

ROGERS PARK BUILDER

FALL/WINTER 2001

www.rpb.org

The Changing Face of Howard Street: Focus of September Board Meeting

Since the inception of the Rogers Park Builders Group in 1994, the rebuilding of Howard Street as a major commercial and retail center has been a focal point of the group. Today there is strong evidence that we may be well along toward achieving that goal. At least that was the gist of the comments of three developers who presented exciting plans for reestablishment of Howard Street and the surrounding area at the September board meeting. A record 48 attended the meeting, which was hosted by Clark-Devon Hardware.

The first of the developers represented was Ken Sproul, a partner of SMB Development, who announced that 26 units of the 56-unit condo development are sold. The development, currently under construction at the site of the former Shell Station, is located on Sheridan Road, just south of Evanston. When completed it will consist of two three-story townhouses, sixteen duplexes each approximately 2,000 square feet, and 38 condos, from 1,200 to 2,100 square feet apiece.

Sproul indicated that after about two years of community and planning meetings, work on the foundation is scheduled to begin this fall. Features include all brick and masonry construction, rear entry parking, and an elevator building. Prices range from \$279,000 to \$466,000 for the condos, and from \$450,000 to \$500,000 for the duplexes.

Also very upbeat in his presentation was Dave Dubin, of Dubin Residential, a citywide developer, who is building a 26-unit townhouse development on the site of a former Chinese restaurant, at Rogers and Damen. The development, consisting of two and three-bedroom units, is known as Emerson Point. It is awaiting building permits for construction to get underway. Prices range from \$239,000 to \$300,000 per unit. Occupancy is scheduled for late Spring or early Summer of 2002.

Dubin is also involved in numerous other residential projects in Lakeview, West Bucktown (Humboldt Park), and the far South Side, to name a few. He also has purchased the former Wisdom Bridge and Lerner properties on Howard Street and is negotiating with the Wisdom Bridge Arts Association who plan to reestablish the old Wisdom Bridge Theater as an arts center.

Kevin Richards, of the Wisdom Bridge Arts Association, then described that group's exciting plans for the reestablishment of the old Wisdom Bridge Theater building as an arts center (see story on page 2).

The last presentation of the evening was made by Tim Sullivan, of the Cornerstone group, which has developed more than 20 Walgreens stores in Chicago and surrounding suburbs. Cornerstone plans to build a two-story Walgreens store on the site of the former Marathon gas station on Howard and Sheridan Road. The 16,000 square foot, two-story structure will be split into sections for a food mart, drugs and related merchandise, and pharmacy. Construction is expected to begin in six to eight months, said Sullivan.

Announcing Our New Website

The Rogers Park Builders Group website (www.rpb.org) is up and running. According to Calin Day, programmer for Future Solutions, the firm in charge of designing and installing the website, it will have several headings which interested parties can go to in seeking out information about the Builders Group and its members.

Currently, if a user clicks on "Membership Directory," he or she has a choice of getting a listing of Directors, or other listings of Sponsors, Advisors and Associate members. There is also a membership application form for interested users to fill out if they wish to join the Builders Group.

In addition there is a heading on "Newsletters" which will enable users to read articles from the current *Builder* issue or from older issues. Other headings display photos of new and existing developments, information about Rogers Park itself, and a summary of outreach projects such as the Labor Day Parade, the Messiah Concert, and the camera projects at Field and Gale Schools.

"Altogether, the new website should prove invaluable for both members and prospective members in providing useful information on the Rogers Park Builders Group," said RPBG president, Mike Glasser. "We even have a vendors list which can serve as a terrific neighborhood resource."

The webmaster, Tim Krueger, of Future Solutions, can be reached at: tim@futuresolutions.net.



Artists rendering of Emerson Point townhouse development. The 26-unit development is to be built on the site of the former Chinese restaurant on Rogers and Damen.



Plans for Wisdom Bridge as Arts Center

Plans are proceeding full speed ahead for the renovation of the Wisdom Bridge Theater Building, but the finished product may not quite be what old-time Wisdom Bridge playgoers may have hoped for.

According to Kevin Richards, co-chairman of the Wisdom Bridge Arts Project, negotiations are currently underway with Dubin Residential, which has purchased the property from Urban Investment, the developer of the multi-million dollar Gateway Centre. Included in the parcel is the old Wisdom Bridge Building, the Lerner Newspaper building, and the parking lot separating the two.

According to Richards, they have been offered a purchase price for the Wisdom Bridge building approximately \$200,000 lower than what Urban has been asking for the building.

