

New dog-friendly area unveiled in Grant Park; \$55,000 raised to date

By Marie Balice Ward

South Loop Neighbors, the South Loop DogPAC, and the Grand Park Advisory Council recently sponsored a community gathering to unveil the new site for the Grant Park dog-friendly area. Those attending overwhelmingly approved the new site.

The dog-friendly area now will be located next to the tennis courts and west of the 9th Street service buildings; the previously planned site was at Roosevelt Road and closer to Michigan Avenue. Dog owners will be able to access the new location via the 11th Street Bridge, and a possible future entrance would be from Balbo Avenue.

The change was needed, explained Bob O'Neill, president of the Grant Park Advisory Council and Grant Park Conservancy, because the Framework Plan for Grant Park is moving along more quickly than anticipated and the previous site for the dog-friendly area is designated for a different use under the plan.

Lara Khoury, director of dog-friendly developments for the Chicago Park District, said the new

area already has infrastructure in place and consequently will cost much less to develop. "The original site would have needed to be trenched, which would have added considerably to the cost," Khoury said, adding that the new site offers another advantage because it can be completed more quickly.

The space will be known as "Grant Bark Park," said Gail Merritt, chair, DogPAC. The price tag is \$150,000, and the community must contribute half the cost, with the Chicago Park District absorbing the remainder. Merritt said \$55,000 has been raised since the plans were approved about 17 months ago.

Bricks that community residents, dog owners, and others have purchased as part of the Grant Bark Park's fundraising campaign will be incorporated into the park's design, Merritt explained. Also, Khoury noted lighting will be included for safety, saying, "dog parks make areas safer for everyone."

The design will be completed once the parks superintendent approves the plan and should "take between six weeks to two months," Khoury added.