

Executive Summary

Protect Our Parks, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) public interest organization, joined by other concerned South Side organizations and residents, filed a lawsuit seeking administrative review as well as raising other causes of action. The Defendants named in the lawsuit include the city of Chicago, three federal agencies, and the Obama Foundation.

The lawsuit asks the US District Court of the Northern District of Illinois to review and enforce long-established federal laws enacted to protect local historic sites, environmental impacts, impairment of dedicated public parkland, and related community natural resources which require a diligent search for alternatives prior to approval of any proposed projects that adversely impact existing public resources. These concerns are all implicated by the city of Chicago and the Obama Foundation's attempt to construct a proposed Obama Presidential Center ("OPC") in historic Jackson Park.

As part of the relief sought, the Plaintiffs seek to enjoin all construction related activity until completion of the proper reviews, which must include consideration of avoidance and minimization of adverse impacts to historical, cultural, and environmental resources relative to the proposed construction of the OPC in Jackson Park, in addition to developing an environmental impact statement.

The Plaintiffs have repeatedly declared support for an OPC construction on any of the many existing and needy legal non-public park south side locations. To that end, Plaintiffs have identified a location that provides a better economic alternative, superior environmental protection, and better transportation access, all with the additional benefit of preserving parkland and the historical and cultural resources embodied in Jackson Park. However, these efforts remain largely ignored.

The complaint focuses on two fundamental flaws that permeate all of the federal reviews. First, in each of these reviews, the agencies artificially segment the project, splitting one unified project into smaller pieces. One piece is the destruction of Jackson Park, and the second is the construction of a new road system after the construction of the OPC. By manufacturing this division, the federal agencies argue that the OPC construction segment is a "local" matter. They claim they have no control over such matters while simultaneously asserting control over the project's remaining elements. In so doing, the federal agencies and the other defendants approve and embrace the clear-cutting of 1000 mature, carbon-sequestering trees, permanent disruption of annual bird migratory flights, and the closing of four main automobile thoroughfares in Chicago's South Side. Such a result, founded upon the division of a unitary undertaking, is contrary to the law and the policies underlying the federal regulatory framework triggered by the OPC's proposed construction in Jackson Park.

Second, by engaging in that prohibited practice, the federal agencies nullify their statutory requirement to search for alternatives to avoid or minimize these significant adverse impacts to environmental, historical, and cultural resources. In so doing, federal agencies and other defendants ignored the applicable statutory mandates and therefore failed concerned citizens and the public interest.

Finally, the lawsuit raises the city's breach of its public trust obligations. The City gives a private entity, the Obama Foundation, nearly 20 prime acres of publicly owned green space in the heart of historic Jackson Park for 99-years, tax-free, for \$10.00. As part of

the transaction, the City delegated all material decision-making authority to the Obama Foundation without conducting adequate due diligence. Ultimately, rubber-stamping this one-sided transaction, consistent with its improper delegation of authority.

Other claims for violation of the Illinois and federal constitution are also set forth in detail.

Read the full complaint [here](#).