

** Alderman **
Michele Smith
Chicago's 43rd Ward



Children's Memorial Redevelopment Plan Finalized

Dear Friends,

After 2 1/2 years of extensive negotiations, the Children's Memorial Redevelopment Plan has been finalized. Here are the [site plans](#), [planned development statements](#), and [traffic plan](#) that will be submitted to the Plan Commission. [Renderings](#) of the plans can be found here, as shown to our community during the public meeting on Jan. 14 with changes we have negotiated since then.

While the vast majority of the feedback from the Ward is positive about the Children's Redevelopment, the challenge has been to find a way to accommodate an important project in one of the most desirable parts of the City of Chicago while balancing it with the concerns of its immediate neighbors.

The following is offered to bring perspective to the discussion that has brought us to this point.

Background Facts

- For 100 years Children's Memorial functioned as a very large urban hospital on six acres
- The site is the center of Lincoln Park surrounded by businesses, cultural and educational institutions and homes
- Over 4,000 people went in and out of the hospital every day or 1.4 million people annually
- Over 1300 people parked at the Lincoln Avenue garage every weekday
- The plan received overwhelming community support at the Jan. 14th public meeting and from well over 2,000 positive contacts my office received from ward residents.

Density

The new development features a maximum of 540 apartments and 60 condos, in a mix that is largely studios and one-bedroom apartments. Given that the average apartment in Lincoln Park holds just over one person, perhaps 750 people will live there, a fraction of the 4100 people who daily came in and out of Children's. There are over 1000 parking spaces in this development, plus extra for valet parking. That is enough parking for every single resident to have a space, and we are

restricting permit parking to ensure that existing residents maintain priority access to street parking.

Height

At two stories taller than the old hospital, the height of the new apartment buildings will allow an acre of new open space benefiting the entire community, maintain historic buildings and provide 10% affordable housing for neighborhood residents.

We fought for two years to significantly reduce the height of this development and we succeeded, reducing the height of two buildings by 8 stories, and eliminating one entire taller building. This was a good compromise achieved after hard negotiation. We have come a long way from the bulky, cumbersome plan with well over 800 units shown in December of 2011, and the gigantic, tall plan shown in July of 2012.

Precedent

This plan will not set a new precedent. The height was a direct result of the tradeoffs. There is not another site that is as unique as the Children's site.

Traffic

The greatest area of concern of neighboring residents relates to the already congested traffic surrounding the Fullerton/Halsted/Lincoln intersection.

Working with CDOT traffic engineers, I compiled a long list of traffic-related infrastructure improvements that will be important to help address these long-standing traffic issues. I am very pleased to report that, as a result of our negotiations, McCaffery Interests has agreed to fund 100% of the infrastructure improvements that were proposed by CDOT. In addition, as a result of community feedback since the Jan. 14 community meeting, additional changes have been made. These are reflected in the [Planned Development CDOT Site Plans](#), and in an unprecedented [Public Way Infrastructure Improvements and Traffic Demand Management Requirements](#) document which is part of the [Planned Development document](#). This type of document is not normally part of a Planned Development document and represents the importance of traffic control in this development. In total, significant improvements will be made to the surrounding traffic infrastructure. The developer will fully fund these improvements:

- The main entrance of one of the towers has been moved off of Fullerton. Instead of a previously proposed standing zone, a No Parking Tow-Zone at the "T" of the intersection of Burling and Fullerton will be installed
- A new westbound right turn lane on Fullerton
- A new southbound left turn arrow on Halsted
- A new traffic signal at Orchard and Fullerton
- Lengthened turn lanes on Lincoln
- Continuous bike lanes on Lincoln and Halsted up to and through the intersection of Lincoln/Halsted/Fullerton, running in both directions
- Repaved perimeter streets with special noise reducing asphalt
- New pedestrian bump-outs and restriping on surrounding intersections
- Widened sidewalks on Lincoln, Halsted and Fullerton
- Increased bike and pedestrian access overall, while separating bike and

automobile traffic

- Increased permit parking on some neighborhood streets
- Prohibition against apartment residents from obtaining residential permit parking
- Available car-sharing on site
- For two years, the developer will give Ventra cards to new residents

