

Dear Mayor Daley, Chicago Plan Commission, and City Council Aldermen;

Chicago Children's Museum officials have stated that Grant Park in downtown Chicago is the only viable location for their new flagship. We, and the majority of Chicago residents, reject the view that the *only* place for a new world class museum is Chicago's legacy "*forever open, clear, and free*" downtown open space.

Alternative *high visibility, transit accessible, and available locations* for the Museum have not even been considered. The *Children's Museum of Indianapolis*, the largest and most successful in the country, is located six miles from that city's downtown in a diverse neighborhood. Indianapolis has demonstrated that if you build a world-class children's museum, families will come. Attractions like the *Museum of Science and Industry*, *DuSable Museum*, and *Mexican Fine Arts Museum* have proved that here in Chicago. There's no reason to exclude consideration of candidate sites where a signature new museum can thrive that are not the City's front yard.

Alderman Brendan Reilly (42nd Ward) issued a reasoned decision to oppose a building in Grant Park. He cites 172 years of landmark legal protections and a public process that solicited input from constituents. Even if the museum moves completely underground in Grant Park, the Illinois Supreme Court's *Montgomery Ward decisions* still prohibit this protected legacy space from being used for "*such circuses or exhibitions to which the public would not be admitted for free.*" And, the proposed Museum is a *building*, albeit below grade. The Plan Commission and City Council have a responsibility to future generations to honor this clear mandate and preserve Grant Park as landmark public space.

An alternative location next to Logan Boulevard Square has been presented to the City and CCM. The proposed park activities center and Museum codevelopment would encompass the 2.5 acre property at 2500-40 North Milwaukee Avenue which is home to the troubled Mega Mall, as well as an adjacent 2 acre parcel owned by the Chicago Transit Authority. The city closed the Mega Mall in 2005 due to extensive building code violations and has begun eminent domain acquisition of the Tax Increment Finance site for redevelopment. The CCM and Park Campus will include a fieldhouse, community center with resources for youth and seniors, and art and performance. A green roof on the complex would house gardens, an educational greenhouse, and running track.

The location is adjacent to the *O'Hare to Loop* branch of the CTA Blue Line, which carries 22 million passengers per year, and is also accessible by major bus routes. Nearby vehicle arteries include the Kennedy Expressway (I-90/94), and Milwaukee, Western, Fullerton, and Diversey Avenues plus Logan and Kedzie Boulevards.

Museum officials say they want a high visibility location and a world class design. Logan Square offers the CCM planning options that simply aren't feasible in downtown. Imagine a glass and steel museum whose upper floors span over the Blue Line, with elevated trains literally running through it. That provides a sweeping visual showcase of museum attractions to millions of El riders and Chicago visitors traveling the city's transit gateway and a unique thrill for children inside the museum to see real trains passing. An underground facility in Grant Park can't match that.

Logan Square offers the rare opportunity for an amazing new museum and park accessible to all of Chicago's children. We hope museum and city leaders will give fair consideration to Logan Square and other locations which can embrace their vision and accommodate signature architecture. The Museum will be steps from Logan Boulevard Square itself. This landmark is the north terminus of our historic Boulevard System and home to the Illinois Centennial Monument. Designed by Henry Bacon (architect for the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC), the elegant 68 foot tall column topped with an eagle was dedicated in 1918 to honor the first 100 years of Illinois' statehood.

Let's add a new CCM plus park jewel to Chicago's *emerald necklace* and keep Grant Park "*forever open, clear, and free.*"

Sincerely,

Mark Heller
Sigilfredo Souchet (Logan Square Neighborhood Association President 2002-2004)
Friends of The Park CENTER at Logan Square
Email: LoganSquareParksAdvocate@yahoo.com