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Dear Neighbor,

My name is Stephen "Andy" Schneider. I am President of Logan Square Preservation, a writer, a father, a husband, a real estate professional, and a proud progressive Democrat.

I'm writing to you because I am running for Alderperson in the new 1st Ward and I want to explain why I am running and ask for your support in the February 28, 2023 Municipal Elections. While I am knocking on doors to engage with voters in person, I hope this letter effectively conveys what is at stake in our community. If you would like more information or have questions, please visit our website www.andyforall.com, email me at andyschneiderforall@gmail.com, or text me directly on my personal cell phone (312) 330-2083. I would love to hear from you.

I am challenging incumbent Alderperson Daniel LaSpata. Like many, I supported Daniel four years ago but also, like many, I have been disappointed. The last two Alderpersons of the 1st Ward have pursued their personal agendas and ignored or silenced other voices. I know from my history organizing that listening to all in our community and working to build consensus is what delivers better outcomes for all of us. That's what our communities deserve. That's why I'm running.

To be clear, Daniel and I share the same progressive values and most (but not all) policy positions. But an Alderperson has two critical jobs that are necessary to improve the lives of the residents of the ward. They must be leaders on the City Council advocating for progressive legislation and a budget that reflects progressive priorities. We share that concern. They must also work to truly engage and organize in the ward not only to bring people together for the goal of civic engagement, but to ensure our neighbors are heard and respected. That has not happened in the 1st Ward, and our approaches to leadership will be profoundly different.

Robust civic engagement has intrinsic value, but it has so much more. Our ward is vibrant, diverse, and full of active and engaged community members. There is incredible talent and vision, rich artistic and cultural institutions, but also anxiety and sometimes fear among our neighbors. If we are effectively going to address our shared concerns, we must do it together as a community. I've seen the value in these robust processes. Sometimes elected officials believe they understand the solutions best and don't need to hear from residents. I know that is not true.

My personal story

I live with my wife of 14 years, Katie, and we are raising our three children in a two-flat in Logan Square. Like so many in our community, we love being part of a diverse neighborhood where people live side by side as friends and neighbors. Whether their families go back generations, or just recently made the city

their home, we share the same values and the same concerns, and actively work to improve things for ourselves and our neighbors.

My father was a coal-mining engineer, and I grew up in various towns and cities across the country, moving as mines closed. We ended up in Park Ridge and I attended Maine South High School and then the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

I moved to Logan Square shortly after graduating and quickly became an engaged member of the community, organizing Logan Square Preservation's annual House and Garden Walk, working on zoning and development reviews, while also helping with tree planting and neighborhood clean-ups. It was this community involvement that sparked my passion for Chicago history and architecture.

I spent ten years as a full-time reporter at both the Sun-Times Group and later leading the editorial department of a group of independent suburban weeklies. Working as a journalist amplified my concerns about ethics and transparency in government. I watched hundreds of elected officials change their ways because someone was there to document what they were doing. It left me committed to holding elected officials accountable in my work, and here in my community.

Since then, I have been the editor of Screen Magazine, a niche publication covering Chicago's film and commercial production industries. In this role I learned the opportunities and the challenges of small business in our city. I have also authored several books on Chicago-area political and architectural history.

I bought my home, a traditional Chicago two-flat, in 2011. Like many struggling new homeowners and first-time landlords, I learned the rudiments of carpentry, electric wiring, and dry walling. My interest in my community and in my building led me to join a real estate brokerage where I have extolled the virtues of our vintage multi-unit buildings and the unique role they have in the history of affordability and middle class mobility in our city.

[My record at Logan Square Preservation](#)

My work as a reporter showed me how much of an impact engaged residents can have in local government and that strengthened my resolve to do that here. The desire to positively impact the place I live led me to Logan Square Preservation where I learned the stories of so many of our neighbors and was able to apply what I had learned covering planning and development in my day job. It gave me a chance to advocate for better design in development and, as gentrification took hold, to advocate for greater affordability to preserve not only the buildings in our neighborhood, but also its people.

I've consistently stood up for our community as an advocate for affordability and preventing the far too frequent displacement of lower-income residents. I've helped negotiate with developers large and small on over 1,000 new housing units and was a leading advocate for the trailblazing Lucy Gonzalez Parsons Apartments on Emmett Street—an all-affordable housing development.

