

November 7, 2013
RE: Letter of Support for City of Blue Island
Michael Davidson
Senior Program Officer for Sustainable Development
The Chicago Community Trust
225 N Michigan Avenue, Suite 2200
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Mr. Davidson,

I am very happy to be writing to you expressing my significant support for the City of Blue Island's proposal to study the feasibility of an Intercollegiate Rowing Center and Marina at Fay's Point. Rowing has been a competitive sport for centuries. It was one of the original sports in the first modern Olympic Games, it was the first intercollegiate sport in the United States, and it is easily one of the fastest growing sports in the country today. In the last decade, the sport has evolved into a multimillion dollar industry that has a diverse following that come from, quite literally, every segment of society.

The Cal-Sag Channel is uniquely suited to high-level rowing competitions and Blue Island has successfully hosted a number competitive rowing events in the past. I was able to see this first hand when I assisted with the rowing specific race operations at some of the events, which included race timing and results. I can tell that Blue Island is a perfect location for this sort of rowing development.

In addition to hosting races recently, the Cal-Sag Channel has a history of elite events as well. It was the rowing venue for the 3rd Pan Am Games which were held August to September of 1959. And from the Pan Am Games came most notably, Harvard's late and long-time head men's rowing coach, Harry Parker, had his only personal international win at that race on the Cal-Sag, a gold in the men's single sculls. The Cal-Sag and Blue Island have demonstrated an ability to host successfully host large regattas. But more importantly, the location at Fay's Point is perfect for the development of a community rowing club.

A rowing facility at Fay's point would be the home for any newly founded community rowing programs. This would include new youth and high school teams, new college age programs for local institutions and universities, as well as a community program for adults and adaptive athletes.

The proposed feasibility study would investigate the demand for rowing as well as other valuable sports like kayaking, canoeing, and dragon boating. It would be very valuable to have an evaluation of the site's suitability, to be able to identify the various land use and transportation issues, to study costs and management opportunities with already existing rowing and paddling companies, as well as to convene a working group of Millennium Reserve Steering Committee partners dedicated to assisting Blue Island and its partners.

Here is a short list of the benefits of competitive alternative sports like rowing and paddling:

- Sports like rowing and paddling provide a healthy recreational activity for literally every segment of society and for virtually all ages.
- These sports are safe, healthy, and provide access to the outdoors both recreationally and competitively.
- These sports offer new and unique year-round athletic opportunities as well as summer camp options for youth.
- People learn by example. Student athletes can help to introduce their family members to alternative sports like rowing and paddling.
- These sports provide an opportunity for youth to participate in the same activity as their parents, including the ability to participate in the same competitions.
- Rowing and paddling are all adaptive sports, providing equal access to athletes with disabilities, as well as utilizing the same facilities as athletes with full mobility.
- These sports provide an opportunity for community outreach, with proven successes demonstrated in the Chicago Training Center, who provides at-risk youth with access to rowing; Recovery on Water, who provides access to rowing for breast cancer survivors; and the Chicago Rowing Union, who created an all-inclusive rowing program for Chicago's LGBT Community.
- Title IX provides unique opportunities for female student athletes in college, with possible full athletic scholarships available.
- Alternative Sports like rowing and paddling exposes youth to new perspective on competition by allowing them to travel to destination events.
- Providing an opportunity to compete on a national level, exposing their talents to recruitment for college athletics.
- Organizing bodies like the Big 10 and the NCAA seek reliable venues and locations for annual events that have the potential to draw a significant amount of focus to a region.

I will commit to work with the City of Blue Island in any capacity needed in order to make a rowing venue at Fay's point a reality. I am able to bring together rowing planners, participants, private partners, potential donors, and enthusiasts, in order to make sure sports like rowing, paddling and dragon boating can have a permanent home in Blue Island.

Blue Island has been an active participant in regional initiatives, including the Millennium Reserve Calumet Core, which I am also heavily involved personally. I endorse their proposal to study the feasibility of a rowing center and boat house marina and will dedicate anything to ensure I and my partners are able to help play a committed and active role in this development.

Thanks for your time. Please feel free to contact me at anytime.

Sincerely,

Mark Carroll
Rowing Group