

ROGERS PARK BUILDER

Fall 1999/WINTER 2000

RPBG Supports Plan to Convert Units in Howard North Area for Affordable Condos

At the November Board meeting the Rogers Park Builders Group voted unanimously to support a plan to convert two properties in the Howard North area to affordable condos.

At the meeting the Board heard presentations made by two well-established Chicago developers, Hispanic Housing Development Corp. and the Chicago Equity Fund (CEF).

Both plans would take advantage of the City's "New Homes for Chicago" program which reduces the purchase price of condos to qualified first time home buyers of limited income.

Under the plan, presented by Mark Kruse of Hispanic Housing, the firm would convert an occupied 22-unit building at 7732-42 N. Paulina into 22 two and three-bedroom condos designed to sell from \$42,000 to \$72,500. Speaking for CEF, President Bill Higginson, noted that the other building, a vacant 49-unit building at 7715-21 N. Hermitage, would be converted into 30 one and two-bedroom condos, selling for \$30,000 to \$104,000, depending on household income and the family size.

A key issue which remains undecided at this date is which of any of several sites could provide the parking required for the development. This is an issue which the developer, the City and the community are presently considering, but the action might be influenced by litigation pending between HUD and a tenants rights organization protesting the possible demolition of a dilapidated building on Jonquil.

The RPBG commends Ald. Moore for taking the lead in helping to put the plan on the table. According to the Alderman, residents of the two building to be acquired by Hispanic Housing under the plan - the North Paulina and the West Jonquil properties - would receive relocation assistance as well as Section 8 voucher assistance.

Survey Reveals Rental Market is Tight and Generally Favorable

With all of the talk of condo conversions as a means of stabilizing the community, should we focus on, as well, our 'bread and butter,' the rental market? How is the rental market doing? Are rental units available? Have rentals increased proportionately to the boom in real estate values?

During the week of November 8-12, the Builder conducted an informal, unscientific survey of the Rogers Park rental market by interviewing several members active in renting apartments.

Our survey shows a tight rental market with low vacancies and considerably higher rental rates than was the case only 2-3 years ago.

Jake Weiss of Weiss Properties

His firm owns or manages 600 units in Rogers Park. During the week of the survey, they had six one bedroom units available for rentals in the \$700 per month category, three two-bedroom units available in the \$900 bracket, and three studios at \$600 a month.

In general, says Weiss, their properties are 95 to 97 percent rented and they are getting a much more responsible tenant mix. While in the past, they had to push hard to get good tenants, this year they are getting an abundance of leads through the Internet. Many of their tenants have found the Lincoln Park market overpriced and they appreciate the amenities of Rogers Park. He also credited Loyola University for adding a measure of stability to the entire area.

Jim Stoller of Urban Properties

On the day of the survey Jim reported one unit available in the \$600 to \$900 category and two studios at \$400 a month. In general, he finds the market considerably tighter than last year at this time, and that landlords are seeing qualified tenants who are able to meet increasingly higher credit requirements. "Landlords are more choosy about whom they can rent to," said Jim.

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Rogers Park Builders Group Event Photos

A fitting End of the Summer event was the private beach party held on the terrace of Nate and Nancy Jarvinen on September 18. Featured were the jazz offerings of Rich Fudoli (second from left) and his group, dancing, cocktails and dinner. Credit Carla Price (at left) for another super Builders Group affair.

Very much in evidence at the Stars and Stripes Labor Day parade held last September was the Rogers Park Builders Group banner held here by Terry Sacks and Mike Luckenbach. Alan Goldberg (left) was disguised as the Builder mascot and made a big hit at the event.



AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Raven Theater Focusing Site Near Former Wisdom Bridge as Its New Home

Attentions of Rogers Park's oldest continuously running theater group, the Raven Theater, are focusing on a storefront near the former Wisdom Bridge Theater on Howard Street.

