



Chicago Park District

Legislation Text

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REQUEST TO OFFICIALLY NAME COLUMBIA BEACH PARK IN HONOR OF HELEN DORIA

To the Honorable Board of Commissioners of the Chicago Park District

I. Recommendation

It is recommended that an order be entered authorizing the General Superintendent or his designee to officially name Columbia Beach Park in honor of Helen Doria.

II. Park Naming Information

Proposed Park: Columbia Beach Park, Park #1251
Location: 1041 W. Columbia Ave. Chicago, IL. 60626
Community Area: 1- Rogers Park
Ward: 49
Proposed Name: Helen Doria Beach Park

III. Park Naming Procedures

Pursuant to Chapter VII, Section E (1) of the Code of the Chicago Park District, this request to name Park Pratt Beach Park was forwarded to the Secretary of the Chicago Park District, who filed a copy of this request with the Committee on Programs and Recreation and initiated a notice period to solicit public input. Notices were posted in parks and sent to advisory councils located within a one-mile radius of the park site. Elected officials were also notified of the proposal, including the alderman of the ward in which the park is located.

The notice period of forty-five (45) days soliciting public input regarding the naming proposal was initiated on February 16, 2016. There has been positive support for this proposal from the Loyola Park Advisory Council and Alderman Joe Moore of the 49th Ward, as well as Congressman Jan Schakowsky, Cook County Clerk David Orr, and Chicago Public Schools CEO (and former CPD General Superintendent) Forrest Claypool; and the Rogers Park Neighbors. Since the notice was posted, the Chicago Park District also received support for this proposal from the Rogers Park/ West Ridge Historical Society, the Young Women's Leadership Charter School of Chicago, and numerous individuals including Marj Halperin, Harriet Russell, Earl Manesky, Tony Karman, Randy Mehrberg, Alison Zehr, and Katy Donlon.

The Chicago Park District has received one letter objecting to the naming proposal. The objector is a West Columbia Ave. resident, who previously requested naming the park for a family member. District staff determined that the proposed individual did not meet the naming criteria set forth in Chapter VII, Section E of the Code of the Chicago Park District. Subsequently, the family installed an honorary bench and received an honorary street name for the proposed individual from the City of Chicago.

IV. Explanation

Helen Doria (1951 - 2012) was a dynamic cultural leader who spent decades enriching Chicago with strong cultural programs that unified individuals, groups, and neighborhoods throughout the city. The oldest of eight children, Helen was born in Chicago and grew up on the Southwest Side. After receiving a bachelor's degree in political science and history from Mundelein College in Chicago in 1973, she began her professional career as a grass root activist in the Rogers Park neighborhood. While working as an aide to then 49th Ward Alderman David Orr, she worked with the Chicago Park District to acquire the Berger Park mansions and develop the site as a Cultural Center Park. She went on to work for the City of Chicago's Department of Special Events and Department of Cultural Affairs, spearheading such initiatives as the Sister City's program. She then joined the staff of the Chicago Park District and brought new life to the district's cultural programming. Her rich cultural art legacy includes establishing the arts partners in residency program in park field houses, creating mini-festivals that introduced thousands of Chicagoans to the varied cultures in their own neighborhoods, and bringing excellent arts programming such as theater, music, dance, and visual arts to park patrons throughout the

city.

In 2004, Helen Doria became the first Executive Director of Millennium Park and is widely recognized for making the new park an exciting and democratic space for all Chicagoans with a broad array of activities and offerings as well as an attractive destination place for tourists and visitors. She was instrumental in initiating the *Made in Chicago: World Class Concert Series* that continues to thrive in Millennium Park. From 2008 to the end of her life, Helen served as a consultant on arts, culture and public spaces, taking a lead role in development of the 606 and working with businesses, not-for-profit organizations and governmental agencies to make the arts an accessible part of urban life. Even through her final illness, she served as an active member of the Board of Directors of the Young Women's Leadership Charter School, working to share her hopes for Chicago with a new generation of creative activists. She received many honors during her life and since her death including the creation of the Helen Doria Arts in the Park Award from the Illinois Association of Park Districts. Helen was a creative, talented leader who believed that arts and culture are a basic human right. She inspired many people in and beyond Chicago, and her legacy will endure. Because of the many years in which she lived and worked on the North Side of Chicago, renaming Columbia Beach Park in her honor is especially appropriate.