



RANCH Triangle Community Conservation Association

PO Box 14780 Chicago, Illinois 60614-0780

www.ranchtriangle.org

July 23, 2019

The Honorable Lori E. Lightfoot, Mayor of Chicago
Office of the Mayor
121 N. LaSalle Street
Chicago City Hall, 4th Floor
Chicago IL 60602

RE: North Branch Park Preserve

Dear Mayor Lightfoot:

We write as representatives of RANCH Triangle Community Conservation Association (RANCH), a 50+ year-old nonprofit community organization that serves the residents of the Ranch Triangle neighborhood in Lincoln Park. We are writing to request your support for the North Branch Park Preserve (NBPP). As you may know, RANCH's boundaries include much of the General Iron property and much of the eastern portion of the Lincoln Yards Planned Development (Lincoln Yards PD). It is our understanding that the General Iron property is currently for sale. This could provide our city with an opportunity it did not have only weeks ago: the desire by the city leadership to obtain the property as a real public park space in perpetuity.

Since the city began planning the transformation of the North Branch Industrial Corridor, comprising over 750 acres of industrial land, RANCH has advocated for balanced development and the need for additional open, recreational space along the river. This space is necessary to serve not only the existing residents of Lincoln Park and other surrounding neighborhoods, but also the thousands of new residents anticipated as a result of new development, and to provide additional park space for all Chicagoans. Yet the city's Framework Plan promised only 10 acres for the entire 750-acre area, and failed to mandate that this meager allotment be contiguous land. The realization that the city's plan fell short gave rise to the NBPP.

RANCH, along with many other organizations and Aldermen Smith and Waguespack, has consistently articulated the importance of and need for the NBPP. Throughout the Lincoln Yards and TIF approval processes, some attempted to paint those in support of the NBPP as anti-development, willfully ignoring the role that park space plays in the attractiveness, vitality and sustainability of any development, not to mention the general health and environmental benefits that green space offers a city and its citizens. Not only is a large-scale recreational park a necessary ingredient to the success of the massive and "once-in-a-generation" development that is the Lincoln Yards PD, the park would confer a somewhat proportionate public benefit to the city's residents in exchange for the massive TIF passed in connection therewith - something currently lacking. Moreover, the fact that the revised TIF appears to transfer ownership of portions of the river wall from the city to Sterling Bay emphasizes the need for action to

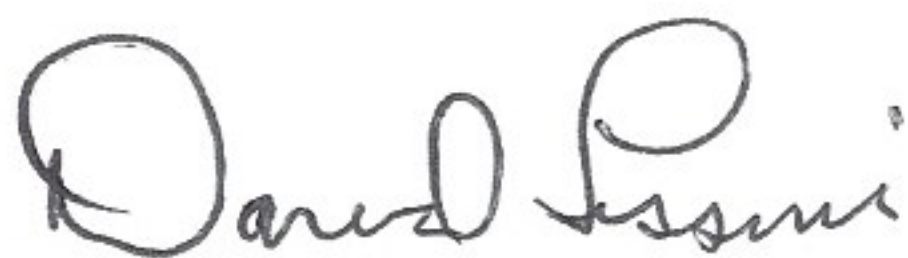
ensure lasting river access to the citizens of Chicago. While the Lincoln Yards PD and Cortland/Chicago River TIF were hurriedly passed by the previous mayor and city council over the outcry of various citizen groups from around the city and even over your own call for a more deliberate and thoughtful review, the opportunity to create the North Branch Park & Nature Preserve, thankfully, still remains.

A large portion of the proposed park site is the current General Iron property. General Iron has announced that it plans to relocate, and its land is currently for sale. This land is adjacent to the Lincoln Yards PD. The park would undoubtedly serve as an enhancement to this development, and as such, help realize the Department of Planning and Development's expectation that it would be "an economic engine" for the city. Moreover, a park would preclude further development on this land – ensuring that the already-strained infrastructure and anticipated increases in congestion from existing and planned developments are not exacerbated. Aldermen Smith and Waguespack previously consulted with municipal funding experts to explore viable public and private funding partnerships that could help make this park a reality. Additionally, there is money not currently earmarked in the Cortland/Chicago River TIF and/or funds that could be ported from adjacent TIFs, like the Goose Island or Near North TIFs, that could be set aside for the purchase of land for the park and help offset the massive density increases approved by the previous administration.

As you know, the ongoing increase in dense development throughout this area, even beyond the Lincoln Yards PD, will overburden available park space. With the potential for 100 additional acres of dense development in this same North Branch sub-area, we will need more greenspace. More than ever, our community and our city need the NBPP. Chicago's motto, "Urbs in Horto," deserves to be reflected in the city's planning process: to set the standard, requiring real urban planning when contemplating the rezoning of other PMDs around the city; to continue the trend of a publicly-owned park every two miles along the Chicago River; to ensure public access to the city's riverfront; to help attract new businesses and residents; and to encourage our current families and residents to remain residents of the city. We encourage your administration to continue to lead on environmental issues, and embrace the NBPP.

In light of General Iron's announcement that its property is for sale and reports of significant interest by developers, we believe the transfer of ownership is likely imminent and, therefore, respectfully request a meeting with your office as soon as is practicable to discuss this matter further - before the opportunity is lost forever.

Sincerely,



David Lissner, President, Ranch Triangle
Community Conservation Association

/s/

Reatha Kay, Vice President, RANCH Triangle
Community Conservation Association

cc: Alderman Scott Waguespack, Finance Chair
Maurice Classen, Chief of Staff (marice.classen@cityofchicago.org)
Daniel Lurie, Assistant to the Mayor (daniel.lurie@cityofchicago.org)
Alderman Michele Smith