

Comment Zoning Application 37 S. Sangamon

Rich <skolly4960@gmail.com>

Wed 4/14/2021 9:42 AM

To: CPC <CPC@cityofchicago.org>

[Warning: External email]

Good Day,

I'm writing to comment on the proposal to build a 258' tall building. I'm against it. It is too big and does not fit the character of the community. Our neighborhood is medium size eight (8) story buildings. This proposal is an insult to the community; a skyscraper in the middle of a neighborhood.

I suggest a build half the height as shown in the proposal.

Respectfully,

Richard M. Skolly

949 W. Madison Street #210 Chicago, IL 60607

Resident/owner 21 years.\

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

Dear Honorable Chicago Plan Commission Chair and Members,

Starting the conversation about any Development with what the Community wants — a “Community Benefit Agreement” — inspires Developers to drive architectural designs that can sustainably deliver those benefits.

This approach increases the efficiency and effectiveness of the Development Review Process, while creating a win/win/win for the City, Developer and Community.

To this end, members of True West Loop — the West Loop’s largest and most active Community Forum with over 11,000+ Members — have engaged in extensive discussions and polling around the Community Benefits they’d like to see for the 23 N. Sangamon Development (aka 37 S. Sangamon).

Together, we’ve developed this rough rendering below for illustrative purposes, and to prompt discussion.

Image: Proposed Mary Bartelme Park Expansion featuring Merit School of Music, Stage, opening out onto Amphitheater / Event Lawn. Architect to design building(s) — currently placemarked in grey behind stage, that will make this Community Benefit economically feasible.



We would encourage the Developer and Architect to return with a proposal that delivers on the following top 5 desires while building on the proud legacies of Mary Bartelme and the Merit School of Music:

Expand Mary Bartelme Park by annexing Monroe and connecting the two blocks — creating more free space like Skinner Park did with Loomis. Added by you 425 votes

Create Mini-Millennium Park with building on north end of lot, Merit Stage, and Ravinia-like amphitheater connected to Mary Bartelme Park. Added by you 102 votes

Build a new Merit School of Music into the base/podium of the proposed building, so that Merit can stay in the neighborhood. Added by you 80 votes

Create a Permanent Community Garden to replace the existing temporary GARDEN. Added by you 80 votes

Adopt a tall and thin design to maximize green space and maximize light. Added by you 32 votes

Source: <https://m.facebook.com/groups/1822215038025690?view=permalink&id=2914590452121471>

EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT & SECTION 4.2.2 OF THE WEST LOOP DESIGN GUIDELINES

While Merit School of Music and Mary Bartelme Park are located in the West Loop, it's important to remember when making an argument for Equitable Development, that they both serve underprivileged Chicagoans — not just local West Loop Residents.

Mary Bartelme was actually built as a “Regional Park” serving not only the Greater West Loop, including our neighbors west of Ashland, but also drawing folks from across the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, and Tourists — it is much more than a “Neighborhood Park”.

See: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/truwestloop/permalink/2051257751788083/>

Merit School of Music's mission is to provide musical education to underprivileged kids across the City — in some of the most underserved communities of Chicago — no matter their race or class.

Merit School in the West Loop is a haven where these kids currently come to learn — it is the “Whitney Young of Music”.

Yet unlike Whitney Young's new Michelle Obama Athletic Complex paid for with \$4.3 million in TIF funds, Merit's students have no outdoor greenspace other than complimentary access to the GARDEN which we provide.

See: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/truwestloop/permalink/2222405354673321/>

It's time to treat Merit's students, staff and alumni with the dignity and respect that they deserve. It's Time to build this hidden jewel a permanent home and world-class stage on which to shine and make Chicago proud.

There are strong arguments for bringing residents of diverse neighborhoods of the City together to build bridges of understanding — rather than reinforcing segregation by squeezing Merit out of the neighborhood.

Merit has a long history of bringing much needed Diversity to the West Loop, and we need to protect them.

Also, this is currently a Vacant Lot.

