The forthcoming Obama Presidential Center commemorates a historic presidency and its connections to Chicago. Drafted as a dynamic composition of buildings on a 20-acre site in Jackson Park, the Center includes an obelisk-like museum and low-slung library and public forum buildings. Gardens and paths connect to existing park to the east.

The $500 million project is not without controversy. The proposed road closure and alteration of Frederick Law Olmsted's original park vision has had its detractors. It has held up to court challenges, but a federal review of possible impacts to Jackson Park found the 235-foot museum tower will have “adverse effects” on the pastoral experience of the park.

Community stakeholders have worked toward an agreement for local residents to share in spillover benefits from the Obama Center. An influx of visitors will spur the economy but also pose a risk of displacement. Hyde Park, Woodlawn and South Shore are already experiencing some of the sharpest rent increases in Chicago. In response, an Obama Community Benefits Ordinance has been taken up by aldermen Leslie Hairston and Jeanette Taylor. Covering a mile-and-a-half radius from the Center, the ordinance stipulates that 30% of new housing be affordable when city funding is involved, or when demolition or significant rehab takes place. It would also give tenant groups first right of refusal in the sale of multifamily buildings and dedicate city-owned vacant land for affordable housing. The proposed ordinance is on hold while the Lightfoot Administration shops an alternative—and scaled-back—piece of legislation based on a six-point plan for housing stability.

Further reading:
Obama Presidential Center
Development Timeline

- Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects chosen as lead architect of $500 million OPC
- 144 architecture firms respond to RFQ
- RFP goes out to seven semifinalist firms
- Jackson Park Watch and other groups call for a vital community planning process
- Tribune article frames OPC as part of a wave of privatization efforts within Jackson Park
- Plan Commission votes to approve OPC; Protect Our Parks (POP) files federal suit to halt construction
- First public open house held by Obama Foundation detailing design and program for the OPC
- City Council approves 99-year lease of Jackson Park acreage to Obama Foundation
- Federal court rules in favor of City; POP files appeal
- OPC tower grows taller, parking structure on the Midway Plaisance scrapped in redesign
- Federal review finds OPC will have "adverse effects" on Olmsted’s vision for Jackson Park and Midway Plaisance; initiates 30-day comment period
- Community Benefits Housing Ordinance introduced in City Council
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