

## 2023 CHICAGO MUNICIPAL ELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

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A completed questionnaire must be received by Wednesday, January 25, to have answers distributed to our stakeholders before early voting starts. Please return to [rachelbr@fotp.org](mailto: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.

**As Alderman, we have partnered with the Chicago Park District and since I was elected in 2011, I've worked to provide our open spaces with \$10 million in supplemental funding, including millions of dollars for Warren, Indian Boundary, Rogers, Chippewa, Lerner and Green Briar parks. Notably, we established a new 1.8-acre park along the North Shore Channel near Devon Avenue and McCormick Road and added a nature play area at Indian Boundary Park.**

**Under my leadership, we secured funding and completed a much-needed bridge connecting a gap in the North Shore Channel Trail. The \$3.4 million Lincoln Village Pedestrian Bridge opened to users in 2020. We are in the process of starting construction on a second bridge at Pratt that will connect to Lincolnwood. We are adding protected bike lanes on Pratt to create a safe east-west route through the ward.**

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.

**I have a strong voting record on environmental issues in the City Council and I look forward to building upon it during my next term. A few recent examples: I sponsored R2020-81, a resolution declaring a climate emergency and called for a 2023 budget that promotes urgent climate action. I also sponsored R2019-747, a resolution calling on Gov. Pritzker & the ILGA to support passage of the successful Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA). I supported legislation to ban single-use plastics in Chicago restaurants and increase regulations for utility companies, including ComEd.**

**I also support pending legislation on a number of environmental issues including bus fleet electrification as well as automated enforcement to prevent vehicles from blocking bus and bicycle lanes - I was pleased to see the mayor move forward on that latter issue earlier this month.**

**My ward is unique in that for parts of every week – and holidays – we have a population that does not use cars. Like other aldermen, I would like to see greater progress on the City's Vision Zero policies with the goal of encouraging walking, biking and the use of mass transit.**

**In December 2022, I introduced the Chicago Fatal Crash Legacy Report Ordinance. This is first of its kind legislation in Chicago that will require a formal safety plan for sites where pedestrians and cyclists are killed by motor vehicles.**

**The concept was driven in part by the death of a 9-year-old boy who was struck by a driver more than a year ago as he was biking in a crosswalk in our community. We struggled to find solutions to make the neighborhood safer. I am not a transportation expert and the guidance and funding sources to try to address the situation were not readily available.**

**We've experienced too many tragedies in our neighborhoods and there is a clear need for leadership from experts to make sure they never happen again. On top of an accounting of what took place, these Crash Legacy Reports will be a blueprint to make our neighborhoods safer. Protecting Chicagoans – especially our children – from traffic violence is a fitting way to honor the memory of people we've lost.**

**I will be happy to provide updates but we are making some changes to this ordinance with City departments with the goal of reintroducing it as a substitute ordinance. We have 12 co-sponsors and I'm hopeful this novel legislation can help make Chicago safer.**

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?

**We are looking at boosting our green spaces. For example, the two bridges we are adding connect cyclists and pedestrians to trails that connect up to Lake County. It may be possible to add additional parks along the Channel that runs through our Ward. For example, we have Park No. 538, an undeveloped green space that runs along Kedzie between Devon and Touhy. People sometimes use that land to access the Channel via kayak. I would be interested in additional discussions to formally bring some of the properties owned by the Water Reclamation District into recreational use for the park district - Stone Park is an example of that and we should explore other opportunities.**

**I spearheaded an initiative to create a more green and pedestrian-and bike-friendly corridor along Western Avenue – you may have seen it recently highlighted in *The Chicago Tribune*. This ongoing series of meetings with key City departments and other stakeholders will hopefully provide a long-term blueprint for transforming a five mile stretch of one of the busiest streets in the City of Chicago. I'm very pleased to see how we have engaged hundreds of residents in this process.**

