



**PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL
SENECA PARK/ELI M. SCHULMAN
PLAYGROUND**

October 26, 2020

Alderman Brian Hopkins
2nd Ward
City of Chicago
121 N. LaSalle Street – Rm 200
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Alderman Hopkins:

This letter is sent to you jointly by the Streeterville Organization of Active Residents and the Park Advisory Council for Seneca Park & Eli M. Schulman Playground.

Over the last several months, there has been justified concern in our community over the taking of parkland to widen Mies van der Rohe for the benefit of an additional traffic lane and the resulting impact on Seneca Park.

Seneca Park & the Eli M. Schulman Playground have been a neighborhood treasure since the community came together in 1988 to raise money to create the Playground and rebuild the Park, including the purchase of the Deborah Butterfield Statue. The design by Chicago Park District architect, Maria Smithburg, and the completed Park and Playground dedicated on May 7, 1990 by then Mayor Richard M. Daley and Governor James R. Thompson, won many awards and has been cited as one of the treasures of Chicago.

In November of 2013, the Chicago Park District retained Site Design Group and called a community meeting to discuss the future of Lake Shore Park and Seneca Park. That started a very long process and community discussion that resulted in a focus on Seneca Park and the Eli M. Schulman Playground. Site Design did numerous designs for the Park and Playground and numerous community events were held first by Alderman Fioretti and then Alderman Hopkins in connection with the Park District. There were many discussions about the need to maintain the fencing around the Park for security while also giving access from the Museum of Contemporary Art and Lurie Children's Hospital.

At a community meeting at the MCA on September 18, 2019, the Park District presented a final plan for the first phase of project, rebuilding the Eli M. Schulman Playground. There was also discussion about the second phase, rebuilding the eastern portion of the Park, which was understood to take place at a later date after more funds were secured.

At the meetings, there were mentions that the street could be widened and possibly creating a streetscape, but there was no follow up or meetings held to specifically address the widening. As a result of the mention of the street widening to address traffic concerns, numerous community

members requested a current traffic study. To our knowledge, no traffic study has been completed

Thanks to the commitment of Alderman Hopkins and the Chicago Park District, significant funds were secured to start construction of the Playground with the Chicago Parks Foundation. The

Parks Foundation agreed to take the lead in working with the Alderman and the community to raise funds for the second phase of the project. In fact, an event was planned in mid-March at the Ritz Carlton Hotel to celebrate the start of the work on the Playground. The shutdown of the City because of COVID-19 made that event impossible and fundraising efforts were suspended because of the current economic conditions.

There has been no notification of changed plans or meetings on the subject of the widening of Mies van der Rohe or Phase Two of the work on Seneca Park until the Alderman's email a few days ago.

In advance of the work on widening Mies van der Rohe, the Park Advisory Council had requested the following from Alderman Hopkins on numerous occasions. We were all surprised and disappointed when the work started without that meeting.

We are now restating what we asked of Alderman Hopkins and seek his response:

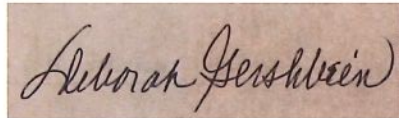
1. **Department of Transportation study status**
 - a. Date completed, presentation, safety concerns, recommendations
 - b. Primary concern is safety – multiple people have been hit or nearly hit by vehicles crossing from Pearson Street to Mies van der Rohe going to Seneca Park or MCA. MAJOR issue, especially for children and elderly crossing
2. **Current traffic issue is caused by cars and buses on Pearson Street (west bound) turning left on Mies van der Rohe)**
 - a. Recommendation has been repeatedly stated to make Pearson one way – west to east, thus immediately alleviating congestion and confusion.
 - b. Rerouting buses, private shuttle buses and commercial vehicles that do not pick up on Pearson to Chicago Avenue
3. **Seneca Park overall plan and timing** – Seneca Park is the primary green space and attraction in the neighborhood (families, business workers, visitors)
 - a. Plan
 - b. Phases
 - c. Confirmed funding
 - d. If next phase is suspended because of COVID-19, how do we insure for our community that Seneca Park remains a gem when it reopens.

We take great pride that Seneca Park is an important asset for our neighborhood and has been something that the community has universally supported. In this time of so much economic, health and criminal issues in our neighborhood, this is a time that we all have to come together.

Alderman Hopkins, we look forward to you scheduling a public meeting as soon as possible to address the issues raised herein.

Sincerely

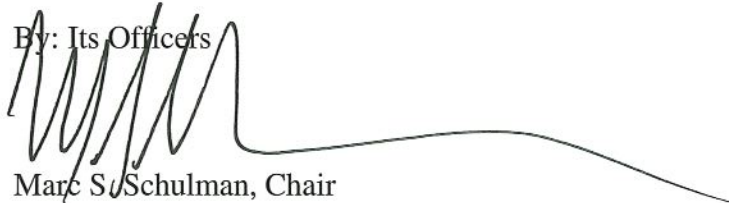
Streeterville Organization of Active Residents

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Deborah Gershbein", is written on a rectangular piece of light brown paper.

By: Deborah Gershbein, President

Seneca Park/Eli M. Schulman Playground Park Advisory Council

By: Its Officers

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Marc S. Schulman", is written in black ink. The signature is followed by a long, horizontal, wavy line that extends to the right.

Marc S. Schulman, Chair

Karen Burnett, Vice President

Stephen DiPadua, Vice President

Karla Loring, Secretary