



Chicago Park District

Legislation Text

File #: 15-2210-0114, **Version:** 1

REQUEST TO OFFICIALLY RENAME JARVIS BEACH PARK IN HONOR OF MARION MAHONY GRIFFIN

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 Jarvis Beach Park in honor of Marion Mahony Griffin.

II. Park Naming Information

Park or feature: Jarvis Beach Park (Park #1257)

Location: 1208 W. Jarvis, Chicago, 60626

Community Area: Rogers Park

Ward: #49

Proposed Name: Marion Mahony Griffin Beach Park

III. Park Naming Procedures

Pursuant to Chapter VII, Section E (1) of the Code of the Chicago Park District, this request to rename Jarvis 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 November 13, 2014.. There has been positive support for this proposal from the Rogers Park/ West Ridge Historical Society, the Australian Consulate-General; the American Institute of Architects - Chicago, the Chicago Area Women's History Council, the Walter Burley Griffin Society, numerous community members as well as Alderman Joe Moore of the 49th Ward. Staff recommends that the Board approve the request to rename Jarvis Beach Park as Marion Mahony Griffin Beach Park.

IV. Explanation

Described by the *New York Times* as "Heroine of Chicago Architecture," Marion Mahony Griffin (1871-1961) was one of the city's earliest and most significant women architects. Born in Chicago and raised in Winnetka, Illinois, Marion Mahony received a degree in architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1894 and began her career in office of her cousin, Prairie School architect Dwight Heald Perkins. The following year, she went to work for Frank Lloyd Wright, soon playing important role in his office. In addition to participating in the design of some of Wright's most significant commissions, Marion Mahony produced exquisite drawings that wove architecture and nature together in a unique way. These renderings, helped Wright attract new clients and to achieve fame. When Wright abruptly abandoned his studio in 1909, Marion Mahony was in charge of completing several of his unfinished architectural commissions.

In 1911, Marion Mahony married another successful Prairie School architect, Walter Burley Griffin. Marion and Walter began practicing together, and soon entered a competition to design Australia's new capital, Canberra. Marion Mahony Griffin produced extraordinary renderings for their submission. The couple won first prize and moved to Australia in 1914 where they helped oversee

the execution of the Canberra Plan and also received many other commissions to design architecture throughout the country.

In the late 1930s, the Griffins moved to India and continued practicing architecture together. When Walter Burley Griffin died suddenly in 1937, Marion returned briefly to Australia, but then decided to come home to Chicago. She lived at 1946 W. Estes for the remainder of her life. During these years, Marion Mahony Griffin continued practicing architecture and also wrote a beautifully illustrated memoir entitled “Magic of America.” Among extant examples of Marion Mahony Griffin’s work in Chicago is a two panel mural in Armstrong School, a public elementary school in the West Rogers Park community. (Marion’s sister worked at Armstrong School as a teacher). Recently conserved, the mural, which depicts fairies feeding herons, was featured in an exhibit and book presented by the Block Museum at Northwestern University entitled: “Marion Mahony Griffin: Drawing the Form of Nature.”

In 2014, Australians celebrated the centennial of their capital, Canberra, and local efforts served to remind Chicagoans of the important connection between our city and theirs. Naming a park in honor of Marion Mahony Griffin is not only a meaningful commemoration of this relationship, but an opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of one of the nation’s most talented and significant architects.

Jarvis Beach Park is considered a candidate for renaming because the site was named for the street rather than the historical figure, and the street name will continue to honor R.J. Jarvis. (Little historical information has been uncovered relating to Jarvis, and he is not considered an important figure in Rogers Park history.) Marion Mahony Griffin lived approximately 1 ½ miles away from Jarvis Beach Park, and the naming will have significance to the Rogers Park community and the city of Chicago, as well as the nation and the world.