Moshe Tamssot, Founder of True West Loop jumped the fence five years ago and established the West Loop Community GARDEN — after the lot sat neglected and idle for years.

He's since championed and City Council passed, Section 4.2.2 of the West Loop Design Guidelines that encourages Developers, City and Residents to activate Vacant Lots across the West Loop.

That's what we're doing here.

We've identified a GREATER COMMUNITY NEED first, designed a Community Benefit Agreement, and are asking the Plan Commission to please request the Developer return with a proposal of a Building(s) that can economically deliver those benefits — without the threat of Eminent Domain, which isn't necessary when a License to Use Agreement would suffice (as it has all these years with the GARDEN).

Everyone should be whole and not out of pocket.

The 80% of Neighborhood Opportunity Bonus Funds should still go towards rebuilding the South and West Sides, where many of Merit's students live. This can be funded using

Squeezing Merit School of Music out of the West Loop to build even more multimillion dollar condos, is not a good way to break down Systemic Racism — nor is it a good look for a gentrifying neighborhood.

And that will happen with Phase 2 of this project, whether it's this Developer or another, it's only a matter of time before a second tower is proposed that displaces Merit.

In fact it was already proposed.



It's better that we think now in terms of a bigger more meaningful vision for these two properties in what many consider to be the most significant block in the West Loop, than to lose this once in a lifetime opportunity.

FIVE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are additional details to help inform the Developer and Architect of the responding Community's desires:

1) MARY BARTELME PARK EXPANSION

As of the time of submission, 425 Residents have voted for a Mary Bartelme Park Expansion made possible by connecting the Park with both the Developer's and Merit School of Music's Property north of Monroe Street.

Image: Current Conditions, 23 S. Sangamon, Merit School of Music, and Mary Bartelme Park

