To the Chicago Plan Commission, May 17, 2018 hearing
I ask that this written statement be entered into the record. I will ask to speak verbally if I am able to attend the hearing.

Agenda item(s)- Obama Presidential Center consideration under the Lakefront Protection Ordinance, Obama Presidential Center application for a Planned Development rezoning in Jackson Park, CDOT road and circulation proposal for Jackson Park and area, and replacement Track and Field in Jackson Park. (Please insert docket number.)

Gary M. Ossewaarde
1765 E. 55th St. #B6, Chicago, IL 60615
Speaking “For” the proposals, on behalf of myself and as a member of Jackson Park Advisory Council.
I own property within 1 block of the affected park but not to the nearest proposal or road change.

WRITTEN STATEMENT REGARDING OBAMA PRESIDENTIAL CENTER AND RELATED PROPOSED PROJECTS IN JACKSON PARK

I strongly support the projects. I have lived near Jackson Park for over 50 years, active in community organizations concerned with Jackson and other area parks for over 20 years and directly involved in Jackson Park and its PAC for 20 years.

The Obama Presidential Center and related changes will significantly enhance the integrity and connectivity of Jackson. It will improve a now-underperforming part of the park and a larger area’s environment. It will expand and highlight the prized natural area adjacent to Center while creating a new campus with the Museum of Science and Industry. It will add significantly to the role and value of Jackson Park as a public forum and place for learning and thinking for the future and of civic engagement for all ages and communities, a welcoming beacon to all. By adding the lens and trajectory of Barack Obama’s life and Presidency, the OPC will expand and update the park’s circle of celebration of history. This will follow upon and respect Olmsted’s original, the World’s Columbian Exposition, the Field Columbian Museum and Museum of Science and Industry, and Wooded Island including the Japanese Garden and Chicago-Japan connection over near-150 years. I believe the thoughtful new plans respect the park’s legacy and the Lakefront Protection Ordinance.

The City right now at this moment in the process must endorse the vision and give permissions for this transformative project, so that the responsible reviews, the investment in planning, and the raising of funds public and private can go forward in timely manner. Of course (as always) infill information is needed and aspects may change. But the outline needs to be endorsed now and not bogged down.

As for the road and connectivity improvements, many desirable anyway, and the gains for the park environment, unity and safety make the changes worthwhile. I believe a serious effort has been and will continue to be made to make conditions for drivers better rather than worse. I understand that people will seek compromise, especially for Cornell Drive that give a few of the promised benefits for park connectivity, safety, quiet, increased landscape and nature, and reduction of pollution while helping traffic. But I have not seen any so far that much do so, especially “narrowing,” and even some kind of lowering/ tunnel, the latter greatly increasing cost and time delay and being risky to hydrology close to the lagoon natural area. I give credence to CDOT’s experience on the ground and their expertise and professionalism rather than to a review commissioned by a group seeking to bolster a point of view. Whether or not the Center can or would go forward keeping Cornell is irrelevant. In any case, I prefer big plans (bold or at least optimizing) over least-you-can-get-away-with.

I also support the plans for the replacement Track and Field.