At the same time, Richards announced that his group plans to operate the building as an arts education center, with the upper floor being set up as a 'black box.' It would be windowless and have a floating seating and stage arrangement which would make it suitable for various types of entertainments – dance, visual arts, choral music, etc. The first floor would house classrooms, offices and a coffee house.

To speed the process of converting the building into a community arts center, Richards announced

that Tim Anstett, former executive director of Steppenwolf Theater, has been engaged as director of programming and is designing programming for the center, which is scheduled to be completed by the end of February, 2002. When fully operational in 2003, it will serve as a citywide model in arts education.

To that end, the Wisdom Bridge association is negotiating with such groups as Mexico Folklorico, Joel Hall Dancers and Lill Street Gallery. The center would not only sponsor performances and shows of these groups but would offer classes for both grade school and high school youngsters and adults in the various arts – dance, music, theater and visual arts.

Admittedly, Richards and his group have a long way to go in realizing their dreams. Dubin must complete renovation of the property for one, and the Wisdom Bridge group will have to raise a considerable sum of money – estimated at nearly \$200,000 – to make this dream a reality.

As to reinstating the Wisdom Bridge as a performing theater of the caliber of its illustrious predecessor, Richards says that this is not in the cards right now, but may be in the not too distant future.

Kevin Richards can be reached at (773)508-5885.

Steady and Stable for RPBG and on His Kayak, Too!

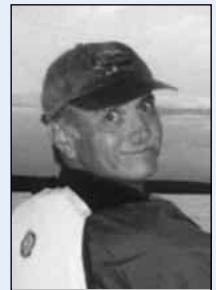
Tom Heineman is a good man to go to when you need to get something done. Not only is he a loyal and committed director but he is capable and gives whatever he does his best. That is why *The Builder* this month has selected Tom for its Neighbor Profile.

A charter member of the Builders Group, Tom has held several positions with the group during the past seven years. For four years he was our first treasurer, where the main challenge was finding enough money to keep the operation in the black. Then after a brief hiatus, he was again asked to serve as treasurer where he watchdogs our cash reserves to make sure funds are adequate to meet the need. He has also served as a very thorough and painstaking editor of *The Builder* since its inception four years ago.

A long-time resident of Rogers Park (he settled here in 1972) Tom owns and occupies a three-flat on Eastlake since 1989. In addition he rents out a condo he first purchased in 1978. In 1998, he was a partner with other RPBG members (O'Leary and Steward) in a condo quality conversion at 1522 Jonquil, which he describes as the first of a wave of new quality condo conversions in the north of Howard area. This project served as a stimulus for several other recent condo conversions north of Howard.

Tom is very active in the community where his messages on various community concerns are often seen on the Internet and in the *Lerner Newspaper*. He is also active in the Chicago Area Sea Kayakers Association (CASKA), an organization which promotes safe kayaking and greater access to the lake for self-propelled watercraft.

As to areas which the Builders Group should tackle in the near future, Tom noted one area deserving of priority: providing new products and services for members, such as the use of the Web to list members' properties for sale or rental, or the development of a preferred contractors list.



He believes RPBG's biggest accomplishment is in boosting the confidence of investors, board members, and banks in Rogers Park as a place in which to live and to invest. Tom feels that the synergy of having developers, realtors and owners meeting regularly inspires confidence in the neighborhood and spurs development. As an example he notes that when he and his family first moved here in 1972, banks were overly cautious in approving loans for investment and property development in the area. Today, it is almost the opposite with banks encouraging local businessmen and developers to invest in Rogers Park.

Tom's belief in Rogers Park is unflinching and has never been higher. As an example he cites the fact that he has recently invested \$100,000 in his three-flat in the last year. He anticipates investing an additional \$100,000 in the next two years to finish the rehab of his property which, he adds, is never really finished being rehabbed. He credits director Tim Flentye with helping to increase the value of his property by converting a three-flat next door to luxury condos selling for more than \$200 a square foot. The future of Eastlake Terrace and Rogers Park has never looked brighter.

1617 W. Estes and 7410 N. Winchester

Rich Aronson, of Camelot Realty, reports two new condo developments in the northern sector of Rogers Park. The first, at 1617 W. Estes, consists of a nine-flat of a period-influenced design. The property consists of three 2,500 sq. ft. three-bedroom, three-bath units plus family room duplexes, at a pre-construction price of \$375,000 and six 1,400 sq. ft two-bedroom two-bath simplexes, pre-construction priced from \$290,000. Features include master suites with luxury baths, gourmet island kitchens, wood burning fireplaces and very ample windows. Each unit comes with a deeded parking space, a large deck and/or balcony, and the building is wired with CAT for high speed Internet access. Occupancy is scheduled for Fall of 2002.

