

NewsBriefs

Differing views on Maggie Daley Park restaurant

A new restaurant slated for development in Maggie Daley Park is drawing opposing reactions from two groups that support Chicago parks.

Friends of the Parks opposes the restaurant, citing conflict with the Lakefront Protection Ordinance (LPO). The Grant Park Conservancy favors the restaurant, based on positive feedback at public meetings.

Maggie Daley Park, opened in December 2014, is an activity-focused area within Grant Park featuring a three-acre play garden, rock climbing structures, and an ice skating ribbon. The park-within-a-park is bordered by Columbus Drive, Randolph Street, Monroe Street, and Lake Shore Drive.

Officials expect the restaurant to open at the south end of the park in spring 2016.

"Many of the benefits that the lakefront provides us are available today because of early Chicagoans who fought to ensure that the lake was available to all citizens," Friends of the Parks director of policy Melanie L. Moore said.

"While we have supported Maggie Daley Park previously, we have concerns about the restaurant's footprint, appearance from Monroe Street, and impact on the park," Moore added.

"Policy #5 of the Lakefront Protection Ordinance states: 'Maintain and improve the formal character and open water vista of Grant Park with no new above-ground structures permitted.' The open vista on Monroe Street will be blocked with the proposed glass structure," according to Moore.

Moore noted the LPO's stated purpose is "To insure that the Lakefront Parks...are devoted

only to public purposes and to insure the integrity of and expand the quantity and quality of the Lakeshore Parks."

"The rationale of the restaurant is to draw people from Maggie Daley Park to a private restaurant," Moore added. "While we do support the Park District having concessions available to the general public at this site, the scope of this project far exceeds what was originally presented to our organization."

These concerns did not arise at either of two public meetings hosted by the Grant Park Conservancy in January and February, according to GPC president Bob O'Neill.

"We went out to the public with two well attended meetings," said O'Neill, noting more than 200 people came to one of the meetings.

"We heard nothing but positive feedback and praise for it" [the restaurant], O'Neill added. "The innovative design is airy glass, built around mature existing trees. The sides open for indoor-outdoor dining in the park. It has a green roof—you can walk onto it—and it extends the park to Monroe. It will provide food service for all of Maggie Daley Park, to take food out to picnic in the park. It has lots of bathrooms. It's a place to go in winter as well.

"All in all, it brings an amenity," O'Neill said. "We are trying to get people to use the parks year-round, and it allows that. We're really big on green space, but we also want people to use it."

He added that private funds would pay for the building, with the operation generating revenue for the Chicago Park District.

The Park District Board of Commissioners in mid-January approved authorization to enter into a concession agreement with Four Corners Tavern Group to design, build, and operate

the restaurant; run a concession kiosk; and cater special events at Maggie Daley Park. Four Corners Tavern Group operates ten establishments, including Schoolyard Tavern, West End Bar, and Ranalli's.

"The operator was chosen pursuant to a publicly advertised notice," said Park District spokeswoman Jessica Maxey-Faulkner. "Maggie Daley Park is one of the Chicago Park District's newest premier parks. Such an amenity would serve as a benefit to visitors and a source of revenue to the Chicago Park District.

"The City of Chicago appreciates the feedback of the community and organizations including Friends of the Parks and takes into consideration their comments and suggestions," she added.

—Monica M. Walk

Hero Ed Kulbida named 12th Police District commander

No can say Edward Kulbida has not paid his dues.

The 30-year Chicago Police Department veteran and recent recipient of the Top Cop Award became the new commander of the Near West [12th] Police District on April 27. The National Association of Police Organizations presented the Top Cop Award to Kulbida after he was wounded in the line of duty last October.

One of seven newly promoted commanders recognized by Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Police Superintendent Garry F. McCarthy during a recent ceremony at Navy Pier, Kulbida previously served as captain of the Englewood District on the South Side.

McCarthy "called me into his office and he said, 'I'm promoting you. You're going to the 12th District.' And I said, 'Yes, sir,'" Kulbida said. "It's a great honor. He's put his confidence in me to

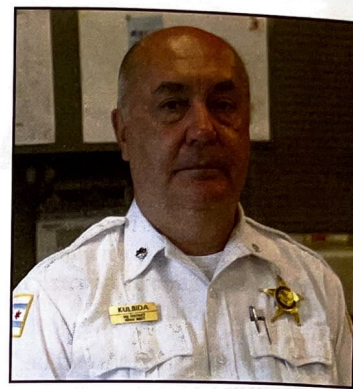


Photo by Troy Heinzerth

Edward Kulbida has been named 12th Police District Commander.

oversee an up-and-coming area, and I hope I'll be able to adapt and do a good job."

The Near West District is the city's largest, spanning eight communities and employing more than 500 officers. Kulbida anticipates primarily tending to citizen concerns regarding property and theft as opposed to the violent crimes that garnered much of his attention as an executive officer in Englewood.

"I've worked the streets, I know how to keep bad guys off the streets, and a bad guy's a bad guy, whether it be violent crime or crimes relating to property," Kulbida said. "You still need to know how to keep him off the streets."

It was on those streets that Kulbida was shot in the head and shoulder last October while aiding U.S. Marshals and the Chicago Police fugitive apprehension unit in the 7200 block of South Lowe Avenue in Englewood.

After a stint in the hospital, physical therapy, and counseling, Kulbida returned to duty in December. He expressed cautious optimism that his new role will make it unlikely a similar event will occur in the future.

"You never know," he said. "You assume that it'll be safer, but you just never know what's going to happen to you when you take