas like the Lakefront trail may tend to have open and clean bathrooms, many other parks have dirty, locked, or no bathroom facilities. Without access to a bathroom, the time residents can spend or activities they can engage in at a park are limited. Some parks lack lights, clear parking spaces, signs at the entrance, multi-lingual signage or signage throughout to identify elements of the park. In some cases, roads leading into parks are blocked with gates and barricades at all hours.

- What steps will you take to ensure our parks, playlots, beaches, and trails are welcoming and accessible places for everyone?

When it comes to our parks, playlots, beaches, and trails, we must ensure these public lands stay publicly available and accessible for everyone. To ensure this is the case, I believe that it is important to take ADA compliant measures like making sure all surfaces are wheelchair friendly. In addition to adhering to ADA regulations, I think it is also essential to ensure equity in terms of availability and accessibility - that our parks represent the culturally diverse population of their respective areas and provide access points for those with disabilities. Ultimately, my goal is make sure that public land remains open to the public and offered equally.

- Pet owners bring their dogs to parks, playlots, paths, and beaches across the city. Dogs can also be a barrier to other residents' enjoyment or a threat to wildlife. How will you engage with various points of views about dogs in parks?

Engaging with various points of views about dogs in parks requires common sense policies and a balanced approach. Safety must be a priority, while at the same time fostering an environment that is welcoming to pet owners. Pet owners must also understand their responsibility to share the park



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resource, respect restrictions, clean-up after their pets, and adhere to guidelines to prevent conflict between people and pets. Education will serve as an important tool, ensuring pet owners are aware of the rules that keep wonderful communal spaces safe and enjoyable for all who use them.

- As the Chicago Park District plans improvement and maintenance of fieldhouses, playgrounds, and other recreation facilities, how will you prioritize resources based on historic disinvestment faced by some parks and communities? How will you include the community in the decision-making process? How will a commitment to racial equity impact your actions?

It is mandatory for the Chicago Park District to engage its communities when it comes to planning for improvement and maintenance of recreation facilities, playgrounds, and fieldhouses. In order to prioritize resources, an acknowledgement of the historic disinvestment some parks and communities have faced must be at the forefront of the decision making process. To ensure that racial equity plays a role in the plan, equitable practices must lead the decision-making process by including mandatory community engagement every step of the way. This approach creates greater accessibility and inclusion in recreation planning that ultimately has positive benefits for impacted community members.

- Field houses across the city are often closed on weekends and evenings. These closures mean people lack access to bathrooms, staff assistance or programming. Similarly, park bathrooms outside field house are often locked, or many parks have no bathroom. What will you do to make sure park field houses and the resource they provide can reach more residents?

In order to ensure accessibility of park field houses, we must address the urgent needs in our community. This requires creative problem-solving and a dedication to community engagement. We can start by looking at existing city resources, including how accessibility can be improved through better use of local funding or staff resources. For instance, hosting an open house at field houses on weekends or making repairs to ensure safe access to bathrooms in parks without them.

- Often, new construction developments are allowed to use developer-owned "publicly accessible" green spaces to satisfy open space requirements rather than Chicago Park District-controlled land. When private corporations dictate the development, management, and public access to green spaces, it seldom leads to park spaces desired by Chicago. These privately administered spaces are subject to different operating hours and rules than local parks. Additionally, when departments in the City government collaborate for new development or capital improvement to be "shared," the park users miss out on access or design of the space. An example is Whitney Young's Sports Complex, funded entirely with tax-increment financing. What is your vision to ensuring true public access to new green spaces, facilities, or amenities that are a funded with public dollars or promise public access during construction? How will you use your position to support that vision?



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Ensuring the public has access to quality green spaces is an imperative part of community development. In order to protect public access, more attention must be given to community engagement, accountability and equitable solutions when it comes to new construction developments. This involves building consensus among public stakeholders, including local parks department and community members, as well as establishing clear parameters for design and usage that offer greater equity in balance with developers. Doing so not only empowers citizens by providing true public access, it also strengthens investments made into community projects such as Whitney Young's Sports Complex so resources can be maximized for a multiplicity of benefits.

