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NEWS RELEASE

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Protect Our Parks uses its privilege to fight community progress; enough is enough

CHICAGO – Today, the U.S. District Court hearing the case for the future of the Obama Presidential Center dismissed the case from federal jurisdiction. Opponents now have two options – they can appeal to the Supreme Court or they can bring their case to the Illinois state courts instead. As we await word about their next oppositionist attempt to delay the project, a coalition of South Side community leaders, business owners and residents are saying enough is enough.

As a diverse group of residents from Woodlawn, Washington Park, South Shore, Grand Crossing and other South Side neighborhoods, we are tired of groups such as Protect our Parks (POP) opposing the authentic voice of our community in its relentless opposition to the [Obama Presidential Center](#).

Each time you are defeated in a court of law, you engage in another meritless appeal meant to stall, delay, and ultimately stop the construction of the Obama Presidential Center. In the meantime, construction costs are rising and residents who could be working on the site remain jobless.

We are outraged by this continued pattern of paternalism by a minority of naysayers, some of whom don't even live in Chicago, who believe their privilege trumps our will. We have the creativity and expertise to design and transform our neighborhoods through our unique cultural lens. We don't need you selective preservationists to speak for us!

POP and Jackson Park Watch care more about trees and traffic than they do about the lives of people who are impacted by decades of systemic disinvestment, job loss, poverty, and limited economic opportunity. Each lawsuit, appeal and publicity stunt is just another tactic to delay and thwart our ability to revitalize our community and create a legacy for our children. Your actions reflect a settler's mentality aiming to exclude the legitimate voices of the majority while elevating your own, no matter how much you have to twist the truth to do so. **-MORE-**

As neighbors, taxpayers, and stakeholders from all walks of life, we welcome the Obama Center to the South Side, in general, and Jackson Park, in particular. In addition to the jobs and opportunities it will provide in both its development and operational phases, we know that this global showcase will transform lives, strengthen communities, and provide a global platform for Chicago to showcase its beauty and brilliance.

The Obama Presidential Center is a ray of hope in a South Side community overwhelmed by racial inequity, poor public policy and persistent post-traumatic stress disorder. Your protracted campaign to block the OPC is callous, uncaring, and devoid of any sensitivity to a people who are still longing to be seen and heard. Your effort to drown out our voices is destructive and

arrogant. And what, indeed, are you “protecting” our parks from – underutilization, beautification, accessibility, environmental restoration, inspiration and possibility or US?!

Former President Barack Obama, and First Lady Michelle, are the epitome of excellence and their lives symbolize hope for all people. This center will be the only state-of-the-art facility on the South Side that houses a public library, a technology center, arts & cultural activities, a museum, and a comprehensive array of programs designed to inform and inspire our youth and families.

Jackson Park is a living thing, a beacon for the future, not a graveyard for the past. Its legacy is still a work in progress. It belongs to all of us, not just the thousands of Black faces that live and work on the city’s South Side, but all of Chicago and the world. In recent weeks, we have heard the cry of the oppressed in protest. They are tired of their shared dreams being undermined and held hostage by a privileged few who are detached from, and blind to, their plight. You obstructionists represent still one more foot on our collective necks!

We applaud Mayor Lori Lightfoot and the Chicago City Council for voting to fund a Woodlawn neighborhood improvement plan. These dollars will go a long way in assuring that current homeowners, renters, and businesses are not displaced and have the resources they need to maintain their properties.

This is a watershed moment in our nation’s history. People all over the country are working to dismantle systems that have perpetuated racial hostility and social colonization. We don’t need more paternalism disguised as community advocacy. If POP calls itself a friend of the community, then it should respect our right to self-determination. Stop Popping Off and start Protecting the rights of the People.

Efforts like this succeeded in running the Lucas Museum out of town, but WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED!

We, the undersigned, support the Obama Presidential Center, now and in the long run. We oppose any group that seeks to disrupt, discredit, disrespect and destroy our self-determination and our children’s futures.

