



# Chicago Park District

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 15-2211-0114, **Version:** 1

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### **REQUEST TO OFFICIALLY NAME PARK #553 AS LA VILLITA PARK**

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 [LOCATION] in honor of [NAME].

#### **II. Park Naming Information**

Park: Park #553

Location: 2800 S. Sacramento Ave., Chicago 60608

Community Area: South Lawndale

Ward: #12

Proposed Name: La Villita 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 #552 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 Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO) as well as 12<sup>th</sup> Ward Alderman George Cardenas and many community members.. Staff recommends that the Board approve the request to name Park #553 as La Villita Park.

#### **IV. Explanation**

Along with other elected officials, Mayor Rahm Emanuel dedicated Park #553 on December 14, 2014. The impressive 21.42-acre new park is located in the Little Village neighborhood of the South Lawndale Community. It was a former brownfield called Celotex in reference to one of the former industrial companies that polluted and degraded the site. Designated by the EPA as a Superfund site, the property went through remediation. This process was completed in 2009 and the Chicago Park District acquired the site in 2012.

The Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO) had advocated for cleaning up this site and converting it to parkland. The Chicago Park District worked closely with LVEJO and Little Village community members to develop plans for the new park. Designed by Smith Group JJR the \$ 18,920,000 park (including acquisition costs) has two artificial turf athletic fields with lighting; three natural grass athletic fields; a skate park; basketball courts; community gardens; passive landscape areas; a large playground with a water spray feature; a picnic pavilion; comfort stations with concessions; a multi-use trail with fitness stations; and environmentally-friendly utilities.

The new park is extremely significant to the surrounding Little Village neighborhood. Not only does this area have one of the highest needs for open space in Chicago, but its residents long-contended with the negative consequences of living near a polluted site.

LVEJO provided a very democratic and inclusive process to identify an appropriate name for the new park. The organization discussed possible names at several community meetings and then engaged more than 700 residents in an on-line survey. The result of this process was strong consensus for naming Park #553 as La Villita Park. The name recognizes the vitality of one of Chicago's great immigrant neighborhoods. For decades, Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans have made great cultural and economic contributions to Little Village and the city of Chicago.