



Ald. Tom Tunney and Ald. Jason Ervin, Co-Chairs
Special Committee on the Chicago Casino
City Hall
121 N LaSalle St
Chicago, IL 60602

2545 W. Diversey Avenue
Suite 225
Chicago, IL 60647
(773) 929-5552

May 4, 2022

RE: Proposed Casino at Chicago Tribune Site

Dear Ald. Tunney and Ald. Ervin:

North Branch Works (NBW) is a membership-supported nonprofit organization that for forty years has promoted balanced, job-creating economic development along the North Branch of the Chicago River. We are also a City of Chicago “delegate agency” providing an array of support services to local businesses through the Local Industrial Retention Initiative and Neighborhood Business Development Center programs.

The North Branch Industrial Corridor is home to dozens of manufacturing and industrial firms including WaterSaver Faucets, Guardian Systems, Prairie Materials, Bigane Paving, Ogden Avenue Materials, as well as the forthcoming Pilot Plant at Mars Wrigley. These firms have provided high-quality, family sustaining employment opportunities for thousands of Chicagoans. NBW would prefer to see the proposed Bally casino site used to support compatible uses in the area including advanced manufacturing or research within the growing life sciences and tech sectors, uses that would directly complement existing research hubs and incubators such as MxD and mHUB.

If the administration and City Council do select the Chicago Tribune site for the proposed casino, they would introduce an entertainment complex into a busy industrial corridor. The administration should therefore commit to protecting and supporting existing employers. This may include freezing property taxes to mitigate the casino entertainment district’s tendency to push up adjoining property assessments, enacting a moratorium on nuisance complaints which may occur as different uses are placed in close proximity, and committing to improving and maintaining infrastructure which supports the industrial firms and a healthy river ecosystem.

NBW has met with all stakeholders including administration officials, neighborhood groups in the area immediately surrounding the Tribune site, and senior officials from Bally’s Casino. If the Tribune site is chosen for the casino, I have no doubt that we will be able to work in partnership with all stakeholders to ensure the project minimizes its impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods and industrial firms while mitigating all of the concerns local groups raised including traffic congestion.

In addition, NBW would advocate for an amendment to PD 1426 eliminating residential uses in the area. Even if the heaviest usage is expected off-hours to office and residential uses, the casino and hotel will

undoubtedly increase traffic. Adding more residential would overburden the area. Only by eliminating residential can the area adjoining Halsted and Chicago avenues sustain the proposed uses.

It is expected that the casino and hotel project will create 2,000 permanent jobs and 3,000 construction jobs. The Bally's Casino team is committed to hiring locally, and we expect the administration to track that outcome. We stand ready to work with their team to bring good job opportunities to all Chicagoans.

Since 1982 North Branch Works has supported Near North Side manufacturing firms. The proposed Bally's Casino and Hotel would have a significant impact on this important business corridor. We will work with all our partners to ensure the success of new use, and we remain committed to growing the industrial sector firms in the surrounding area. The administration must not choose one economic sector at the expense of the other.

We look forward to working with you in the best interests of the community and of the City.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Snyder
Executive Director

cc: Mayor Lori Lightfoot
Deputy Mayor Samir Mayekar
Commissioner Maurice Cox, Department of Planning and Development
Ald. Walter Burnett, 27th Ward
Ald. Brendan Reilly, 42nd Ward
Friends of the Chicago River
Near North Unity Program
Neighbors of River West
River North Neighborhood Association