RESPONSE PARK ACCESSIBILITY, FACILITIES, & AMENITIES:

9) PARK PROGRAMMING

Annually, more than 350,000 people participate through the Chicago Park District in thousands of sports, recreational, cultural, and environmental programs across the city. Yet the distribution of programs is often inequitable and mismatched, failing to meet the needs of local communities effectively. Even preliminary research indicates dramatic inequities across the city in the amount of programs and services offered. At times, programs feel dropped into a community without community input or research. In addition, the programs families are looking to for their health, cultural, and recreation may also be financially out of reach.

Where processes existed under the 1983 Consent Decree to ensure equitably distributed and responsive programming, many parks now lack the programs that are culturally relevant and affordable.

- Parks can be essential resources for people of all ages in a community, especially because they offer classes, camps, pools, exercise equipment and facilities, and chances to socialize. What resources will you invest in parks to prioritize use by diverse populations – seniors, families and children, people with disabilities, and teenagers? How will you ensure park programming is culturally relevant to BIPOC communities that have experienced exclusion and disinvestment?

In order to ensure equitable use of our parks, we must prioritize equitable access and prioritize services for those in underserved populations such as seniors, people with disabilities, families and children, and teenagers. We can do this by exploring the ways in which park programming is currently designed to be relevant to BIPOC communities who have experienced historic exclusion and disinvestment. Investing in equitable approaches to park resources such as classes, camps, pools, exercise equipment and facilities that are culturally capable of supporting community needs will create safe spaces for community members from these populations where positive growth and development can occur.

- What will you do to support residents and community groups to have access to park space and programming for no or low cost?



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My work will focus on ensuring park space and programming is accessible for all residents, regardless of financial constraints. To achieve this goal, my team will work with federal and state stakeholders to secure funding for vital components of park programming. Additionally, I'm committed to engaging communities directly by hosting community visioning sessions and prioritizing the interests and needs identified by residents for no- or low-cost programs. Our work will also involve evaluating existing services and identifying gaps in order to establish comprehensive park programming with an equality-focused approach. We are confident that these steps will make access to park space and programming easier for everyone, regardless of financial circumstances.

- Parks across Chicago do not have the same access to sufficient, culturally relevant, and affordable programs or have space maintained to meet the needs of the community. What will you do to ensure equity in park programming and resources (facilities, maintenance, etc.) for parks in your ward and across Chicago, keeping in mind the historic underinvestment in West and South Side parks?

My goal is to ensure that all parks in my ward and across Chicago have equity in park programming and resources. I will strive to increase community engagement, advocate for community-driven solutions, prioritize investments in public health by focusing resources toward vulnerable populations, and promote equitable access. Annually, I will ask community members what they need from their neighborhoods parks to help create spaces that are sustainably maintained and focused on community well-being. Additionally I recognize the history of underinvestment on the West and South sides of the city and acknowledge that their needs should be prioritized when making decisions about park programming driven by city funds.

- How will you include the community in program design and program offering in their parks to make sure it is sufficient, relevant, and affordable and to proactively account for external community problems related to public safety and violence?

With the aim of proactively accounting for public safety and violence, preventative measures should be established in the form of improved lighting, monitored pathways, and permissible areas to ensure community members can enjoy their parks. Beyond preventative measures, efficient programs should also be developed with comprehensive engagement from the community to ensure that park offer sufficient, relevant and affordable amenities. Regularly taking into account feedback from community members on upcoming initiatives also helps solidify these programs in a way that encourages upward mobility and benefits the larger population.



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RESPONSE PARK PROGRAMMING:

10) SAFETY

Feelings of safety and security greatly shape how park spaces are experienced. While some park users feel vulnerable when parks are too empty, others want quiet, wide-open, empty spaces. Some fear gun violence, and others fear oppressive police presence. Some are worried about playground conditions, and others are worried about vandalism. Some want more lights or call boxes. All of these are important considerations as we address safety concerns.

