

Letter from the Alderman

The most rewarding aspect of being Alderman has been working with people in the community, hearing the concerns, creating a plan of action, following it and seeing it realized. For more than eight years, I have partnered with the community to bring needed renewal to our housing, businesses and schools.



I have had some victories. In the area of education, the transition of Fiske and Sexton schools has been managed well with the support of the parents, administration and community. Another victory was the reopening of the Woodlawn Mental Health Clinic at 6317 S. Woodlawn. At that clinic case workers are now visiting the homes of clients to deliver routine services. The University of Chicago recently announced its hospital has petitioned to expand its emergency room to provide more access and better services. This includes increasing the age of youth treatment for traumatic injuries to 17 years old.

The neighborhood is also getting better as a result of \$300 million in improvements across the ward in recent years, including work on sewer and water lines, streets, parkways and lights. One of the greatest transformations in Woodlawn's history has been that of former Grove Parc Plaza Apartment complex. The Cottage Grove corridor has never looked so good with the transformation of this property to Woodlawn Park.

The change continues to take place as we improve the quality of life. We continue to advocate for expanding pediatric and adult trauma centers. We continue to develop new programs for youth and new market rate and affordable housing and we continue to stand up for legislation to reduce foreclosures and hold lenders responsible for the property that is on their books.

In addition, I am feverishly working to see that Woodlawn, Washington Park and Jackson Park are included in the President Barack Obama Library discussion and that the residents of the 20th Ward, as well as Black businesses, participate.

The community is on the cutting edge of real breakthroughs and I look forward to continuing the strong alliance we have built to keep moving forward and building a better future.

- Alderman Willie B. Cochran, 20th Ward

"CHICAGO OFFICE" continued from front

jobs and complementary businesses to key commercial areas.

From there the discussion covered a mix of the progress made in recent years and work still left to do. Washington Park residents see a library there as a boost for 55th Street, where an arts incubator and other bold investments underscore the area's potential but where vacant lots still underscore its challenges.

Woodlawn residents talked about the library's potential to revive 63rd Street and to connect to development under way on Cottage Grove and in east Woodlawn, where hundreds of new and rehabbed units are either built or under development and where new retail and institutional projects are planned for the next few years.

Hundreds of people testified, none more spiritedly than Rev. Leon Finney, who brought the crowd to its feet with a passionate argument for a South Side location.

The Obamas, we are told, will pick a site in the spring. A Jackson Park site should provide a boost for 63rd Street, but a Washington Park site might have a bigger impact on West Woodlawn.

Whatever the outcome, the fight for the library gave local residents and stakeholders an opportunity to brag about their neighborhood and they did not miss their chance. Hopefully we can all continue to build on such a spirited outpouring.

- Bill Eager, VP Chicago Area, POAH

WINTER 2015

FROM THE GROVE

A Preservation of Affordable Housing NEWSLETTER

Strand Hotel to Get New Life - Add to the Vitality of Cottage Grove



Original Strand Hotel



Rendering of New Strand Hotel

The revival of the historic Strand Hotel, on Cottage Grove Avenue just south of 63rd Street, is under way.

Developer Peter Holsten, Holsten Human Capital Development and Historic Strand LP plan to invest \$23 million to renovate the long-vacant century-old hotel into 63 studio and one-bedroom apartments with ground-floor retail space. 53 of the units will be made available to residents who earn up to 60% of area median income, while nine will be rented at market rates and one will be reserved for on-site maintenance.

Once part of a thriving entertainment district anchored by the former Tivoli Theater to the south, the Strand Hotel housed the McKie's Disk Jockey Show Lounge, where jazz legends such as John Coltrane, Sonny Stitt and Sonny Rollins often played. However, after years of disinvestment, the building fell into disrepair and was abandoned in 1965. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2013. The dramatic marble staircase, plaster pilasters and capitals, skylights and beautifully tiled floors still remain awaiting restoration.

"African American night clubs blossomed in 1951 when the Woodlawn color lines broke," said 20th Ward Alderman Willie B. Cochran. "I'm glad that we are able to preserve this important piece of history while providing the housing that this community needs."

See "STRAND" inside >>>

From the POAH Chicago Office

With the debate over the home of the Obama Presidential Library attracting national attention, the spotlight is certainly on Woodlawn and our neighbor Washington Park of late. And with that attention comes the opportunity to show off this community's continuing progress.



On January 13, residents, park preservationists and others packed the Hyde Park Academy auditorium for the first of two public hearings on whether a presidential library should be located in Jackson Park – directly across Stony Island from the school – or in Washington Park near 55th and King Drive.

At Hyde Park Academy, and at Washington Park the next day, community support for placing the library on the South Side was overwhelming, although parks preservation groups provided spirited opposition to the idea.

