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Statement to Chicago Plan Commission May 15, 2008

The League of Women Voters of Chicago is opposed to the construction of the Chicago Children's Museum in Grant Park. Our opposition to this proposed site is based on positions that our members have confirmed many times. We believe that the parks should be used for public recreation only, consistent with and enhancing the aesthetic quality of the parks. Buildings should be kept to a minimum. Plans for the parks should ensure adequate pedestrian access to the parks and lakefront and leave the lakefront free of obstacles such as buildings and roads that would interfere with the open lakefront.

Grant Park should remain a public ground, open and available to the public. It should not be whittled away for private use. It is important that Grant Park provide residents and visitors a variety of experiences. These experiences should include open space available for reflection and rest. The proposed Children's Museum with its skylights would insert a building into the park with obstacles that would impair the public's access to park space.

Today much of Grant Park is filled with activity. Millennium Park draws millions of visitors each year. The Pritzker Pavilion is the scene of concerts and performances. The Gospel, Blues and Jazz Fests take place in Grant Park and for ten days each summer the *Taste of Chicago* draws a million people to Grant Park. There are ball fields and tennis courts as well. All these activities are available to the public at no entrance charge. The proposed location for the Children's Museum conflicts with public space. It does so through admittance fees and through funding its construction by soliciting funds in exchange for naming rights.

Locating the Chicago Children's Museum in Grant Park will, inevitably, lead to prolonged and costly litigation. A century ago the Illinois Supreme Court affirmed the mandate that Grant Park remain clear of buildings and obstructions. The League of Women Voters of Chicago urges the Chicago Park District and the City of Chicago to recognize their obligation to comply with settled law and deny permission to relocate the Children's Museum in Grant Park.

Therefore, we urge the Plan Commission to reject the proposed site for the Children's Museum in Grant Park.