In the summer of 2022, as a response to the death of Chicago teenager, a curfew was enacted at Millennium Park to restrict event access to the park for young residents not accompanied by an adult or attending a ticketed event. In multiple Listening Tour sessions in different parts of Chicago, we heard similar statements that represent a specific loss of access to park amenities after violence occurred in their parks. If the response to select instances of violence in parks is to close, restrict, or remove certain amenities, this seems like the beginning of a very dangerous trend of the Chicago Park District punishing entire communities for the actions of a few.

- How will you approach safety in a way that does not unfairly punish entire communities for the behavior of the few?

When it comes to safety, social justice must be a primary consideration. It is unacceptable that entire communities should be punished for the actions of the few, so community engagement and equitable approaches must be employed. Through these lenses, justice can be restorative, rather than punitive; solutions that support healthier social climates must replace those that operate from fear or mistrust. Community members should have an active role in conversations about safety strategies to ensure all voices are considered in building a more secure future for everyone.

- How would you ensure residents of all ages can access public amenities while balancing concerns for public safety?

Ensuring all residents, regardless of age, have access to public amenities requires accountability and safety. Achieving this can be achieved through proactive and inclusive community engagement by engaging stakeholders such as local government, businesses, and service organizations. This allows for the design of spaces that are safe and accessible for all members of the community. In addition, developing a comprehensive plan focusing on education and accountability would ensure that appropriate standards are set while structures are in place to properly monitor compliance. Ultimately making sure all public amenities are designed with the entire community in mind is essential to creating an equitable society.



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- What steps will you take or policies will you support to increase the public safety of Chicago's parks, playlots, playgrounds, paths, and beaches beyond increasing police presence?

To increase public safety in Chicago's parks, playlots, playgrounds, paths and beaches beyond the visible presence of police personnel, community engagement is paramount. Partnerships between neighborhood groups and community leaders should be formed to develop preventative measures that tackle the root causes behind crime, such as poverty and lack of access to relevant community services. Programs aimed at connecting individuals with resources for employment, housing and community outreach activities can help establish safe spaces within these community areas and promote community involvement in these initiatives. Additionally, making more parks and recreation centers available in multiple neighborhoods and investing in educational programs for youth are some other steps that can be taken towards increasing public safety across Chicago.

RESPONSE SAFETY:

11) PARK DISTRICT OVERSIGHT

- The Chicago Park District is not a department of the city government, but a separate governmental entity. However, the Chicago Park District's Board of Commissioners' members are nominated by the mayor and must be approved by the Committee on Special Events, Cultural Affairs and Recreation. What policies do you support to make sure nominees have **demonstrated relevant experience, background and skills sets related to parks?**

To ensure that the Chicago Park District's Board of Commissioners nominees possess the requisite relevant experience, background, and skills sets related to parks, a holistic approach should be embraced. Effective policy implementation could include conducting an extensive background check that encompasses an individual's past work history as well as their credentials and qualifications in order to topically assess their ability to serve on the board. Mobile interviews should be conducted either in-person or via videoconferencing to gain a holistic understanding of how each nominee will engage with community members within their allocated role. It should also involve mapping out projects they have championed in the past and ascertaining any potential conflicts of interest. Adopting this process aimed at receiving informed decision-making around nominees' background can ensure fair representation for all community members.

- How will you use your role to provide oversight to the parks, playlots and beaches in your ward?

As the ward overseer of parks, playlots and beaches, communication with respective departments will be essential in ensuring that these municipalities are well maintained. Being aware of budget constrictions and potential maintenance problems, I am dedicated to working collaboratively with other organizations to provide support wherever needed. In order to create large-scale solutions, I believe that



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community engagement is of utmost importance. By creating meaningful dialogue between local constituents, organizations and other relevant stakeholders, it is more likely that a positive outcome can be achieved. Through communication and community engagement I hope to make a positive contribution to my local parks and recreation sites.

RESPONSE PARK DISTRICT OVERSIGHT: