



PROTECT OUR PARKS

Summary of Our Cause and Our Case

Five years after a proposal by the Latin School to build an athletic facility in the North Meadow of the South Field in Lincoln Park was overwhelmingly rejected by area residents in public meetings during 2002, bulldozers showed up one day, unannounced, in November of 2007, and ripped out 4 acres of grass in the South Meadow. An athletic facility was going in. Residents could scarcely believe their eyes! The park was being raped in broad daylight! How could this be happening? "It's a done deal" was the answer. A contract between the Chicago Park District and the Latin School to build an artificial turf soccer field in south Lincoln Park had been signed, and that's all there was to it. Never mind that the community didn't want it, didn't need it, and loved the grassy meadow which had hosted thousands of people every season for everything from kite flying to tai chi to colorful tented charity bazaars. It was going in anyway, and the Chicago Park District and the Latin School, didn't much care what the neighbors thought.

But they should have! Over 2,000 of them signed petitions, told whoever would listen what they thought about this shameful and illegal venture, raised money and sued the City, the Park District and the Latin School. AND WON!!! The construction has been stopped in its tracks, the ugly equipment removed, and the "done deal", the secret contract between the Park District and Latin -- voided.

But --- don't uncork the champagne, yet! The Park District is apparently intent on completing the illegal construction, anyway! Never mind that this community HAS NO NEED FOR AND DOES NOT WANT A SOCCER FIELD! Never mind that Latin has coveted that space since 2002, and probably before. Never mind that it was intended all along for the priority use of Latin -- a private school taking over public land. Never mind that they stopped at nothing-- flouting every regulation -- keeping it secret for as long as possible -- then sprinting into a headlong dash to completion, in order to present this sorry spectacle of official misconduct as a "fait accompli" Oops! It's all finished! "You wouldn't want us to waste \$2 million dollars, would you?!!" Never mind that it would only have cost half that amount if they had picked a different site, one that did not require \$1Million dollars worth of drainage! Never mind that the only reason the location was chosen was its proximity to the Latin School. Never mind that there were no objective studies of the demographics of the population -- Perhaps the lowest percentage of school age children in the city --, or of the environmental and health impact of having an artificial turf stadium in that location. Artificial turf creates "islands of heat" in summer, heating up to 160-200 degrees! Three states have declared moratoriums on artificial turf fields due to a myriad of health hazards associated with them. Never mind that no alternate locations were ever even considered! The Park District has announced their intention of completing it at their own expense. And guess who will be the prime beneficiaries of this all too obvious strategy? And possibly, though hopefully not, the prime victims of their own arrogance?

Use the money where it's needed! Put a soccer field where it makes sense. Not in the last open space of one of the most beautiful vistas in the city. Put it in a neighborhood where there are children and where there are public schools. And where there is enough space for all. SAY NO TO SOCCER IN THE NORTH MEADOW OF LINCOLN PARK!

Protect Our Parks is a grass-roots, all-volunteer neighborhood organization dedicated to stopping the privatization, destruction and diminution of our public parks.

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