According to the Theater's chief executive, Michael Menendian, the group has been advised that the city plans to convert its present location into a school and they must be out of their space by Spring.

Menendian noted that the group, which was founded in 1985 and which has strong roots in Rogers Park, would like to remain in the area. Among its numerous successes have been such plays as "Six Degrees of Separation," "Glengary Glen Ross," "Death of a Salesman," and the currently playing, "A View from a Bridge."

Relocation efforts are currently focusing on a storefront adjacent to the former Wisdom Bridge Theater. "In effect we would be taking over a box, and we would have to add heating and ventilation and electrical work," said Menendian, adding that the site would have space for 150 seats.

"Our decision would depend largely on the total cost involved, and on whatever assistance the city can provide," he said. Anyone who believes that they know of a site which could accommodate the Raven Theater is urged to contact Menendian at the Raven Theater at 338-2177.

RPBG Backs Hamos Bill on Unifying Transportation System

The Builders Group has come out strongly in favor of a transportation measure sponsored by State Representative Julie Hamos which would integrate transportation to speed up the flow of riders to and from the city.

Under Rep. Hamos' resolution, which has already cleared the lower house in the state legislature, riders would be able to make connections between the CTA, Metra, and Pace with much greater speed and ease. For example, a new Metra stop a block away from the Gateway Development at Howard and Clark would facilitate the transfer of riders to the CTA or to Pace, both of which come into the Howard Street Terminal.

At present Metra (train) riders seeking to transfer to CTA trains or buses from the Metra stop at Clark and Lunt have to walk to Howard Street, a distance of roughly a half mile, to make connections at Howard Street for their end destination.

Ms. Hamos' resolution also calls for:

Adding more Pace shuttle buses from key Metra and CTA transportation hubs to serve new job destinations in the suburbs, devising a universal fare card and coordinated transfer policies, and coordinating maps, schedules and signs.

"As real estate professionals and property owners in Rogers Park, we in the Builders Group are quite excited about the prospect of Metra adding a new stop near the Gateway Retail/Transportation Mall," said Mike Glasser, President. He further cited the economic benefits to people living in the area which will enable them to more readily take jobs in the suburbs and to retailers on Howard Street, on both sides of Clark, from increased pedestrian traffic between the terminals.

He indicated that the changes are greatly needed because the Howard-Clark terminal is the second largest in the city. "In view of the very real benefits which would accrue to Rogers Park residents under the legislation, he urged that voters add their voices in support of the measure.

NEIGHBOR PROFILE

He Carries a Big Stick

Mike Realmuto, who heads his own architectural firm, would seem to be a prime exponent of Teddy Roosevelt's old dictum: "Speak softly and carry a big stick."

The soft-spoken Mike carries a big stick indeed. Since joining the RPBG in '96, Mike has served as Treasurer for two years and currently as Chair of the Planning and Development Committee and in both posts, he has served with distinction and effectiveness.

A long-time member of the Rogers Park Community Council, Mike served on their Board for a number of years and was instrumental in developing **Rogers Park 2000**, a long-range plan for the development and enhancement of Rogers Park, a work which has had widespread impact on the planning future of the community. Because of business commitments, he has had to resign from the Board in recent months, but continues as an active and committed Council member.

He is, in addition, active in a subsidiary of the Community Council, the Rogers Park Community

Development Corp., which currently is concentrating on the conversion of a former slum and drug-ridden property at 1528 W. Morse, as a senior citizens home. Plans for the property also call for the relocation of the Community Council headquarters there after it is ready for occupancy.

The Council currently occupies space at 1772 W. Lunt.

Mike, who received his bachelor of architecture degree at the Illinois Institute of Technology in 1977, was associated with the architectural firm of Booth, Nagle and Hartrey for several years, before opening his own firm in 1980.

Mike is a Rogers Park resident and sees the RPBG as a group highly influential and with the "potential to effect positive changes in the community."

And that's what will happen at least if Mike is involved.