The second property, a new construction six-flat is located at 7410 N. Winchester and features progressive-contemporary design. The property consists of two 2,500 sq. ft three-bedroom three-bath plus family room duplexes, priced pre-construction at \$350,000 each and four 1,450 sq. ft. two-bedroom two-bath duplex penthouses pre-construction priced from \$340,000. Occupancy is scheduled for Fall 2002. For information contact Rich Aronson at (773)465-2200.

7527 N. Sheridan Road

Bill Moran of Moran Associates, announces an 18-unit condo conversion at 7527 N. Sheridan Road. Consisting of 11 two-bedroom, two-bath units and 7 one-bedroom units, the properties are completely gutted and feature all new plumbing, new windows, hardwood floors, built-in washer-dryer units. The one-bedroom units are priced in the low \$120,000s and the two-bedroom units in the high \$180,000s. Three are under contract. For information, contact Jim Currier at Bill Moran and Associates, (312)787-2345.

Greenview and Lunt

An attractive 23-unit condo conversion will soon be complete at Greenview and Lunt. The award-winning developer plans to transform rental units to fully-restored condo homes. Units will feature Italian cabinets in the kitchens and baths, plus some exposed brick, pocket doors and contemporary design, which the agent, Sharon Kozak of Coldwell Banker, says will set these units apart. Limited parking is available for purchase. Near to the train. Pre-sale price scheduled to start in the fourth quarter. Garden units are priced from \$130,500 and two-bedroom two-bath units from \$179,000. For information, contact Sharon at (773)908-8002.

Construction on New Ten-Story Building for Senior Citizens Slated to Start Soon

Construction on the new 10-story 110-unit senior citizens housing facility is scheduled to begin soon, according to Mark Kruse, of Hispanic Housing, and RPBG Director. Kruse reported that work on the caissons has begun and that they expect to close on financing by month's end.

The facility, located at the Gateway Centre on Rogers just west of the L-tracks, is aimed at seniors, 55 or over, or as Mark described them: "Empty nesters - active adults still working or recently retired."

Rents will depend on income, with a one-bedroom, one-bath unit for those earning 40 percent of median, projected at \$475 a month, while a one-bedroom for those earning 60 percent of median, will rent for \$650 a month. A two-bedroom, one-bath unit will run \$750 for those earning 60 percent of median or below.

A few one-bedroom market-rate units are available at \$750 a month. Two-bedroom market-rate units will rent for \$850 a month.

Mark indicated that occupancy on the new building is scheduled for the Fall of 2002.

Kimberly Bares is New Executive Director at DevCorp North

Kimberly Bares has been appointed the new Executive Director of DevCorp North, Rogers Park's economic development agency. She occupies a post vacated by the former director, Ken Govas, in June.

A Rogers Park resident, Ms. Bares was most recently Co-Director of the Rogers Park Community Development Corporation. Previously, she served as executive director of the Edgewater Community Council. As she puts it, in the field of community development there are three primary focal points: economic development, housing, and organizing.

With regard to the Builders Group, Ms. Bares said that she will work toward a "joining of forces between DevCorp North and the Rogers Park Builders Group in the area of commercial redevelopment to create a prospect database of available commercial space."

She further would like to see DevCorp North used as a "first source for business and entrepreneurs looking to open new businesses in Rogers Park."

Bares holds a BA from the State University of New York and is currently enrolled in the Master of Urban Planning and Policy program at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Correction

The Builder was obviously in error when it inflated the amount of money the "Artist's of the Wall" event raised. According to one of the event's organizers, Kate Hogan, of the Heartland Cafe, the event is expected to nearly break even and the slight profit realized will be used to provide a computer for the Loyola Park office. We regret any wrong impressions this error may have made. Perhaps, we merely expressed the wishful thinking of the event's organizers.

As I See It . . .

by **Mike Glasser**
President, Rogers Park Builders Group
9/11: A Tribute 9/25: A Milestone



On Tuesday, September 25, we had a most unusual monthly board meeting at Bank One's Rogers Park Branch on Western. Subdued by the impact of the 9/11 events, the meeting still represented a milestone for our organization.

A sizable crowd of about 45 people showed up, and the sponsor of the meeting, Clark Devon Hardware, had furnished a hearty Chinese/Korean meal furnished by Sue (a member of South Korea's Fourth Place 1964 Olympic Volleyball team) and owner of the Mandarin House Restaurant (Pratt and Sheridan). With a busy agenda, my primary concern at the inception of the meeting was how I could complete it by 9:15pm, and avoid the wrath of Helen, the bank's branch manager, who most months has to threaten to call loans or raise service fees to get our stragglers out the door on time.

