

December 5, 2022

Dear Governor Pritzker:

As you said during the signing of the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, “As of today, Illinois is a force for good, for an environmental future we can be proud of.” To make this future a reality, we must choose each step forward with equity and environmental justice in mind. We - the undersigned representatives of communities along the Chicago River’s South Branch and supporting advocacy organizations - want to be a part of this future. Accordingly, we are confused and concerned by the state’s decision to sell the 23-acre site along the South Branch of the Chicago River known as the Damen Silos to MAT Limited Partnership.

Simply put, **the sale of public land deserves public comment.** We seek to ensure transparency in public land transactions and to preserve as much riverfront property as possible for public benefit.

We are disappointed that this sale process has been conducted with no qualitative review of plans for the site and no community input. **Failure to engage community stakeholders is a social and environmental justice issue** for communities like ours, who face historical inequities and will be directly impacted by development on this site for generations to come.

Furthermore, the state’s sale to MAT Limited Partnership ignores planning efforts already in place to protect the river and our surrounding neighborhoods of McKinley Park, Pilsen, Brighton Park, La Villita/Little Village, and Bridgeport. We ask the state to respect the work done by Chicago communities by considering existing plans and frameworks in the development of this site, none of which are consistent with the proposed sale.

**We join with the many community and environmental groups asking the state to halt the sale of the Damen Silos to MAT Limited Partnership.** Since the state’s current policy does not allow for public involvement, it is in the public’s best interest for the state to sell or transfer the Damen Silos to the City of Chicago. The city can then work with the community to transform this site into a community asset providing local residents with opportunities for recreation, education, active transportation, and more – all designed in alignment with existing community development plans and riverfront protections.

Moving forward, every community should have a say in the sale and use of its public lands. **The State of Illinois must change its procedures** and adopt a model such as the Chicago Department of Planning and Development’s Request for Proposal process under Invest South/West. The city’s process includes neighborhood stakeholders from start to finish. It builds community input into shaping requirements and vetting proposals. It also requires public officials and would-be developers to field real face-to-face and written public comments prior to sales of public property.

We appreciate your consideration in this matter. We look forward to working with you to protect the South Branch of our river and the communities that line its banks.

Sincerely,

Kate Eakin  
McKinley Park Development Council

Liz Gres  
McKinley Park Mutual Aid

Charlotte Piwowar  
Bridgeport Alliance

Kim Wasserman  
Little Village Environmental Justice Organization

Alfredo Romo  
Neighbors for Environmental Justice (N4EJ)

Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger  
Friends of the Parks

Jim Merrell  
Active Transportation Alliance

Theresa McNamara  
Southwest Environmental Alliance

Byron Sigcho-Lopez  
25th Ward Alderman

Julia Ramirez  
Candidate for 12th Ward Alderperson