

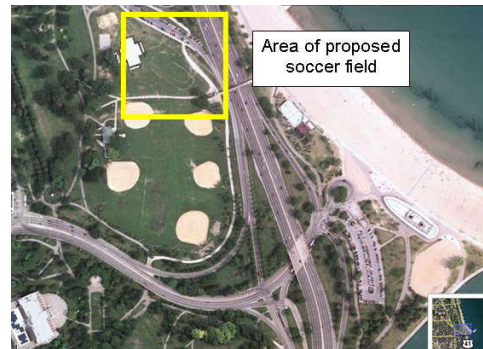
In a Nutshell: Lincoln Park-Latin School Soccer Stadium Deal

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Brief history. Latin has wanted a facility in the park for years. In 2002, a push to build a similar track-and-field facility in the park for Latin's primary use met with overwhelming public disapproval. In December 2006, with no public discussion whatsoever, a contract was secretly inked guaranteeing Latin all of the prime-time school-season use at a new facility which would cover the largest open meadow remaining in South Lincoln Park. Latin would also control advertising and other rights, on land that has historically been enjoyed by tens of thousands every year and for popular events, including the Air and Water Show. Latin's cost to construct the field has been shown to be much less than what they would spend on regular use of the field over 10 years; it can be more than recouped with their advertising rights; and it doesn't begin to account for the intangible value of this public land. In 2007, the public discovered the deal and there was an immediate uprising. Behind-the-scenes negotiations followed, the sole result being a proposed 10% reduction in Latin's virtual monopoly of the field. Meanwhile, public schools and other groups are badly underserved.

Latin and Park district positions. Latin and the Park District argue that everything was done within the law, but this not only is an unethical position to take, it is also unlikely. Peter Brown, Latin director of facilities, has defended the school's decision: "It's important to realize that we didn't approach the Park District. They came to us. They said this was very important to Mayor Daley." The Park District's main position is that Latin's contribution allows them to build more fields in less privileged areas. They sidestep questions about the lack of public process and the problem of putting a largely private, limited-use facility in a popular and valuable multi-use meadow. Laird Koldyke, an influential Latin parent, was placed by the mayor on the Park District board and chairs the committee that approved the deal. Parents and faculty at the school are upset about the breach of trust.

Alderman Daley's position. She claims not to have been informed about the deal before the fact and therefore couldn't have done anything about it. Latin, however, has said that she did know. She says she's upset, but adds she drafted a resolution calling on groups to resolve problems and held public meetings where significant compromises were reached. The reality is that this toothless resolution never left committee, and her only meeting was nearly a year after the binding agreement was already signed, held only after a massive public outcry. Furthermore, those against the field's creation were shut out of discussions held in Fall 2007, where Latin merely conceded 10% of its prime time. Far from expressing any outrage, the alderman



has instead gently requested the Park District to "inform her in advance" of any similar activities they contemplate in the future.

Advocacy group positions.

The sole public encounter before the contract was signed was at the Lincoln Park Advisory Council in September 2006, in which the Park District gave a general overview of new citywide soccer field plans, and specifically assured LPAC that Lincoln Park was not currently being considered. The Chicago regional board of the Trust for Public Land, presumably a very important advocate, has not commented on this. (Dede Koldyke, the wife of the Park District board member, sits on the trust's advisory board. We find this dual conflict of interest very troubling.) Other right-to-know parties include Friends of the Parks, nearby community organizations, and the alderman. All advocates are upset about this, but they feel powerless to act. Private adult soccer organizations are supportive of the deal, because they say they can use it when the school is not, but they cannot defend the absence of a public process, nor can they argue that there is no better place for new soccer fields. They also avoid discussing the problems that adult soccer teams bring to a community.

Alternative. Build a multi-field facility elsewhere nearby, to be used by Area 6 public schools, private schools, and many other groups. Former Cabrini-Green land is an ideal location for this. It is more central to the area for all groups in need, closer to public transit, and it does not take away valuable parkland.

Lawsuit. Buoyed by the recent news that an almost identical agreement in New York was voided by a court, CKLPP filed a lawsuit asking for temporary and permanent restraining orders on April 16, 2008. CKLPP and POP are seeking financial assistance from the community for the legal fund. Legal theories include: violations of Lakefront Protection Ordinance and Public Trust doctrine, and of public notice, Open Meetings Act, Chicago Plan Commission, and other public right-to-know and oversight requirements; violation of capital improvement anti-discrimination consent-decrees, ordinances, and laws; other due-diligence failings; and numerous conflicts of interest and breaches of fiduciary duty to the public.