-MORE-

Sincerely,

51st Business Association, Sandra Bivens
720 Films
7200 S. Luella Block Club, Walter Bland
75th on the Lake HOA, Donna M. Strickland
A&D Property Services, Inc
Abundant Media & Entertainment, Inc.
Alextronics Systems Inc.
All Star Gas Station
All Points Security & Detective, Inc.
Always Absolute Heating and Air Conditioning
Amir Foodmart #1
Angie's Hair Salon
Annie B Jones Community Services, Victoria Brady
Bell Tax Service
Bey Financial Corporation, Tracey Bey
Bicycle Clinic
Black United Fund of Illinois, Inc., Carolyn Day
blkHauUS Studios, Norman Teague
Bonnie's Eye to the Sky Inc, Bonnie De Shong
Bowa Construction, Nosa Ehimwenman
Brown & Sons Landscaping, Curtis Brown
Bryn Mawr East Area Council, Gerald Wayne Williams
Cade Collective LLC
Cambridge Condo Association
Channel Sources Sales & Merchandising, Annette Challenor
Chef Sara's Cafe
Chicago Urban League, Karen Freeman-Wilson
Childress and Associates LLC, Veda Childress
Darnell's Ground Services
Dickerson Global Advisors, Amina Dickerson
Don Nash Park Advisory Council
Dream Spots Leasing
Dwan Johnson-Bell State Farm Insurance Agent
Eating to Live Foods, David Fuller
Emerald South, Ghian Foreman
Eta Creative Arts Foundation, Kai el Zabar
Ex-Cons for Community and Social Change, Tyrone Muhammad
Full Video Service Productions
Gallery Guichard, Frances and Andre Guichard
Give Me Some Sugah

Global Generation Group
Golden Peacock Consulting & Design LLC, Neffer Kerr
Hype Park Animal Clinic
Inner City Entertainment, Alisa Starks
It's Major, Inc.
J. A. Gibson Realty, Joyce A. Gibson
Jackson Park Advisory Council, Louise Mc Curry
Jackson Park Golf and Community Leadership Council, Al deBonnett
Jackson Park Highlands Association
Jeanette Foreman and Associates, Jeanette Foreman
Jeffery Big Market
Jeffery Sub Fast Food
Keen Insight Consulting, Dr. Bonita Carr
Kenyatta's Day Care & Learning Center
Local Market Grocery Store
Lost Boyz, Lavonte Stewart
Luthetis Realty Group, Luthetis Carey
Majani Vegan Restaurant
Mammoth Loyalty, Inc., Nia Malika Augustine
MBMD Strategic Consultants, Julia Perkins
M&R Prescription
Neighborhood Network Alliance, Val Free
Perfect Pieces Boutique
Power to the People Energy, Karen Youngblood
Pump High Energy Fitness Center
Ralph's Heating Service, Inc.
Real Communities Investment, Corp.
Ron Miller and Associates, Inc.
Roseco Auto Repair
S&M Plow Corp.
Serendipity Condo Association, Frank E. Cargle
Shore Partners Design & Construction
Signatures of Prolific Women, Dr. Mildred Harris
Slab Bar-B-Que, LLC
South Merrill Community Garden, Dianne Hodges
South Shore Brew
South Shore Chamber of Commerce, Tonya Trice
South Shore Cookie Co., Nairobi Henson
South Shore Commercial Properties, LLC
South Shore Food & Liquor

South Shore Plumbing & Heating Supply Co.
South Shore Works, Ernest Sanders
South Side Neighbors for Hope, Erin Adams
SPB Consulting Services
Strategic Event Solutions, Twyler Jenkins
Studio Yogi Health and Wellness Center
Surf's Up Restaurant
Sutton Group Painting
Sylvain Studios LLC, Dorian Sylvain
T2 Staffing Agency, T. Bey
Taste of Chicago Restaurant
Team Dental Family Dentistry
Teamwork Englewood, Anton Seals, Jr.
The Kemetite Institute, Yvonne Jones
The Quarry Event Center, Yvette Moyo
The Scentuary, Robin Clark
Turnkey Kaizen L3C, Lavon Pettis
Ujaama Construction
Urban Prescriptives, Carol L. Adams
Washington Pk. Chamber of Commerce, Donna Hampton Smith
W & W Consulting, Teyonda Wertz
Barbara Bowles, South Side resident
Pamyla Brown, South Side resident
Lisa Carter, South Side resident
Sasha Daltonn, South Side resident
Donald Dew, South Side resident
Lindsey Gregorio, South Side resident
Candace Henley, South Side resident
Perri Irmer, South Side resident
Veronica Kyle, South Side resident
William Kyle, South Side resident
Chineze Mogbo, South Side resident
Kimberly Nevels, South Side resident
Malik Nevels, South Side resident
Pemon Rami, South Side resident
Mona Lisa Smith, South Side resident
Debra Wesley, South Side resident

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