EUBA and RPBG Compare Notes at First-Time Ever Joint Meeting

In a first-time ever meeting members of the Edgewater-Uptown Builders Association (EUBA) and the Rogers Park Builders Group were able to compare notes and contrast the growth and development of both organizations.

Meeting at the Uptown National Bank in October in an event hosted by Clark-Devon Hardware, those attending found that both groups were established largely in order to overcome negative images about their respective communities.

Presently both organizations are facing the challenges and responsibilities of a strong real estate market in which both high income upscale renters and low to moderate income renters are scrambling to find apartments.

J. R. Graves, a leading condo developer in the EUBA group, described how in today's condo market, first developed in the early 90s, units now sell for up to \$200,000 in the Edgewater-Uptown areas.

Property values in Rogers Park have likewise increased for prospective condo conversion deals and for apartment buildings. "The market is hotter than a pistol," said Alan Goldberg, of Hallmark & Johnson. He noted that property values can be kept up only if owners maintain their buildings properly.

The ensuing discussion focused on many important issues including the commercial development in the respective communities, meeting the demands of tenants seeking affordable rentals, and steps taken by both groups to insure that responsible building owners purchase property.

Both organizations were quick to adopt public relations programs after their inception. Former Builders Group President Michael Walkk noted that the group's efforts have resulted in considerable publicity both nationally and locally, and includes the publication of an attractive 12-page, 4-color brochure touting Rogers Park as a good place in which to live, work and invest.

Both organizations have already begun planning many more exciting and successful joint meetings. *Monty Hall look out!*

Police Commander Boggs Commended for Howard Street Cleanup

The RPBG has commended Police Commander David Boggs for steps he has taken in recent months to clean up drug dealing in the area north of Howard Street.

In a letter to the Commander, Mike Glasser, President, and Mike Luckenbach, Chair, Outreach Committee, noted that "there has been a marked decrease in the amount of drug dealing in the area - notably, Paulina, Jonquil and other streets . . ."

"Much of this is directly attributable to the efforts Boggs and his officers have made in policing the area since the 'sweep' of several months ago.

"We feel this is increasing the quality of life that we all want to attain," the letter continued, adding that it has made the community much safer and more secure for all.

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Former President Michael Walkk of Lakeside Realty

Michael, who owns a 32-unit building on Arthur near Glenwood, reports that his units run from \$485 a month for a small studio to \$525 for a large studio and \$625 a month for a one-bedroom. "Currently, we are completely filled up," said Mike, adding that apartments are leased almost as soon as they become available.

Marty Max of MLC Properties

He reported no vacancies in their 72 units in Rogers Park. "It's a very tight market, but we find that tenants are demanding more in services than ever before." Marty reports that they get \$950 a month for a two-bedroom apartment on the lake.

Tim Flentye of Flentye Properties

Tim reported that they have several properties ranging from 3 to 74 units per building. Of these, they have three bedroom units renting for \$1,500 a month, two-bedroom units at \$800 a month and one-bedroom units at \$600 a month.

This should not be construed to mean that there are no apartments available to be found in the area. There are, but you might have to look harder to find them.

As I See It... by Mike Glasser

President, Rogers Park Builders Group



Since moving back to the community two months ago, my dog Shorty and I have begun rediscovering Rogers Park. We had a particularly interesting experience the other day, while driving to a friend's house to watch some post Thanksgiving football. Not wanting to go empty-handed, we made a few stops along the way. First, we went to Caribbean Bakery, on Howard Street, for a few quick meat pies (if you've not tried them before, you are missing out on something). Unfortunately, there was a five-minute wait so we picked up some fresh bread and moved on, stopping at the Rogers Park Fruit Market. After we picked up some fresh fruit, we continued south to Touhy and Clark and couldn't resist the temptation. To Shorty's (and my) delight, Romanian had yet to close for the Shabbat, allowing us to buy their flavorful pastrami and smoked turkey. (Imaging doing this, the day after Thanksgiving).

