

## 2023 Friends of the Park Election Questionnaire

Read the 26<sup>th</sup> Ward Questionnaire Here -  
[https://www.fotp.org/uploads/1/3/3/6/133647985/fotp\\_2023\\_municipal\\_questionnaire\\_-\\_alderperson\\_citywide.pdf](https://www.fotp.org/uploads/1/3/3/6/133647985/fotp_2023_municipal_questionnaire_-_alderperson_citywide.pdf)

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### **ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND AND PRIORITIES RELATED TO PARKS**

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

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.

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?

#### **Response:**

- My community foundation holds various events for seniors and youth causes and in that process we have frequently used Chicago parks and open spaces as our gathering point. I have firsthand knowledge of how important it is for a community to have access to quality parks and recreation facilities.
- I believe parks are vital to the health of a community and to the physical health of residents. I would like to see stronger investment in front line services to ensure our parks are being properly maintained. In programming, I believe parks can play a vital role in expanded youth programs and be part of an intergovernmental solution to leading our kids on a path away from guns and violence. In the 26<sup>th</sup> Ward, we have a situation where homelessness is surging and our parks and open spaces are becoming 'tent cities'. The City needs a comprehensive, humane plan to find more appropriate housing solutions for these individuals and return our parks to their intended purpose as a resource for area families.

- As Alderperson, I will be an advocate for ensuring that parks and open spaces is more central in overall City planning and that parks are not getting overlooked when it comes time to invest in infrastructure improvements.

### WARD SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

#### **NEW BUILDINGS IN PARKS** **WARD 26**

In 2022 an unpermitted, unapproved building project was undertaken in a non-democratic process with state funds by the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture in historic Humboldt Park next to the landmarked former stables building (and office of Jens Jensen).

- Please disclose any formal or informal leadership roles in the community that you have held or currently hold that relate to National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture and their plan to develop structures on public parkland.
- What did you know about or how were you involved with this project before construction was halted in September 2022?
- How will you offer leadership to remedy this situation?

#### **RESPONSE NEW BUILDINGS IN PARKS:**

- I have had no involvement with the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture plan to develop a structures on park land.
- While I was not involved in the project at any stage, I would be more than willing to be a conduit between Friends of the Park and the leadership of the museum project to try and find solutions that protect park space.

### **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

1. I would strongly support developing a written strategic plan on equity of resource allocation throughout the City. I believe such a plan would highlight what we know to be true, that black and Latino wards have less park space, less park maintenance and less programming than more affluent areas. As alderperson, I would advocate that we use such a plan to create a roadmap to more equal distribution of funds throughout the City. To improve the park going experience, we need more investment in infrastructure and front line services. A dimly lit park in the early evening does not feel safe to a mom with a stroller, so investment in lighting and security are a must. I also believe we need to recruit more police officers of color and more female officers to create a safer presence around parks.
2. The 26<sup>th</sup> Ward includes some of the most densely populated areas in the City with the least amount of green space, so finding creative solutions is necessary for my community. Building on the approach of programs like the Logan Square Open Space Plan, I believe we need to identify areas that can be developed into green space and partner with community organizations to decide what kind of spaces to create that best meet the needs of residents.

I believe areas with the highest density in population and the fewest green spaces should be prioritized in resource allocation.

Managing relationships between multiple different entities and driving them towards the same goal is what I have done as an entrepreneur and with my community foundation and I am confident I am the best candidate in the race to handle the complications and personalities that will inevitably be part of any large scale effort to increase green spaces.

I would work with developers and take a 'polite but firm' approach towards insisting that any new development include adequate green space elements.

I believe public space is public space and any private owner of a POP who is not allowing public access needs to be held accountable. I would be in favor of auditing all POPs to ensure they are truly public assets.

I would push for a comprehensive equity plan that sets real goals for ensuring every neighborhood and community has fair access to parks and open spaces.

I would be in favor of dedicated days or weekends at public golf courses where the general public can make use of the space free of cost.

Defunct industrial sites provide some of the best potential to create new green spaces. As alderperson I would work with the city as well as state and federal officials to prioritize funding and facilitate obtaining these properties. I would also want to see strong community involvement in selecting what kinds of green spaces would go into these properties.

3. I would strongly support any measure that ensures our lakefront continues to be a public asset. I do believe more attention is needed in frontline services to maintain infrastructure and facilities and that we need to recruit more police officers of color and more female officers to improve security and make residents feel safe when going to the lakefront.

The City should take every measure practical to increase accessibility around the lakefront. The Chicago Park District has the ability to levy funds specifically to support improvements that comply with ADA standards. I would like to see a review of how that money is being used and how it could be better streamlined into accessibility projects.