I started the meeting a few minutes early. After we went around the room introducing ourselves, I paused for a minute, took a deep breath and then soberly offered words of condolence to one of our executive committee members whose nephew, a 20-year-old special services officer named Dustin Lawson (Dusty), was killed while rushing to the scene at the Pentagon on September 11. The room turned silent. The ambience of the meeting was forever changed.

I then introduced a series of developers and neighborhood leaders, each of whom updated us on the status of their developments:

1) Ken Sproul of SMB Developers, on the status of the condominium and townhouse development at the old Shell Station site, on Sheridan Road as it makes its bend around to Calgary Cemetery.

2) David Dubin, of Dubin Residential, who offered us an update of his townhouse development at Rogers and Damen. Mr. Dubin also mentioned that his company would likely be developing townhouses at the site of the old Lerner building.

3) Tim Sullivan, a principal of Cornerstone Group, presented his company's plans for developing a Walgreens store at the intersection of Sheridan and Howard, where the Marathon Service Station now sits.

4) The Wisdom Bridge Task Force reported progress in their attempt to preserve an historic theatre building, which only months ago was slated to be replaced with a Dollar Store. They reported on their considerable success, and they described unique arts related uses that they hope to bring to the site.

5) Mary Jane Haggerty, of the Rogers Park Community Council, offered an impromptu update on two other happenings on or near Howard: first, progress in the neighborhood's push to build a new field house at the new playground adjacent to Gale School.

She also reported that the Howard Area Community Center is constructing a day care center in the old Trilogy lot, a block south of Howard Street on Ashland.

The unusual aspect about this meeting is that at any other time during our eight-year history, an agenda like this, filled with optimistic reports by qualified developers and community leaders, would have drawn praise and jubilation from our attendees. Years ago we could never have foreseen such an array of reputable developers showcasing their plans on and around Howard Street.

Yet these presentations stirred little emotion and sparked little discussion. Most months, we can't push people out of the door at 9:30pm. This month, we all promptly left the conference room at 8:45pm, with few stragglers.

Development issues were far from being at the top of minds that evening. Issues that seemed so important—no, vital—to us only weeks before, now seemed remote. The horror of what we witnessed only weeks ago eclipsed the importance of the real estate developments presented that evening.

Let's not diminish the importance of these positive developments. As community members and qualified developers invest their focus, money and talent into the neighborhood, we shake decades old negative perceptions of crime and instability of Howard Street and the blocks around it.

Congratulations to the people who are making all of this happen. And God bless you, Dusty. Rest in peace.

Is Bloom Off the Condo Market? Member Survey Shows a Strong But Slowing Market

Has the condo market in Rogers Park reached its high point? A recent article in *Crain's Chicago Business* indicates that while the number of condo conversions throughout the city is expected to soar in the next few years, sales have slowed and lenders are expected to tighten up requirements severely.

What is the situation in Rogers Park? A random survey of members involved in the condo market would seem to indicate that while the future still looks bright, sales are slowing and it is taking longer to sell units. Here are some sample comments:

Mike Luckenbach: "When last I looked, there were 230 condos on the market in Rogers Park. While there has been somewhat of a slowdown in sales, it is still a viable market, but may well slow down even more in the future."

Sharon Kozak: "While there has been some leveling off, there are still plenty of developers looking for appropriate buildings to convert. The Fall issue of *Chicago Magazine* notes that the MLS (Multiple Listing Service) showed that the appreciation rate for Rogers Park properties has dropped from two digits to a single digit in the last two years. Since the appreciation rate has dropped, buyers are being more choosy and looking for lower prices."

Rich Aronson: "There may be somewhat of a glut downtown or in River North, but I don't foresee any glut in Rogers Park in the immediate future. What I see is that the market is coming back to a more normal pace of buying and selling."

Connie Abels: "There is no glut in the condo market. Previously there was a void of quality condos in Rogers Park. Now there's a variety ranging from the very affordable to the luxurious. But even the most luxurious and expensive condos in Rogers Park are much more affordable than those of similar quality in Edgewater, Lakeview or Lincoln Park."

Steve Livaditis: "If you look at the data for supply and demand for Chicago as compared with other major cities, such as New York, Los Angeles or Phoenix, the statistics would indicate that there is a strong market and quite a demand for condos and that we are undersupplied. But if you look closer, it is clear that there is more residential property for sale than ever before, and from the time the property is placed on the market until it closes, it takes longer than at any other time in the past five years."