What a pity. When I got to my friend's house after half-time, to discover that everyone had already eaten.

This experience points out a unique feature about our community. Each of these shops (and many others) is a long-term Rogers Park classic, offering quality and a special aura that make shopping there a fun and exciting experience. How many other parts of Chicago, or in the country, offer such an array of shopping options all located within a few blocks of each other? Other ethnically diverse communities usually have several blocks separating one ethnic community from another. But in East Rogers Park, the diversity is reflected almost storefront to storefront.

Let's reflect on this as Rogers Park enters a new era of retail development. Soon, Gateway Plaza will be in business, with the long-awaited opening of a major grocery chain, Dominick's, followed by construction of sites for retail, a multiplex cinema, and the tie-in between the shopping plaza and the CTA/bus lines. The Howard Theatre project is also nearing completion, with the facade beautifully restored, and the developer actively leasing the storefronts. The Rogers Park Builders Group actively supports these projects, and we congratulate all of those who have made them happen. At the same time we recognize the challenge and immense opportunity that the developers face. We in the Builders Group aren't privy to specific plans for leasing space, nor is it prudent for these plans to be made public while the parties are still negotiating. But we are confident that the neighborhood lease makers are aware that the demographics for the neighborhood are sound, with high median income (even if you don't include the cemetery). Howard Street can support stable vibrant retailers, restaurants and other entertainment venues that reflect the diverse nature of our neighborhood, which I alluded to above, and which can properly serve our residents and those in the communities surrounding us.

OUR MISSION

The Rogers Park Builders Group's mission is to encourage and support responsible residential and commercial property investment, development, and ownership in the Rogers Park community. Looking far beyond bricks and mortar, the RPBG initiates and supports collaboration on city and community actions to create a destination community.

Tom Heinenan, Assistant Editor

Terry Sacks, Writer/Editor

Jim Stoller, Chairman-Communications

Michael Realmuto, Chairman-Planning and Development

Carla Price, Chairman-Arts

Michael C. Luckenbach, Chairman-Outreach

Jim Klutznick, Chairman-Fundraising

Dan Dooley, Chairman-Membership

John O'Leary, Secretary

Tim Flentye, Treasurer

Laurene Huffman, Vice President

Paul Goguen, Past President

Michael Wallik, Immediate Past President

Mike Classen, President

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Please send information about becoming a member of the Rogers Park Builders Group

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone (daytime) _____

Phone (evening) _____

I'm interested in: _____

Comments _____

Mail to: Mary Jane Sacks, Administrative Director
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The Bottom Line

The Rogers Park Builder is aimed at keeping members, sponsors and prospective supporters up-to-date on both the Rogers Park Builders Group and new developments in the neighborhood.

If you like what you see, please pass it along to a fellow developer or investor.

If you are interested in becoming a member or sponsor, please fill out the form on the left. Feel free to send your comments and suggestions for stories to Terry Sacks, Editor, at the address indicated on the left or send an e-mail to tjacks@aol.com.

Ideas for future newsletters are appreciated. Any of the officers listed next to the mailing label will be happy to discuss the Rogers Park Builders Group and its mission.

Visit us via the Rogers Park community web site: <http://www.rogerspark.com>

❄️
The Rogers Park ❄️
Builders Group
Wishes to You a Very
Happy Holiday
Season and the
Best in 2000! ❄️
 ❄️

THIS MONTH WE SALUTE

We Tip Our Hats

This month we salute several sponsors and associate members who not only offer special services but make it a point to attend our meetings regularly and who are not building owners:

Phil Burnstine
21st Century
Telecom Group, Inc.

Dorian L. Bezanis
Alpha Adjusting Co., Inc.

Kit Baker Carr
Factual Data

Through their participation in the RPBG, the above have proven their commitment to the Rogers Park Builders Group and deserve our deepest gratitude and warrant our patronage.