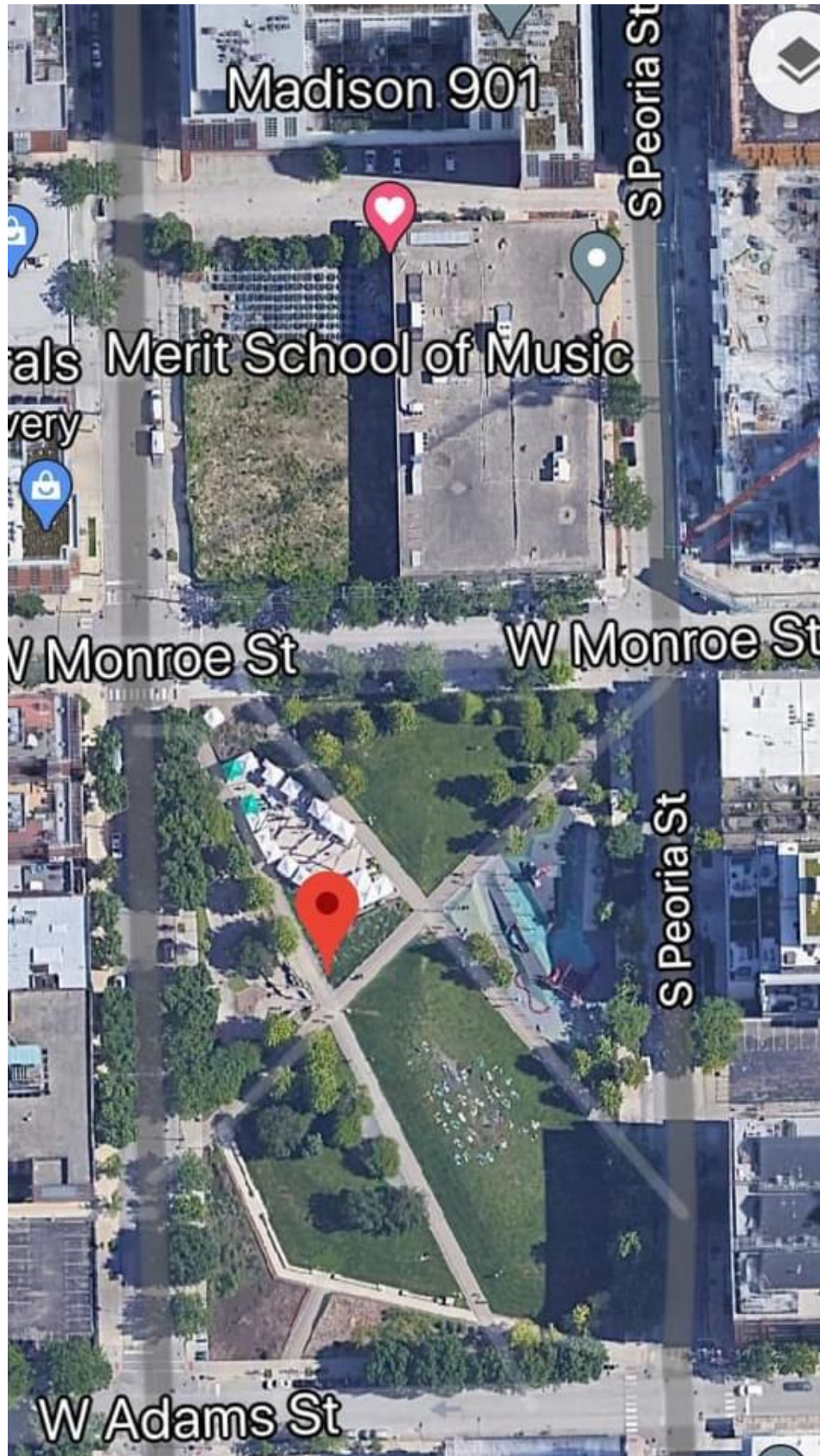


Image: Proposed Mary Bartelme Expansion with Vacated Monroe Street greened over, and building mass moved to north end of properties.



Connecting the two blocks could be accomplished by Vacating Monroe and replacing asphalt with greenspace — as was successfully executed at Skinner Park with Loomis Street.

The Chicago Department of Transportation has at least two programs to help facilitate vacating Monroe. Details of CDOT's "Make Way for People" and the "Commercial/Residential Vacation Program" can be found, here:

CDOT - Complete Streets Program: <https://chicagocompletestreets.org/streets/mwfp/>

CDOT - Vacating Streets:

https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/cdot/permit/MapsAndPlats/2020/Commercial_and_Residential_Street_and_Alley_Vacation.pdf

Residents do not want to see Merit leave the neighborhood, nor should the City, given it subsidized the purchase of Merit's current property.

Merit is a neighborhood gem of much needed culture and diversity that can be given a new home as the base or podium of the new building(s).

Shifting the building(s) to the north end of the lot, closer to 901 W. Madison, will almost double the size of Mary Bartelme Park as illustrated above. The setback will also give the Park some breathing room to create a slew of new amenities.

If vacating Monroe is not feasible, a "green bridge" or "green tunnel" could be constructed, as Monroe will now be under the sloping Event Lawn which rises to meet the top of Holiday Hill on the Park's northern edge.

Image: Green Bridge



Image: Green Tunnels



2) CREATE A MINI-MILLENIUM PARK

By incorporating a new Merit School of Music into the podium of the new building(s), we can keep this cultural crown jewel in the neighborhood — highlighting the talent of students and alumni on a stage that opens onto an amphitheater lawn.

The amphitheater lawn will gently slope to the level of Holiday Hill (~7 feet) — where the Christmas Tree and Menorah are displayed on the north edge of Mary Bartelme Park. This will create a seamless transition between the two blocks.



This gently sloped Event Lawn would accommodate both picnickers in the summer and tobogganers in the winter, creating a year round amenity — while also providing the gradients necessary to harvest water runoff for reuse in watering the landscape and powering water features. .

Image: Soldier Field's Gently Sloped Sledding Hill is a beloved South Loop amenity, something that would encourage utilization of the Mary Bartelme Park Extension's Event Lawn in the winter.



An amphitheater bowl would also eliminate the need to truck soil to the landfill, along with the procession of dump trucks, making construction safer and less disruptive for the Community — while reducing construction costs and environmental impact.