Truck Loading

Any development at this commercial site would generate truck traffic - Children's had 17,500 trucks and ambulances a year that snarled traffic with street level loading docks that required trucks to back in and off of streets. These concerns, raised in the earliest part of our community process in 2011, led to our insistence that most truck loading be conducted out of sight in as efficient a manner as possible.

The underground loading dock proposed will almost double the number of loading bays that are required by city ordinance. This will ensure that multiple trucks can load simultaneously, eliminating any potential backups on Fullerton. In addition, truck turning issues will be reduced because outbound trucks will be able to wait on the loading ramp until it is free for them to exit left on Fullerton. No trucks will be allowed in the historic Fullerton Parkway.

In addition, we have negotiated a comprehensive list of controls on truck traffic to the development, including:

- Restricted hours of operation, and no operation during rush hours
- If trucks arrive in violation of the operating hours, they will be permitted to enter, but not leave the loading dock
- Restrictions on size of trucks
- Requiring a full time dock master
- The developer cannot attempt to even change the truck loading arrangements without going through the entire planned development process again
- Community groups which sign the community agreement would have the power to directly enforce these restrictions without having to go through the city

Trade-offs

Every decision on one element of this complex development affects some other element. The height of the buildings is a direct result of a trade-off for an acre of open space, maintaining important historic buildings, and the desire to provide 10% affordable housing. I do understand fears that this plan will change the neighborhood. But tearing everything down to avoid higher structures, as some have suggested, is not an answer. I believe this plan allows us to save our historic neighborhood character by keeping or rebuilding the older buildings that give context to the crossroads.

Amenities

The commercial development at the site will be a neighborhood amenity with a grocery, health club, and restaurants and other shopping. These anchors will lead to the revitalization of Lincoln Avenue, and support our wonderful theatre

community. It will tie the Apollo and Victory Gardens Theatre on the north end of Lincoln to the Greenhouse Theatre on the south end, making our neighborhood more walkable. The open space will create an area for our community to meet and gather, creating the true neighborhood crossroads that has been the aim of this project from the beginning.

Community Control

City departments monitor much of the requirements of planned developments. In Lincoln Park, I work with our community groups to engage with developers of major projects to obtain assurances about operating aspects of the project and construction details. I fully support this process and have been working with our community groups to complete such an agreement.

Why Now?

Some have argued that we should fight Children's Memorial Hospital and "force" them to reduce their price to enable an even smaller development. We did that - facing down a well-respected public institution and neighbor. Their \$15 million price reduction enabled the development we have today. We have repeatedly demanded a smaller development for over two years and now we have it.

Next Steps

This proposal will be heard this Thursday, Feb. 20 at the Chicago Plan Commission. If the plan is approved at the Plan Commission, the Zoning Committee of City Council will hear it on March 24.

We have come a long way. In December of 2011 we saw a plan that jammed over 800 units on top of historic structures and in bulky L shaped buildings. In July 2012 we rejected a gigantic plan that topped out at 28 stories. Consistent with every pledge I have made, the community was heard, and the historic zoning uses at this site have been honored. Together we achieved a reasonable development. The majority of the community supports going forward with this compromise, reached after 2 1/2 years of effort, rather than abandoning it for an uncertain future.

I want to thank the thousands of ward residents, neighborhood organizations, and local business owners who have participated in many public meetings, ward-office discussions, telephone calls, and who have sent emails, letters and petitions about this project. Together we achieved a reasonable development and we will continue to keep our Ward the very best place in the city to live, work, shop and be entertained.

Sincerely,

Michele

Michele Smith
43rd Ward Alderman

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