

"CEASE AND DESIST" LETTER PREPARED BY THE COMMITTEE TO KEEP LINCOLN PARK PUBLIC

February 28, 2008

Mr. Charles S. Gofen, President, The Latin School of Chicago
Mr. Gery J. Chico, President, Chicago Park District Board of Commissioners
Dr. Donald W. Firke, Head of School, The Latin School of Chicago
Mr. Timothy J. Mitchell, Superintendent and CEO, Chicago Park District

Dear Sirs:

Take notice that the contract between the Chicago Park District and the Latin School of Chicago, to build a permanent soccer structure in Lincoln Park's South Field for the primary use of Latin School, violates public law and doctrine protecting public assets from private exploitation. We call on you to halt the project immediately in an honorable manner.

The contract was signed in secret and with no public input. It illegally circumvents the detailed safeguards, in the Park District's own Code and elsewhere, which exist to reinforce its fiduciary duty to maintain and protect existing open space and, before deciding upon imposing new structures in the park, to require prior public notice, robust community consensus, and unbiased, objective professional studies to document whether a genuine public need exists, and if so what would be an appropriate location and design configuration.

The large, grassy, open-use meadow in Lincoln Park is not an appropriate place for an astroturf-surfaced soccer structure with bleacher seating, scoreboard, night lights, and commercial advertising. It recklessly removes this space from the countless variety of uses it has provided for more than a century.

As an alternative to litigation, we urge the Park District and Latin School to voluntarily agree to suspend further work on the soccer facility and submit the entire matter to informed public examination, community review, and discussion and evaluation by independent, objective experts and leaders. We believe it will ultimately be in the city's and the school's financial and political best interests to do this, because without reevaluating this project from scratch, there will be no alternative but to proceed with a lawsuit. Take note that the undersigned are joined by many hundreds more who have already formally made known their objection to this project and offered support. We are also thankful for the growing number of parents, teachers, students and alumni of Latin School who are joining us.

We believe it is the duty of the Park District to be attentive to our community's best interests and serve as a partner in formulating its development projects, fulfilling its role of guardian of the historic 1902 Burnham Plan for park land, faithful to preserving this public space "forever open, clear and free."

cc: Alderman Vi Daley, Alderman Brendan Reilly, Alderman Mary Ann Smith,
Mayor Richard M. Daley