All design and construction elements in the Extension should harmonize with those in Mary Bartelme Park for continuity of both form and function.

The Landscape Architecture Foundation noted many of these in the two reports it prepared, which should help inform the Architects, here:

Case Study Brief: <https://www.landscapeperformance.org/case-study-briefs/mary-bartelme-park>

Mary Bartelme Park Methods Document:

<https://www.landscapeperformance.org/sites/default/files/Methods%20Document-Mary%20Bartelme-080715.pdf>

The EPA provides guidelines and approximate costs for Brownfield Engineered Controls — remediating the unpaved property to the same levels as Mary Bartelme Park and the Merit School of Music using Permanent Engineered Membranes, here:

https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/ec_information_guide.pdf

3) CREATE A PERMANENT WEST LOOP COMMUNITY GARDEN

For the last five years, the site has been home to the multiple award winning West Loop Community Garden — developed in line with Section 4.2.2 of the West Loop Design Guidelines which encourages Developers, City and Residents to engage in the activation of Vacant Lots. The Garden has operated in line with Chicago's Urban Agriculture Ordinance, while also meeting all necessary BACPP requirements.

See: <https://blockclubchicago.org/2018/11/13/west-loop-community-garden-could-expand-to-second-vacant-lot-in-2019/>

A permanent garden will keep this valued Community amenity growing, while recycling the new Development's rainwater runoff and air conditioning condensate — think of the amphitheater as a collection bowl with a buried cistern — reducing the Development's stress on current sewer infrastructure.

The current GARDEN was a proof-of-concept for many Community Building elements. The newly designed permanent garden should continue to support these existing uses while incorporating the 5 years of learning at the site.

Image: 100 GrowPods were leased for \$100 each in one week, raising \$10,000 to build a fully transportable garden powered by A/C Condensate & Rainwater in a Vacant Lot. The GARDEN is entering its fifth year of operation.



Image: Garden is watered by Rainwater Harvesting and A/C Condensate (distilled water) collected from Merit School's 8 rooftop air conditioners. You can see the white collection pipes linking the A/C units.

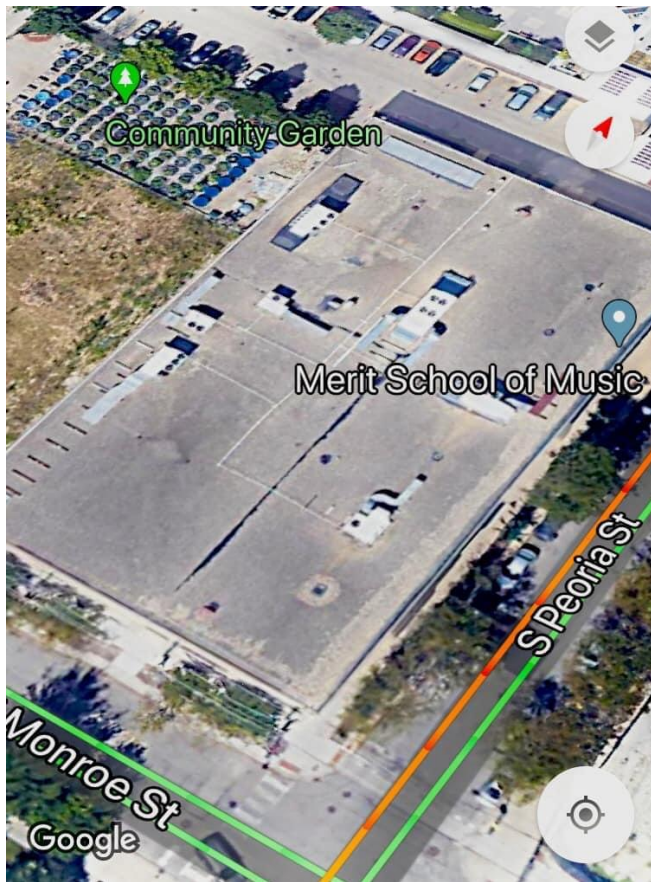


Image: The GARDEN Cinema hosted the Shortcut 100 International Film Festival, projected movies and visual art on the 30' x 300' Merit School Walls, and provided the Community with free Covid-Safe entertainment events (see: <https://vimeo.com/280815710>).