**Western Avenue provides access to numerous parks including Warren, Indian Boundary, Rogers, Winnemac, and the West Ridge Nature Park, to name a few. However, it's a car-centric road. It has speeding cars and some dangerous crossings. It's important people can safely access these parks and bike lanes, wider sidewalks and BRT can help achieve that.**

#### 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?

**The 50<sup>th</sup> Ward is home to a number of historic parks and we have successfully appealed to City agencies to support them. The \$10 million in funding we have received for our parks does not happen without advocacy and planning.**

**Generally speaking, the Chicago Park District needs additional funding. One way we can support our parks is by providing funding for the infrastructure around our parks and ensure they are easily and safely accessible. I support efforts by CDOT to make areas around ALL parks and schools safer. That is currently under consideration as part of CDOT's Complete Streets five years plan. Too often, aldermen are required to use TIF or discretionary funds for basic park maintenance.**

**There needs to be a discussion of how to provide the Park District with additional financial support. Just as we are doing with the CTA, it would be a helpful accountability measure to have parks leadership come before the City Council on a - minimum - quarterly basis.**

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?

- 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?

- 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?
- 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?
- 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?
- 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?
- 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?
- 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 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?

**I think many of these questions were answered above - I've worked to give our parks \$10 million in supplemental funding, including millions of dollars for Warren, Indian Boundary, Rogers, Chippewa, Lerner and Green Briar parks. We renovated the Indian Boundary Fieldhouse and when it experienced a fire, I fought for it to be re-renovated.**

**We established a new 1.8-acre park along the North Shore Channel near Devon Avenue and McCormick Road and added a nature play area at Indian Boundary Park. I will continue to be a strong advocate for my parks.**

**Also under my leadership, we secured funding and completed a much-needed bridge connecting a gap in the North Shore Channel Trail. The \$3.4 million Lincoln Village Pedestrian Bridge opened to users in 2020. We are in the process of starting construction on a second multi-million bridge at Pratt that will connect to Lincolnwood.**

**The City should aggressively seek to purchase properties to expand our parks. We see this done with open land purchases that are completed by county governments, specifically in Lake and Cook county. While the circumstances are different, the City has unique resources and is well-positioned to invest in recreation. They should also be**

**looking for opportunities to connect parks and trails, along waterways for example, to create safe, useful new spaces for pedestrians and cyclists.**

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).
- 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?

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.

- 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?

**I have supported efforts by the Office of the City Treasurer to divest from fossil fuels.**

**I have also signed on to the No Fossil Fuel Money Pledge, a campaign urging representatives to pass up donations from fossil fuel companies that amount to more than \$200.**

**We need to maximize the resources available to the City of Chicago. For example, budgeteers with the State of Illinois report nearly \$5 billion in additional, unexpected**

revenues in FY2022. A portion of that surplus money needs to go to supporting our parks.

Anti-erosion projects should be funded with federal dollars. The lakes are a resource used by many people in many states and a destination for people across the world and the federal government should take a lead in protecting every aspect of them.

Our new bike bridge was built with federal, state and local funding. We collaborated with many entities to get that done. The park district needs shovel-ready projects and it needs to lobby for grants and state and federal dollars. The entities with a plan are the ones who were able to maximize federal COVID relief dollars. Others are still looking for ways to spend this windfall.

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?

- 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?

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

**We work closely with the people who care about our parks. I have an open door policy and meet with any and all people who take an interest in our community. Volunteers are an amazing resource - the people of our Ward are its greatest asset. I want to assist them as much as I can.**

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 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?

- The income from these events does not go to 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?
- 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?
- 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?
- 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 City too frequently gives permission for private music festivals and other private events to use large swaths of public parks with limited community engagement. While we have not experienced this issue first hand, there have been concerns about events along the lakefront on the north side and I am aware that this has been an issue on the southwest side where neighbors called for Riot Fest to be removed from Douglass Park, just as it was removed from Humboldt Park in 2015. I believe, generally, the parks should be free and clear from private interests including advertising. I don't believe the Amazon deal is a good one for Chicagoans - it amounts to private vehicle traffic on our parkland and free billboards in our parks and there is not a commensurate benefit for constituents.**

**Private events on public property should only be done with the express consent of the surrounding community. It should also be costly for the renters. Many of these events are not conducive with the concept of public park space and there needs to be determination about the number and frequency of these events. The City has many music venues including a massive outdoor venue near the lake.**

**I support additional funding for the Chicago Park District – their budget should be set at a level that does not require them to depend on windfalls from concerts or other ticketed events.**

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 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?

