

Advocates Defend Amicus Briefs Supporting the Preservation of Jackson Park

Amicus briefs supporting the plaintiffs in their appeal for a preliminary injunction in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit denied leave.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, UNITED STATES,
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EINPresswire.com/ -- The National Association for Olmsted Parks (NAOP), Jackson Park Watch, Preservation

Chicago, and Dr. Teresa Horton, discussed the amicus briefs they attempted to submit in September supporting the plaintiffs' efforts to preserve Jackson Park on a teleconference call today.



Federal appellate rules permit amicus curiae, or friend of the court briefs, seven days after the brief is filed for the supported party. Accordingly, Protect Our Parks and its co-plaintiffs filed an appeal the week of September 20 to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit (Appeal No. 21-2449) in support of its preliminary injunction request. Unfortunately, even though four reputable advocates requested leave to support the Plaintiffs' position on appeal in a timely manner, the Court did not grant the requests. Further, the Court did not indicate a reason for their denial.

The advocates defended their briefs in support of the appeal of the preliminary injunction to halt the construction of the [Obama Presidential Center](#) in Jackson Park.

"The prescient vision of Frederick Law Olmsted was to create a public, accessible, and open space for all people. Unfortunately, today, private developments are attempting to infringe on that vision which foreshadowed the climate issues we now face and devalue these community assets," said Michael Rachlis, co-counsel, Protect Our Parks. "Through their amicus briefs, these advocates are demonstrating the importance to the public of urban parks from an environmental justice and public health perspective, and we hope that the Court will allow their expert voices a place in the public record."

The following are statements from each of the advocates:

"The Obama Presidential Center is an asset to the community, but sacrificing historic Jackson Park is not the answer. It is unfortunate that the Court rejected three amicus briefs outlining why the public interest demands that the Obama Presidential Center be outside Jackson Park but on the South Side," said Anne Petri, president and CEO of the NAOP. "Olmsted Parks are not expendable luxuries. On the contrary, they are critical green infrastructure --places of historical and ecological importance. Consequently, to serve the public interest, public health, and well-being, it is incumbent on all of us to save these natural spaces, as the pandemic has indeed made clear."

"Looking at census tracts across Chicago, the disparities are apparent; low-income residents have significantly lower life expectancy than those in higher-income neighborhoods. This difference in life expectancy is associated with many causes, but one factor is one's environment, precisely the number and density of mature trees," said Dr. Teresa Horton, a human biologist and researcher. "The Jackson Park neighborhood is a case in point. In Woodlawn, for example, estimates show that the life expectancy is seven years shorter than residents in the adjacent neighborhood of Hyde Park. Moreover, one clear takeaway from my amicus brief that I hope the Court would grasp is that Jackson Park is Chicago's oasis, and it's the trees that make us whole."

"History, nature, and public access to parkland are being reduced or eliminated. Here in Chicago, we have an abundance of vacant land on the South Side outside of a public park that would be an ideal place for the Obama Presidential Center," said Brenda Nelms, co-president, Jackson Park Watch. "We urge the Court to halt all road closure and construction work until the legal issues raised in this case have been fully resolved. Our public land and history are held in high regard by Chicago residents and visitors. Complete and grounded review of this legal matter should be allowed to run its full course before further destruction is permitted."

We were in disbelief when we learned that all the amicus curiae requests made to support the Appellants, in this case, were rejected outright while the requests to file such briefs in support of the Appellees appear to have been summarily accepted," said Mary Lu Seidel, Director of Community Engagement at Preservation Chicago. "The reputation of President Obama and that of the City will be harmed by the destruction of Olmsted's South Parks design and the environmental resources of Jackson Park that serve both humans and wildlife, particularly if the legal process is circumvented. Speed is not the goal; due process."

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