Image: The Merit School Open Stage hosted a variety of free performances and workshops, featuring talent from across Chicago.

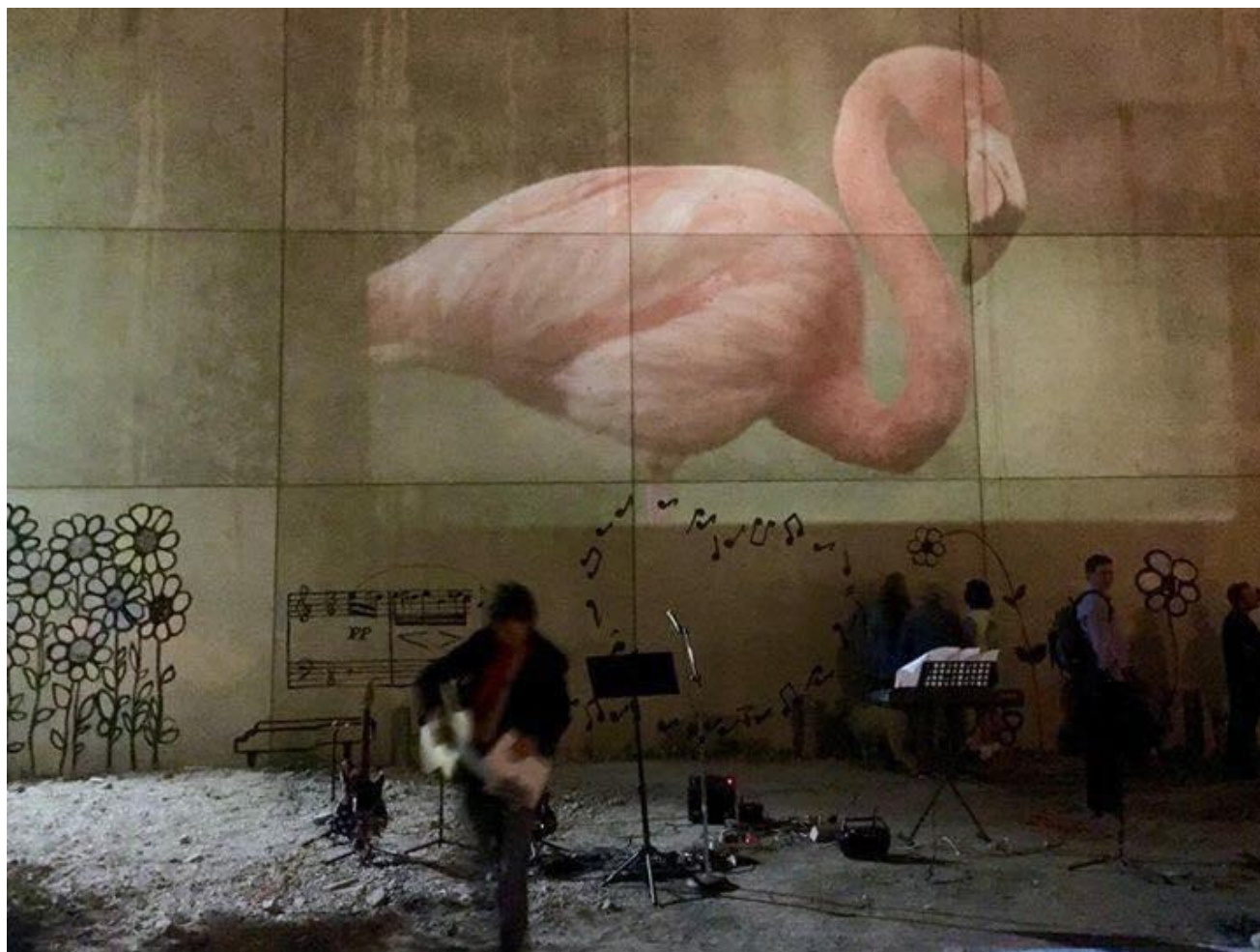
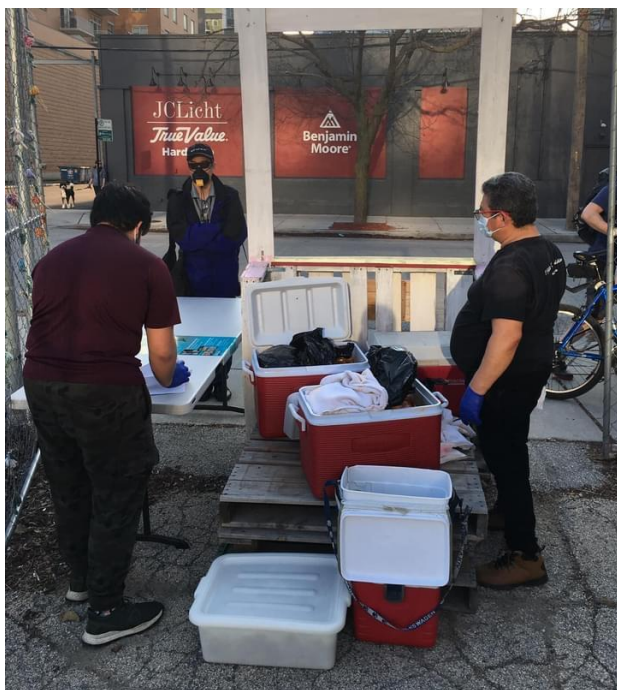


