

Five Things You Should Know About the Obama Presidential Center (OPC) in Jackson Park

The Obama Presidential Center (OPC) could have been built anywhere in the United States, but President and Mrs. Obama CHOSE Jackson Park on the South Side of Chicago – where Mrs. Obama grew up and President Obama began his career in public service.

As a South Side resident, this is what you should know:

1) Who benefits: Our children, our families, and our communities for generations to come.

The stated mission of the Obama Foundation is “to inspire, empower, and connect people to change the world” through their core belief that ordinary people working together can change history. The epicenter of this powerful commitment will sit in Jackson Park on the South Side of Chicago, bringing hope and pride, and inspiring our children to believe their potential is limitless.

2) The OPC is a multi-purpose campus, not just a library, set in a public park. Instead of a research library open only to scholars, the campus will include a museum, a branch of the Chicago Public Library, an athletic center, a public plaza, children’s recreation areas, a sledding hill, and new walking and biking trails. With the exception of the Museum exhibition galleries, all other OPC spaces and grounds will be accessible to the public free of charge.

Why this is important: Currently underutilized parkland will be revitalized with a range of facilities and resources that are free and open to all.

3) The OPC is the first presidential center built in an urban setting with a commitment to the public benefit of its neighbors. The OPC will be a center of activity for South Side children and teenagers, through programming at the Presidential Museum, the on-site Chicago Public Library, and athletic center partnerships with Hyde Park Academy, the YMCA, and the Park District. It is committed to creating not just jobs but careers through high school training and internship opportunities, and job training and fair employment initiatives in collaboration with Lakeside Alliance.

Why this is important: The OPC will be an engine of social and economic development on the South Side and attract tourists to the city from all over the world.

4) The OPC occupies only a small portion of Jackson Park and is designed to enhance its historic and recreational value. OPC buildings will occupy 2.5 acres of its 20.5-acre site on the northwest edge of Jackson Park; that’s less than 0.5% of the whole park’s 547 acres. Jackson Park is designated as a national historic preservation site for its design by Frederick Law Olmsted and as the site for the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. The Obama Foundation architectural and landscape team was well-versed in the history of the site and created a campus that embraces Olmsted’s design principles and restores some of the damage done in the park over the last 50 years. Notably, their design would convert Cornell Drive from the hazardous six-lane highway it is today back to parkland for hiking, biking, and recreational activities.

Why this is important: For the first time since the 1960’s, Jackson Park will flow naturally from cityscape to lakefront, as Olmsted had intended.

5) The OPC will belong to the people of Chicago. Construction costs of the OPC will be entirely funded by private donations raised by the Obama Foundation. When construction is completed, the Obama Foundation will deed ownership of the OPC to the City of Chicago and sign an agreement to lease the site for 99 years. That lease will require the Foundation to cover 100% of the cost and upkeep of buildings and parkland and operate under the same set of rules that govern the City’s other museums in the parks.

Why this is important: The Obama Foundation will bear the cost of the Presidential Center, not Chicago taxpayers.

It is time to get involved and raise your voice in support of the Obama Presidential Center in Jackson Park. We are here to help:

South Side Neighbors For Hope

Web: www.sosiden4hope.org Facebook: SoSideN4Hope Twitter: @SoSideN4Hope