- 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?

- 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?

**I believe the Chicago Park District should be required to present itself regularly in front of the City Council, particularly on issues related to the budget. The process through which its budget is approved is opaque and there's a clear need for greater transparency. The City Council spends weeks discussing its budget, so greater effort needs to be made by the park district to reach out to the communities it serves. People should be informed about the park district's needs -a better understanding of revenues, expenses, infrastructure and projects benefits everyone involved. People love the parks and there is no reason to keep these issues out of the public eye.**

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?

- 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?

- 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?

- 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?

- 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 funded with public dollars or promise public access during construction? How will you use your position to support that vision?

**The parks should be open, accessible and vibrant on weekends, holidays, during winter and spring break and all summer long. Too often we see park district programming misaligned with the schedules that students and working families must manage.**

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?

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

- 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?

- 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?

**I want the best Chicago for all Chicagoans but I think that starts in large part by making it a City that works for young people and families. The parks play a major role in that. Our goals should be the best public transit, schools and parks in the country. We should have access to childcare and recreational programming for young people. We need to be more family-friendly.**

**Continuity of the basic services like transit and schools must be coupled with expanded offerings to help Chicago families. Parks programming plays a major role in that.**

**It's not enough to just keep the pools open in the summertime. We also need to rebuild and maintain park infrastructure. I would like to see our schools, park district and library coordinate programming and work together to expand the amount of time there are activities offered to young people. At suburban park districts, there is a seamless transition between after school care from the school to the park district facility. In Chicago, they expect parents to pick up their kids and get them to the after school care at the park. That makes no sense.**

**While most programs are very affordable, I would be open to special considerations for people in marginalized communities who may need financial assistance to access the parks.**

**In addition to safe things to do, young people need jobs and the park district should be a leader on that. I would like to see the park district do more outreach in our schools to attract students to programming and jobs. Generally, we need to boost the number of jobs the City offers, especially during breaks when kids are out of school.**

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?

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

- 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?

**Public safety is my top concern. I have voted for budgets to increase funding for public safety and will continue to do so. This year's budget provides an all-time record-high amount of resources to the Chicago Police Department - nearly \$2 billion.**

**That is a 3.4 percent increase on police and violence prevention over the previous year and ranks among the highest spends per capita in the country. I support law enforcement and will continue spending as needed to roll back the trends we are seeing.**

**We need to do better in terms of hiring when it comes to City workers from the police and fire department to park district staff, bus drivers to CTA maintenance workers. Bonuses for new hires or longevity, better benefits and increased salaries should be on the table**

**to attract and retain talented, committed people who want to work in public service. The City needs to be fully staffed in every department to function effectively.**

**We need more police in every beat in the City. Crime can happen in many places, including our parks and they will be safer with more patrols. Hours-long waits for 911 calls is unacceptable and it's not fair to residents or other stakeholders.**

**I believe both strict gun laws and increased penalties for crimes involving guns are good public safety policies. I support the Protect Communities Act (HB5855) and hope state lawmakers find additional ways to take guns off the streets. Tougher penalties for carjackings or using illegal guns or firing weapons should be considered as well. One example: An offender hitting a building or car with gunfire is currently considered a property crime, basically the equivalent of vandalism or criminal damage to property. One of our north side state representatives is looking at legislation to make that a more serious crime and I would support that.**

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

**While our parks are overseen by the Chicago Park District, we take responsibility for the parks and everything that goes with them. That's part of our role as aldermen. Our parks are treasures. I've secured all the funding for them that I can and will always aim to do more. They need to be safe, secure and accessible.**