John O'Leary: "I don't see any decline in the demand for condos. I expect that the market will hold for quite a while. The aspirations of both buyers and sellers are holding up well."

Gateway's Last Hurdle Cleared

The way has been cleared to proceed with the last part of the Gateway Retail/Transportation Centre. According to Michael Land, of Ald. Moore's office, the CTA recently deeded the land west of the CTA tracks to Hermitage to the City, which in turn sold it to Urban Investment Trust, the Gateway Centre developer.

Now, Hermitage Avenue, which runs through the Centre to Dominick's Foods, will be vacated and a new building to house Bally's Fitness Center and Marshall's will be installed there. In turn, a new Paulina Street will be built to run just west of the CTA tracks and the bus terminal. It will have two lanes going south for buses and one going north for cars.

That leaves the building just east of Gateway Bar & Grill, which is presently vacant, ready for occupancy. In other developments:

The new 400-car garage off of Rogers is completed and in operation.

Runge's Tire and Auto has moved from its former site on Clark near Birchwood to new quarters in the eastern section of the first floor of the parking garage.

Work on the new CTA station is moving forward. According to Mike Land an invitation to design the prototype of the new station has been put up for bid and should be settled within the next few weeks.

RPBG Director Assists in Helping Rid Area of Gangs, Drug Dealing

RPBG Director Al Goldberg is not one to sit around and do nothing when action is required. When the area surrounding his building on Glenwood and Morse started getting, in his words 'Creepy and more dangerous,' characterized by gangs and drug dealing, Al started looking for solutions. Noting the recently opened police outpost on the Evanston side of Howard and Damen, Al offered a vacant store front in his Morse Avenue building to the district coordinator of CAPS, Glen Brooks (who heads all district CAPS beats) and the Rogers Park police. They quickly took him up on his offer. In short order it was decided to open a CAPS office for a trial 30-day period. There were many squad cars nearby, and undercover operations. "We had zero tolerance in this area," said Al.

"The results were beyond our wildest dreams," said Al. "Basically, the gangs just seemed to fold their tents together with their litter, empty bottles, and drug dealing." The Rogers Park police received many positive letters commending them for their initiative.

"We'll try to do the same thing periodically," commented Al, "and will try to make it a permanent outpost through the use of volunteers, but the future remains to be seen."

In response to the closing of the outpost, CAPS' district advisor Glen Brooks said, "We are appreciative to Al for giving us the opportunity and happy to take him up on it. But it was understood that the project was to be maintained for four weeks and in actuality it lasted for eight weeks." Brooks pointed out that the district has limited resources of manpower, police cars, etc. and must take the overall needs of the district into consideration in allocating resources. "Much as we would have liked to maintain the outpost, we simply were unable to find the resources from the police department to do so." Brooks, who along with representative Karen Hoover, serves as CAPS advisor to the RPBG Board, sees future potential for similar collaborative projects between local CAPS beats and RPBG members. Brooks can be reached at (773)381-1944.

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.

RPBG Executive Committee

- Mike Glasser, President
- Paul Goguen, Past President
- Marty Max, Vice President
- Tom Heineman, Treasurer
- John O'Leary, Secretary
- Al Goldberg, Chairman-Membership
- Mark Kruse, Chairman-Fundraising
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Please Send Information About Becoming a Member of the Rogers Park Builders Group

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone (daytime) _____

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I'm interested in: _____

Comments _____

Mail to: Mary Jane Sacks, Administrative Director
 Rogers Park Builders Group
 1708 W. Jarvis Avenue • Chicago, IL 60626
 Phone/Fax: (773) 743-7453

e-mail: tjacks@aol.com
 Website: www.rpbg.org



The home of artists Don and Jackie Seiden, one of the homes included in the Art Walk. Here Don Seiden is seen surrounded by several of his dynamic animal sculptures. The event, which was held last August, was co-sponsored by the RPBG and the Rogers Park Gay & Lesbian Neighbors Association.



Part of the Labor Day Parade entourage which wound up at Gale School for soft drinks and refreshments. The RPBG co-sponsored the event.

IN THANKS OF THEIR SUPPORT

Earlier this year, the Rogers Park Builders Group embarked on its major fundraising campaign, done about every four years, to fund the development and production of the infamous Rogers Park brochure (the one with the woman bather on it) and for a Rogers Park oriented website specifically geared to our promoting Rogers Park (see story on the cover). Kudos to the following banks, who were the first to contribute towards our fundraising campaign:

- Citibank
- Community Investment Corporation
- Devon Bank
- Manufacturers Bank
- New Century Bank
- Success National Bank

– The Editors