

## Statement of East Lincoln Park Neighbors

### Francis Parker Neighbors meeting

January 16, 2020

East Lincoln Park Neighbors represents, and is committed to protecting the interests, of our community. We recognize that the Francis Parker School is a wealthy, private enterprise located within our community, but note that the over 900 students come from 53 different zip codes in Chicago. Consequently, while the institution may be here, the Francis Parker community may only be here 9-10 months a year for fewer than 12 hours a day. Despite this actuality, over the years, Francis Parker has taken quite a bit from this community. For example:

- closing Grant Place, a public right of way
- zoning variances to fully build out its own north property line without a set back
- 450 feet of daily parking restrictions
- regular blocking of traffic, driveways and alleys on Lincoln Park West, Webster and Belden

Francis Parker's attempts to acquire buildings on Belden raises critical questions about what Francis Parker has given back to this community. The specter of destroying the residential neighborhood begs the question as to how this activity will contribute to the community's best interests. We know that Francis Parker's plans serve their interests, but how will they contribute to the public good? After all Alderman Smith, you are a public servant and this issue must be a critical one in factoring in support for any proposed changes to the neighborhood fabric. To further underscore this point - managing land that serves as the gateway to Lincoln Park not just for this community, but the whole of Chicago and its many visitors is a civic responsibility. Allowing such land to be taken and used solely for a purpose that serves a very small, but grossly wealthy group could be seen as a breach of that responsibility. Francis Parker's expansion onto Belden is a red line that cannot be crossed, because there is no demonstrable positive public benefit and very real public harms.

In destroying the residential fabric of East Lincoln Park, Francis Parker is directly forcing people from their homes, as well as collaborating with unprincipled and conflicted parties. Recent letters from Francis Parker to the community are purposefully misleading and factually inaccurate. East Lincoln Park Neighbors demand the record show that Parker did **NOT** only buy units from people who approached them. **They bought the first two units by stealth** – in their own words which they may now regret, but have been recorded twice —“**under the cover of night.**” Parker used an opaque arrangement, so no one could discern the acquisitions were associated with Parker because – again in their own words -- they “**did not want anyone to know Parker was buying the apartments.**”

At the same time, Parker touts a false narrative, distilling misinformation to Parker board members, families, and the community. Parker knew and has admitted in prior public forums that they knew that the representatives approaching them were not doing so because they had been empowered by the buildings' residents collectively. In fact, Parker has actively worked to drive a wedge within these buildings to CREATE the opportunity to isolate homeowners not aligned with their agenda. Simply put, Parker has been actively trying to buy these buildings and are hiding behind smoke screens. For example, in its recent offer to 317-325 Belden, Parker has put a metaphorical gun to owners heads to

sign, essentially making it impossible for any dissenting voice to emerge without significant consequences. Does this approach reflect an entity that is just being passive or opportunistic?

The Neighbors demand that Parker Board and Administration finally admit what they have been doing. Anyone doubting these events can find a complete timeline and documents on East Lincoln Park Neighbors website.

It is long past time for FWP to act like the community member it professes to be. To that end, we respectfully demand that FWP engage with the neighbors in meaningful discussion of its actions and plans, which affect our community and the City so profoundly. We request the following:

1. Stop acquisitions and discussions of acquisitions, including the takeover and deconversion of 317-325 W. Belden Ave.
2. Stop the false narrative suggesting this behavior was invited, is welcomed and beneficial for the public good. What is the public benefit?
3. Engage in a real community meeting across Lincoln Park and the Mid-North Association to find a publicly acceptable solution to what is fundamentally a wealthy private enterprise's wishes, not their problems.
4. Stop breaching the agreement between Francis Parker School and Francis Parker Neighbors. We formally request Alderman Smith immediately assist FPN in remedying this breach that is harming this community.

There is no public good that comes from a wealthy, private enterprise displacing the fabric of a residential community. Francis Parker's continued actions disrespect tax-paying citizens, whose tax dollars support them and effectively subsidize their existing 6 acres; and residents who have every right to live peacefully in their homes. Francis Parker still has an opportunity to do the right thing.

Respectfully,

East Lincoln Park Neighbors