4. Climate change is very real and presents a very significant threat to every city and state. As alderperson, I will be a champion for policies that preserve existing parks and green space and prioritize adding greenspace with any development. I believe native plants and healthy mature trees should be protected from development and I would both strongly support and personally organize efforts to participate in new tree planting.

5. As alderperson, I would utilize my office resources to be a conduit between the park district and PACs and other community groups to ensure better communication on scheduling and to make sure public input is factoring into park district decision making. I would also be in favor of adopting standards around public notice at parks and giving residents an outlet to have more say in park activities and events.

I will personally meet with any formed PACs in my ward on a regular basis and communicate their input to park leaders. In areas where no PAC yet exists I would work with my extensive contacts in the community to create them.

6. I would support a mandated limit on the number of days a year that a park is unavailable to the general public as a means to ensure for-profit events are not taking over park spaces from residents.

I believe we need to further study the revenue from these events and how more of that revenue can be directed back into the community. The community hosting the event should see some benefit to balance the nuisance of traffic and noise these events can create.

It is appropriate that for-profit programs that utilize parks should invest money in the facilities. However, I think public input must be considered and the public can't be crowded out of park space by private entities. I would need to know more about the Welles Park example, specifically why the residents are opposed, but I do think community control is a must.

The City needs better communication and more buy-in from local residents whose lives are affected by these events. Your alderperson is supposed to be your conduit into city affairs, so I would push for greater involvement in decisions being made on events in my ward to ensure my constituents have a voice.

The Park District should take advantage of outside revenue when appropriate but it should not come at the expense of local control. I also believe that permanent advertising should be limited as it has a negative effect on the aesthetics of our parks.

7. I am in favor of requiring the park district to hold public forums in communities that allow for greater public input as part of the budgeting process. One hearing downtown is not sufficient for a City our size. I believe the parks can do better in terms opening up for public input and giving residents a greater voice in capital projects at their parks.

I would be in favor of a 'one-for-one' approach where every request from an elected official that is approved must be paired with a public request.

I would meet with and take the advice of my local park advisory councils and other community groups when establishing a priority list of projects for the ward.

8. We need to invest in frontline services at our parks and facilities to ensure they are clean and safe. We need to invest in lightening and security and engage with the police department on greater security. These efforts should be done city-wide with an emphasis on equal access to

resources and some of the more underserved areas with crumbling facilities need to be prioritized.

I believe there needs to be dedicated areas that allow pets and ones that do not to ensure everyone has access to facilities in the manner they are comfortable with. Pet owners need to be responsible and in control of their animals. I would be open to a discussion about dedicated 'no pets' hours as a means to accommodate all residents.

Facility improvement should be addressed based on need, which if done properly would prioritize the areas of the city that have traditionally been ignored and allowed to fall into disrepair.

If public dollars were used to build a facility, then that facility has to have some benefit to the public. Similar with golf courses, I would be in favor of mandating public access time for any facility that was built with public dollars.

9. Park programming should be part of the previously mentioned comprehensive study on equality in resource allocation. The park district should engage PACs and other community-based organizations to get input and feedback on programs and events in a given community early on in the planning process so communities don't feel like they are just having random events dropped into their parks with no input. If properly done, this community engagement would also provide the necessary feedback to ensure programming is culturally relevant and enriching.

I would be in favor of dedicating a portion of park funding to both ensure as many programs and events operate at low or no cost as well as to offer hardship waivers to working families to help afford programs like summer camp for their kids.

As stated multiple times in this survey, there is a need to create a comprehensive plan to ensure equal distribution in park programming and resources and I will advocate for creating that plan.

As alderperson, I would utilize my relationships with PACs and other community-based organizations, including my own foundation, to ensure that the community has a voice in both the planning of an event and addressing external concerns stemming from events.

10. I would approach improving safety at parks by hiring more police officers of color and more female officers so that we have adequate policing to keep our parks safe. I also support investing more in physical infrastructure like visible cameras and better lighting and more emergency call stations similar to what college campuses deploy. I am not in support of an 'overkill' approach that shuts down whole parks or programs because of the bad behavior of a few people.

Beyond hiring more police, I believe the City and Park District should invest in un-armed police personnel who can provide a security presence in parks and take more menial tasks like traffic control off police hands so they can focus more on park safety.

11. Park District Commissioners should be knowledgeable and experienced in parks and recreation issues. I support giving the full City Council more oversight on board member selection. I support establishing minimum experience requirements to ensure candidates for the Board are appropriate for these positions.

I plan to be an engaged and present Alderman on all fronts, including our local parks and open spaces. I will work closely with community groups and leaders to ensure we are getting our fair share of resources and that those resources are being deployed properly. I will hold city officials accountable and advocate for more equal distribution of resources.