

OBAMA PRESIDENTIAL CENTER

CITY AREA	South Side
NEIGHBORHOOD	Woodlawn
DEVELOPER	The Obama Foundation
ARCHITECT	Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects Partners, Interactive Design Architects, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates
PROJECT TYPE	Cultural
PROJECT STATUS	Proposed
EST COMPLETION	Unknown

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.



Courtesy of the Obama Foundation

Further reading:

[Lightfoot administration crafting legislation to help residents near Obama Center.](#) Lolly Bowean, Chicago Tribune, January 16, 2020.

[Obama Center Community Benefits Agreement Gains Traction.](#) Curtis Black, The Chicago Reporter, November 21, 2019.

[Updated Visuals Revealed for Obama Center.](#) Sydney Franklin, The Architect's Newspaper, October 30, 2019.

[Study Shows Clear Evidence of Rising Rents Near Obama Center.](#) Amanda Vinicky, WTTW, September 5, 2019.

[Federal Review Finds Obama Center Would Have Adverse Effects.](#) The Cultural Landscape Foundation, August 5, 2019.

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OBAMA PRESIDENTIAL CENTER DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