I have been a fierce advocate for safer streets, developing proposals for a bike and pedestrian priority network along the city's historic boulevard system. Among the first projects I championed was the installation of speed tables to slow traffic on Palmer Square. I was deeply involved with the safety-focused redesign of Logan Square's historic but dangerous traffic circle, sitting on the City's Project Steering ²

Committee and have advocated for the city to create a network of protected bike and pedestrian spaces on

the inner boulevards across the city.

I have been a champion of public space and recreation. I helped secure state funds and city approval for a new “Food Truck Triangle” on a formerly blighted city-owned parcel near Milwaukee Avenue. I successfully secured approval for city funding to refurbish an underutilized gym and classroom annex at Grace Church to offer expanded programming and community space together with nearby Unity Park.

I successfully secured a new public park and saved a historic synagogue building when the local Boys & Girls Club decided to close, all at no cost to the neighborhood or taxpayers.

I led a fight against illegal billboards that were blighting a significant building and negatively impacting the center of historic Logan Square.

I have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to protect the culture and history of Chicago neighborhoods to develop historic exhibits, save the historic bell at St. John Berchmans, restore the stained-glass windows in the Norwegian Lutheran Memorial Church (Minnekirken) and the Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Dia Hispana on Logan Boulevard.

I’ve done this work for the same reason that so many others in our community are so deeply engaged— we love our neighborhoods, we care for our neighbors. We know that our community can do a better job improving the lives of all our residents.

[What is at stake in this race](#)

As I wrote above, our Alderpersons have two jobs: they are legislators in the City Council passing laws and advocating for better city budgets, and they are representatives of their constituents in their wards.

On matters of legislation, Daniel LaSpata and I agree on the importance of many City-wide policy issues. It is why I supported him in the last election.

- We agree on the importance of pedestrian and traffic safety.
- We agree that regular, reliable CTA service is a top priority.
- We agree on the importance of the environment, and I applaud the Alderman for his ordinance requiring the City funds to divest from fossil fuels.
- We agree on the need to have efficient and responsive City services.
- We agree on the need to have greater police accountability and greater investments in root causes of crime and violence, but we also need collaboration to develop a comprehensive strategy to address on-going public safety issues in the ward.

We agree on the need to have responsible development policies – an issue that is profoundly important in our fast-gentrifying neighborhoods – but we disagree on how to do it most effectively. Daniel has pushed for new construction of big developments, but this does not (and clearly has not) effectively addressed affordability concerns for our residents. I have advocated to protect existing and naturally affordable housing, opposing the tear-down culture in our neighborhoods.³

Where Alderman LaSpata disagree most profoundly, however, is the kind of leadership that most benefits

the residents of the 1st Ward.

Four years ago, the ward voted Daniel into office against then-incumbent Proco “Joe” Moreno. We had high hopes that Daniel would lead us away from the old ways of doing business and usher in truly participatory leadership.

I supported him in that race. I was one of the people most hopeful that we would have a better kind of local leadership. Instead, Daniel has made his decisions on his own and refuses to engage the community in decision-making. We see vibrant community engagement in wards across the city where progressive leaders have instituted these processes. We deserve that here as well.

I know we can have both progressive leadership on the Council and robust community engagement. I’ve seen it in other wards and I’ve led such processes for years. I have a demonstrated track record of listening to neighbors and fostering consensus. Many of those who disagreed with me in the past are among my biggest supporters now, because they have confidence in my ability to bring people together and work for the common good. That is what the job requires.

[When we build together, we build for the long term.](#)

If you’ve made it to the end of this letter, I know you care as much as I do about the kind of leadership we have in the 1st Ward. If you agree we deserve an Alderperson who can bring people together to strengthen the civic engagement in the ward and harness the talent and vision of our neighbors to achieve better outcomes, then I respectfully ask for your vote on February 28, 2023.

If elected, I will never abandon our shared progressive values. I will center community engagement and local concerns into all decision-making processes. I will make sure all our residents are able to reach me directly with any questions or concerns or needs for services.

That goes for our campaign, too. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me. Running for local office, at its core, is about service to the community. That is a value that I have lived, and I will always have an open door because I know the only way we can truly move our community forward is by doing it together.

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen 'Andy' Schneider". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephen “Andy” Schneider