To: DuSable Park Development Team
From: River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group
Date: September 23, 2024

The River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group received a presentation about the DuSable Park design concept on September 10, 2024. The presentation provided Task Force participants with an overview of the proposal including how the current park concept plans comply with the Chicago River Design Guidelines, the Central Area Plan, and Planned Development No. 368. Following the development team's presentation there was a 'Question & Answer' session that allowed Task Force participants to ask clarifying questions and provide general feedback verbally and via an online form. The following summary is representative of the group's verbal and written input.

Our understanding of the DuSable Park (401 N. Lake Shore Dr.) site plan proposal
The Chicago Park District owns the site and is working with the DuSable Park Design Alliance (consultant team) to create the detailed construction-ready design, based on a previously created park framework plan. Key goals of the project are to honor Jean Baptiste Pointe DuSable, recognize the unique location at the confluence of the Chicago River and Lake Michigan, attract city residents and tourists to the park, and gather design input from various committees. The proposed park will feature a timeline path, a pavilion, a 300 ft. long mural wall, a flyover connection path and bridge, and a boardwalk along the waterfront. Landscape plans include a wet prairie at the southeast corner of the site, canopy and ornamental trees, and native plantings.

Questions, comments, and considerations from the Task Force's discussion:

- **Increased multilayered diverse vegetation and understory trees**
  The working group desires to see more diversity of species incorporated into the plant palette that would provide pockets of dense multi-level plantings, enhance habitat for wildlife, and to filter stormwater runoff before it enters the Chicago River or Lake Michigan. Specifically, the Task Force notes that Bald Cypress likes to be in wet environments, so it is encouraged to keep this species in the wet prairie or explore other native species that are suited to drier soil conditions. There is a lot of *grow-low sumac* present in the overlook mound area and surrounding the flyover connection, we recommend increasing the diversity of species on the mound, which would both provide additional ecological benefits as well as more aesthetic value. Additionally, because it is a remediated site and built from fill, the working group has concerns about the soil quality to support the planned landscape and tree growth. Plans for proper soil preparation should be incorporated into the budget and construction process to ensure the new trees and plants succeed.

- REGTF Working Group questions related to the landscape plan:
  - What are the landscape details of the section between B and C on the site plan? Is it a lawn strip?

- **Importance of site for bird migration**
  The Working Group wants to emphasize the importance of facilitating safe bird passage and creating bird habitat at the park, because of the site's unique location at the intersection of the river and the lake. It is vital to create pockets of multi-layered vegetation that birds need. The Working Group appreciates the current selection of trees which includes Oaks and Hawthorns, we encourage adding understory trees *(such as hophornbeam)* to increase bird habitat. This will be a beautiful site to experience migration and will be a key stopover for many species of birds that visit our City.

- **Request for additional details about the stormwater management plans**
  In the meeting, the design team notes that they were still in the process of the detailed stormwater management approach to the site, besides the wet prairie. As a detailed stormwater management design moves ahead, the working Group encourages these plans to corporate innovative BMPs to capture, filter and absorb stormwater to protect the river and lake's health. While we acknowledge and appreciate the planned utilization of the wet prairie and permeable pavers for stormwater retention, our group has concerns on how this retained water will be filtered prior to drainage into the river. We also recommend that the Chicago Park District have a strategy for securing trash receptacles and collecting litter that can blow or be washed into the river during storm events, and a clear management strategy to reduce the use of road salts on the site. Floatable plastics, chlorides from road salt, and other waterborne pollutants continue to be a challenge for our waterways and Green Infrastructure features like the wet prairie. Pollutants can be captured with filtering storm drains, and be monitored with monitoring devices, and other site management practices. With its unique location at the confluence of the Chicago River and Lake Michigan it's important for this park to be a good neighbor to these two living bodies of water and ensure additional runoff pollution and litter floatables are not being directly distributed into them.

  - Task Force questions related to the stormwater approach:
    - What portions of the site's run-off *will*, and *will not*, be filtered and discharged into the river?
    - How will floatables, litter, and other waterborne pollutants be captured from the run-off before it reaches the river and/or lake?

- **Explore options for future canoe docking and aquatic habitat**
  Though the Park District shared that a canoe docking station cannot be implemented during the first phase of the park, the Working Group strongly encourages the project team to continue exploring this water access for future phases. This would be a great paddling destination for this high traffic area for paddlers coming from the Main Stem to stop and enjoy the park as well as provide a safe emergency egress point along our urban water trail. On the northwest side under the DuSable Lake Shore Drive Bridge there is a depression in the seawall that could provide a great future opportunity for a canoe docking station. Additionally, when a future canoe docking station is explored there is an opportunity to incorporate restoring and rejuvenating aquatic instream habitat adjacent to the seawall. The inclusion of aquatic gardens can provide habitats for various species, improve water quality, and enhance overall ecosystem health. Incorporating this aquatic habitat in the future will contribute significantly to the park's environmental goals.

Thank you for taking the time to present to the River Ecology and Governance Task Force Development Review Working Group. We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback in the planned development process and look forward to the ongoing coordination as the project moves on to future phases. We hope that implementing the above recommendations can be mutually beneficial for the development team, community residents, and the river itself. We welcome the opportunity for feedback, offer our services in the future, and look forward to your responses and collaboration.

Sincerely,

River Ecology Governance Task Force
Development Review Working Group