Image: The Communal Fire Ring in the GARDEN was built by the Community from salvaged architectural elements — setting the stage for year round events (see:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/truwestloop/permalink/1999261723654353/>)



Images: Street Food Vendors like the Tamale Guy were supported by the Community which bought more than \$5,000 of Tamales, helped raise more than \$36,000 for a dream restaurant, and helped cover \$57,000 in Covid medical bills when Claudio Velez fell ill. We create economic opportunities across the 25th Ward and Chicago for the underprivileged.



Images: Garden Harvests were converted into meals and shared with the Community by restaurants, food trucks, and local B&B's.



4) ADOPT TALL & THIN BUILDING DESIGN PRINCIPLES TO MAXIMIZE GREENSPACE WHILE FUNDING THE EXPANSION

To make the most of the combined 23 S. Sangamon and Merit Properties, we encourage the Developer to consider Tall & Thin building(s) in line with the West Loop Design Guidelines.

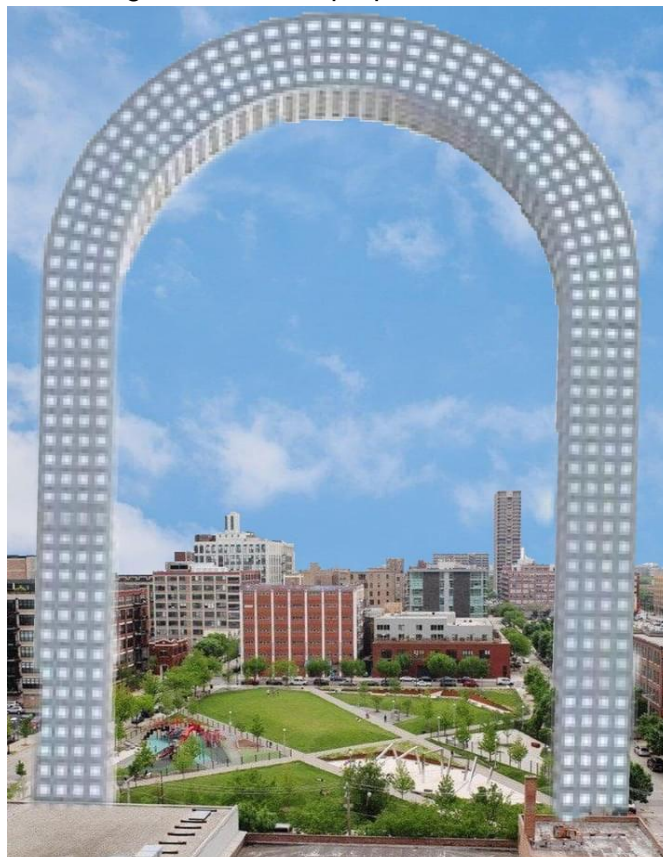
As inspiration, Singapore's Sky Garden demonstrates how 901 W. Madison's view corridors can be preserved, while potentially also creating elevated public greenspace.