Most of the support was expressed along these lines: President Obama lived among us, taught among and worked in the communities that surround us. It's only right that a library and museum honoring our first African-American president be located here. It would be an amenity for our parks and serve as an economic catalyst by bringing

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Cottage Grove Senior Housing and Youth Sports/Education Center Move Closer to Completion

Bringing new resources to the old and young, the transformation of the South Cottage Grove Avenue corridor continues with construction of new senior housing, *The Burnham at Woodlawn Park*, and MetroSquash, a new youth sports/education center.

POAH is building *The Burnham at 62nd* and Cottage Grove as replacement housing for the now-raised Grove Parc Plaza Apartments. When completed, the \$24.3 million development will offer 65 one- and two-bedroom apartments, a walking/sitting garden for residents, a community room, an exercise room and a library. The building will also offer a community resource center and house POAH's property management affiliate, POAH Communities, Inc.

The sports center at 61st and Cottage Grove is being built as the first free-standing facility for MetroSquash, the Chicago-based organization that uses squash to engage students from 5th grade through college in sports, tutoring and mentoring.

The facility will house eight squash courts, four classrooms and community space for 300-plus youth. To construct the building, MetroSquash raised \$6.5 million from private sources. The City and JP Morgan Chase provided \$5 million in New Markets Tax Credits for the project.

"The unique combination of squash and academic instruction along with mentoring, cultural enrichment and community service help students with their self-confidence, independence and academic training in preparation to be successful in middle school, high school and college," said Paul Cussen, chairman of the MetroSquash board.

MetroSquash is scheduled to open in April. The senior building will welcome its first residents in August.



Eyesore Becomes Amenity - The Transformation of the ComEd Substation



At the urging of POAH and Ald. Willie B. Cochran, Commonwealth Edison has made beautification improvements to its substation at 62nd and Cottage Grove Avenue. The improvements complement the transformation that is taking place along the corridor and include ornamental fencing; replacing or repairing exterior doors; repairing or replacing windows; replacing 44 roof skylight louvers with fixed plates and motorized skylights for ventilation; installing lava rock in an area abutting the sidewalk; paving west and east parking areas; installing 12 exterior lights with motion detection; power washing the building; sealing the basement; and adding sod.

"STRAND" continued from front



Original Strand Hotel Lobby

The rehabilitation of the five-story project is made possible through \$2.0 million in City tax increment financing, a \$4.7 million loan, \$3.3 million in historic tax credit equity, \$290,000 in donations tax credit equity and \$1.2 million in low income housing tax credits that are projected to generate \$12.4 million in equity.

Woodlawn Residents Get Hired at Employer's Forum

The Woodlawn Resource Center hosted a hiring seminar on January 6 in partnership with the Calumet Area Industrial Commission (CAIC).

CAIC has a membership of more than 130 companies, including the Ford Motor company, in Chicago and the south suburbs that engage in manufacturing, transportation and logistics. At the hiring event CAIC sought candidates who have a desire to work in manufacturing and are skilled, certified and licensed.

The jobs in question are permanent full-time positions that yield an average hourly wage of \$14-\$20. The Woodlawn Career Network staff screened eligible candidates, and CAIC met with 47 individuals at the hiring event.

CAIC was pleased with the candidate pool and selected nine candidates for additional interviews. Four of those candidates are going through the employment process with Leer Auto Manufacturing and Tower, both contractors for Ford Motor Company.

CAIC continues to count on our partnership as it seeks quality candidates to fill their job orders. The Career Network staff will continue working with candidates not selected during this event to get them placed elsewhere.

Obama's Presidential Library Coming to Woodlawn?

POAH's Chicago Vice President Bill Eager testified in January before Chicago Park District commissioners in support of siting the Obama Presidential Library on the South Side.

education institutions across the city, highlights opportunities for economic development, civic partnerships and cultural enrichment.

The University of Chicago is vying to be the much-sought-after home of the President Obama Library Center and Museum. There are four contenders - two sites on either side of the university, a Lawndale site near the University of Illinois at Chicago; Columbia University in New York; and an area near the University of Hawaii.

Speaking at one of the community meetings, civil rights

activist, community leader and historian Tim Black said "Harold Washington moved the DuSable (Museum) to Washington Park in the 80s to honor the Black man who founded Chicago. It would be only fitting to honor the man (Jean Baptiste Point DuSable) whom Chicago sent to be the first black president with a museum in walking distance of the first."



The crowd at a Park District hearing was overwhelmingly supportive of the Obama library locating on the South Side.

The two sites proposed by the U of C are owned by the Chicago Park District - 21 acres in Jackson Park and 22 acres in Washington Park. The Park District is expected to authorize transferring the park land to the City make way for a potential library should the President and First Lady choose one of these park locations.

The University proposal, which includes ideas for possible collaborations with community groups and higher

Final recommendations for the presidential library are expected to be submitted in the first quarter of 2015.