

June 14, 2019

Ms. Rika Yoshida
President, Board of Trustees
Francis W. Parker School
330 W Webster Ave
Chicago, IL 60614

Dear Ms. Yoshida,

We are writing as community members who are committed to protecting the integrity and historic fabric of our neighborhood in response to repeated attempts by Francis W. Parker School to purchase neighboring vintage residential buildings. We are opposed to these advances, as they would produce long-lasting, negative consequences for our shared community. An expansion would break up the long-established residential nature of the 300 block of W. Belden and adjacent private and public properties by significantly altering its low-rise residential character, disrupting long-term community residents and establishing a precedent that raises uncertainty for future land uses and property values. Thus, we are asking Parker to stop pursuing our buildings, which is not in the best interest of the neighborhood as a whole.

We are aware that Parker has engaged with several adjacent buildings in processes to purchase properties without the consent of their governing bodies. Most recently we learned that Parker has been negotiating with individuals to purchase 317-325 W. Belden Ave (a 1916 building with 19 residential units) through a process that advanced over many months without the knowledge of the majority of its residents or board. Parker's offer to buy the building has divided residents and alarmed those owners who have no wish to be displaced. This follows on the heels of an overture by Parker to purchase 327-333 W. Belden (with 15 residential units) in early 2019 and a bid to purchase the Shakespeare Building (with 24 residential units) in 2013. With these actions, Parker is creating ongoing disruption in its neighboring community and causing market uncertainty; moreover, these actions are in opposition to Parker's stated core value of doing "everything to help, nothing to hinder."

We are members of this decades-old, settled residential community. We live here 365 days a year, 7 days a week, and 24 hours a day. We are full-time residents, stakeholders, and caretakers of this neighborhood, and we pay taxes to help improve the condition of our neighborhood and our city. We are raising our children here (who include many Parker students) and we are planning for their futures in our shared community. Parker's repeated attempts to purchase our homes and our adjoining properties creates upheaval for the entire community. We are confident that Parker can develop needed facilities to serve its academic interests within its ample footprint, without displacing neighboring residents who are intent to live in their homes for decades to come.

We are concerned about the potential impact of redeveloping these properties, which would ripple well beyond the adjacent buildings and properties and residents to many more in the area, especially those under the jurisdiction of the Chicago Lakefront Protection Ordinance. We are concerned about the long-term impact of added vehicle and pedestrian

traffic, the loss of residential neighbors, and the cost to taxpayers of new and upgraded public water and sewer and street/sidewalk infrastructure which such redevelopment would require.

We feel that this West Belden block is a unique cultural asset, as reflected in recent discussions of designation as a landmark district, and it is the gateway to Lincoln Park, the Conservatory and Lincoln Park Zoo, public institutions that bring recreational activity and commerce from all corners of the city and around the country. We are concerned that the Parker precedent would destabilize the architectural fabric of a neighborhood with significant historic value and suggests that other buildings on the block could also come under threat.

Institutional redevelopment would not only unsettle an established residential community, but would also decrease the inventory of family-sized apartments in Lincoln Park. A loss of residential units would negatively impact the neighborhood by reducing foot traffic at local businesses, and having fewer neighbors would likely increase criminal activity by reducing the number of eyes on the street, in particular during evenings and weekends.

In short, we believe that the purchase and redevelopment of established, low-profile, lakefront residential properties for tax-exempt institutional purposes would be detrimental to the long-term interests of the neighborhood and the city as a whole. We are intent on preserving the residential use of 317-325 W. Belden, 327-333 W. Belden, the Shakespeare Building, and other adjacent properties to protect our property values, maintain our city's tax base, and preserve the vintage residential fabric of East and Mid-North Lincoln Park.

We are encouraged that this issue is now in public view, and we look forward to increasing engagement and discussion with Parker about its vision for the future of our shared community.

Your neighbors,

[Redacted signature block]

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cc:
Dan Frank, Principal, Francis W. Parker School
Michele Smith, Alderman, 43rd Ward
Ward Miller, Executive Director, Preservation Chicago
Mary Lu Seidel, Director of Community Engagement, Preservation Chicago
Eleanor Gorski, Interim Commissioner of the Department of Planning and Development
Melissa Macek, President, Mid-North Association
Heather McMillan Hoepfner, Chair, Francis W. Parker Neighbors Committee
Sheila Pacione, Director of Constituent Services and Infrastructure, 43rd Ward