The “Big Bend”, a conceptual Central Park Tall & Thin, demonstrates preserved view corridors while creating an artistic tower folks would want views of:



Here's a version in the current setting for illustrative purposes:





We recognize that there is no free lunch, and that sustainable Community Benefits can be made economical through architecture.

A few more floors for example, can pay for a Park Expansion and ongoing programming — creating a greater benefit for the region Mary Bartelme serves as a “Regional Destination Park” — the original intent of the Park — as well as serving the immediate neighborhood.

See History of Mary Bartelme Park:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/truwestloop/permalink/2051257751788083/>

We also recognize that Development on the perimeter of Mary Bartelme Park threatens to create a canyon effect, while starving people, plants and trees of sunlight — particularly new shade-casting developments to the south of the Park, like the 19 story Milieu Tower (845 W. Adams). Other parcels are ripe for redevelopment threatening more shade.

To avoid this fate, we strongly encourage the Department of Planning and Development to allow the Transfer of Development Rights across Public Property to the Target Zone on the north end of the Developer and Merit Properties.

See: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/truwestloop/permalink/1929801847267008/>

This would shift height and density away from the Park — closer to Madison Street, Businesses and Public Transportation — while reducing Parking Requirements (especially if the Madison 20 Bus Route qualifies for TOD Status).

Precedent was established by Shapack Partners, when they transferred Development Rights across a Public Alley as part of a Planned Development that was approved by Zoning, Planning and City Council.

Using Mary Bartelme Park as the contiguous link to adjacent properties would make this possible.

It also opens the possibility of the Park District to sell and monetize the Development Rights above the Park, creating additional funding to pay for the Park Expansion along with an endowment for ongoing maintenance, improvement and programming of the expanded Park.

This does not mean building on the Park. It's the exact opposite.

The Transfer of Development Rights will ensure that the Park always remains a Park, in perpetuity. And all surrounding buildings never get taller, even when rebuilt.

As reference, Mary Bartelme Park is zoned DS-3, Downtown Service, and has no limit to Development Height. This creates a highly valuable unutilized asset directly above the Park that could be transferred and monetized for the public good — expanding the Park and placing the remaining funds in an endowment to fund maintenance, improvements and programming — lessening the burden on the Park District and Property Tax Payers.

Freed up Park District funds can then be applied in the South and West Sides.

Image: DS-3 Zoning Definition

DS-3 Downtown Service

District

Rail yards, warehouses, and small businesses on downtown's periphery.

Specifications

Zoning Ordinance reference	§ 17-4-0105 View the Chicago Zoning Ordinance
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Floor area ratio	3
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Maximum building height	None, but buildings taller than city's "building height thresholds" require Planned Development review.
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Neighborhood Impact Funds present another opportunity for funding, per 17-4-1004-D Allocation of Bonus Payment Section 3:

“In lieu of the direct deposit otherwise required into the Local Impact Fund, the planned development ordinance may provide for applicants to undertake specific local improvement projects themselves pursuant to the requirements of Sec. 17-4-1005-E, which would allow funds to be used to vacate and transform Monroe street, as it’s outside the planned development borders.

https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/dcd/general/Proposed_Bonus_Restructure_Ordinance_5-13-16.pdf

Image: 17-4-1004-D Allocation of Bonus Payment Section 3

17-4-1003-D Allocation of Bonus Payment.

1. Except as provided in paragraphs 2 and 3 below, all funds received for floor area bonuses under this Sec. 17-4-1000 shall be deposited in the following funds in the following percentages:

<u><i>Bonus Fund</i></u>	<u><i>Percentage of Bonus Payment</i></u>
<u>Neighborhoods Opportunity Fund</u>	<u>80%</u>
<u>Citywide Adopt-a-Landmark Fund</u>	<u>10%</u>
<u>Local Impact Fund</u>	<u>10%</u>

2. In lieu of the direct deposits otherwise required into the Citywide Adopt-a-Landmark Fund or the Local Impact Fund, the Department of Planning and Development may direct applicants to make payments directly to sister agencies or landmark *property owners* to finance specific projects pursuant to the requirements of Sec. 17-4-1005 or Sec. 17-4-1006, as applicable.

3. In lieu of the direct deposit otherwise required into the Local Impact Fund, the *planned development* ordinance may provide for applicants to undertake specific local improvement projects themselves pursuant to the requirements of Sec. 17-4-1005-E.

4. Funds from the Local Impact Fund and the Citywide Adopt-a-Landmark Fund may be combined to finance specific landmark restoration projects in the downtown area, provided such projects satisfy the requirements of Sec. 17-4-1005-C with respect to authorized uses of the Local Impact Fund and Sec. 17-4-1006-C with respect to authorized uses of the Citywide Adopt-a-Landmark Fund.

CONCLUSION

Given all the above, we would encourage the Developer and Architect to return with a proposal that delivers on the following Top 5 Community Benefits, while building on the proud legacies of Mary Bartelme and the Merit School of Music:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Expand Mary Bartelme Park by annexing Monroe and connecting the two blocks — creating more free space like Skinner Park did with Loomis. Added by you 425 votes	×	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Create a Permanent Community Garden to replace the existing temporary GARDEN. Added by you 80 votes	×
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Create Mini-Millennium Park with building on north end of lot, Merit Stage, and Ravinia-like amphitheater connected to Mary Bartelme Park Added by you 102 votes	×	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopt a tall and thin design to maximize green space and maximize light. Added by you 32 votes	×
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Build a new Merit School of Music into the base/podium of the proposed building, so that Merit can stay in the neighborhood. Added by you 80 votes	×		

Source for Complete List:

<https://m.facebook.com/groups/1822215038025690?view=permalink&id=2914590452121471>

A Development Proposal should include as many of the Community prioritized features as is feasibly possible:




<input type="checkbox"/> Open Event Lawn Added by you 82 votes	×	<input type="checkbox"/> Conservatory & Greenhouse Added by you 24 votes	×	
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Gardens Added by you 51 votes	×	<input type="checkbox"/> Amphitheater Added by you 21 votes	×	<input type="checkbox"/> Gardens Added by you 14 votes
<input type="checkbox"/> Water Playground Added by you 38 votes	×	<input type="checkbox"/> Ice Rink (Temporary Winter) Added by you 17 votes	×	<input type="checkbox"/> Golf Facilities Added by you 14 votes
<input type="checkbox"/> Paths & Trails Added by you 37 votes	×	<input type="checkbox"/> Dog Friendly Area Added by you 15 votes	×	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Bathrooms Added by you 13 votes
<input type="checkbox"/> Picnic Area Added by you 28 votes	×	<input type="checkbox"/> Swimming Pool Added by you 14 votes	×	<input type="checkbox"/> Water Spray Feature Added by you 11 votes

Source for Complete List: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/truwestloop/permalink/2920247574889092/>




Finally, by a ratio of 1.7:1, residents would prefer that the Mary Bartelme Park Expansion remains Dog Free, like Millenium Park. As such, please disregard any Dog related features.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/truwestloop/permalink/2934675616779621/>

"DOG FREE", LIKE MILLENNIUM PARK ✕
Added by you

   188 votes

"DOG FRIENDLY", LIKE MB PARK NOW ✕
Added by you

   112 votes

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions, or require any additional information, please feel free to reach out.

Best,

Moshe Tamssot
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18 Year West Loop Resident
Innovator@gmail.com
312-961-9116