

Life is a song to me.
— Dolly Parton

SKYLINE

AN INSIDE PUBLICATIONS NEWSPAPER

FREE

VOL. 122, NO. 35

NEWS OF THE LOOP, STREETERVILLE, RIVER NORTH, NEAR NORTH, GOLD COAST & OLD TOWN

insideonline.com

Data center redevelopment at 300 W. Adams approved

The plan to convert a downtown office building into a data center is getting a thumbs up from City Hall.

It may be the first of several efforts to fill empty downtown office space with data centers, as properties with the right floor layouts and infrastructure are located to operate the data centers.

Last week the Permit Review Committee of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks approved the adaptive reuse of the office building at 300 W. Adams into a data center. The project would convert about half of the historic structure built in 1920 by architect Jens Jensen that stands at the northwestern corner of W. Adams St and S. Franklin St.

Planned by Chilled AI and designed by ZPD+A and C+K Architecture, the proposal calls for converting office space on floors two through six into a data center while floors seven and above would remain as office space. New backup generators would also be added onto the roof, while the buildings ground floor would remain partially retail, though



300 W. Adams St.

Photo courtesy 42floors.com

three storefronts will be removed along Franklin St. to create space for a ComEd electrical vault.

Reportedly the second floor will hold the bulk of the data center's infrastructure with a thin band of office space along the street to screen off views of the computer stacks located inside.

The 12-story terra cotta-clad

building is an excellent example of the Gothic Revival architectural style and a fine example of the important use in Chicago of architectural terra cotta for large-scale commercial buildings.

As a part of the buildout, the light courtyard will be filled in on

DATA see p. 16

Downtown to O'Hare in 15 minutes; Musk promised 12 minute rides

Could new airport express train be free from criminals, homeless and vagrants?

A group of Chicago business and civic leaders unveiled plans to create new airport transportation in Chicago with the O'Hare Flyer, an airport express train they claim will provide a 15-minute ride from downtown to O'Hare Airport's Terminal 2 on a dedicated track with a reliable schedule of "whisper-quiet" train departures every 15 minutes.

The plan reportedly has been under study for the last three years. There is not word yet if a similar proposal is also being considered for Midway Airport.

While the nasty backups on the Kennedy Expy., and criminal safety concerns on the CTA Blue Line may prove there is a need for such a service, this is a promise

Chicago has heard before.

Elon Musk also proposed a O'Hare Express Loop project in 2018. His plan would have been accomplished by boring a giant underground tunnel leading out to O'Hare from downtown, a plan that was selected by former Mayor Rahm Emanuel to move forward, but was ultimately never built.

Last week local business leaders started selling another plan, with claims that the O'Hare Flyer will connect downtown with the airport in 15 minutes. O'Hare Flyer Founder and Chief Executive Officer Dave Lundy said, "This is a first-of-its-kind express train in the U.S. and will give Chicago a safe, reliable, world-class rider experience on a fast, whisper-quiet battery-electric train."

The claim is that the new rail line will provide "concierge-level service" on "clean trains with comfortable seats and luggage racks in every car." They say the

trains will run on continuous rail and recharge at its Downtown station near the Old Post Office and at its Terminal 2 O'Hare station.

Musk's Boring Co. promised to transport passengers between O'Hare and Block 37 in the Loop in approximately 12 minutes each way by using electric vehicles that would run through new twin underground tunnels. The project was to be funded entirely by Musk's company with no taxpayer subsidy, according to Mayor Emanuel.

Of course, unlike Musk's Space X rockets, that plan never got off the ground.

Lundy and his chief engineer Mark Walbrun said his O'Hare Flyer will build on our heritage as "America's rail capital and center of innovation. By combining three existing but underused freight rights-of-way into a dedi-

RIDES see p. 16



Rare bird sighting in River North causes stir, see page 7

Black-Crowned Night-Heron.

Photo by Russ Smith

Run Mag Mile Sept. 12

Run Mag Mile will be held downtown, 6 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Sept. 12 and will start and finish in Grant Park. The 10K route passes down Michigan Ave. and extends to Chicago's lake-front, featuring views of Lake Michigan and Monroe Harbor before returning to the finish.

The run will attract thousands of runners and forces the closure of Michigan Ave. to vehicle traffic

as participants jog past landmarks including the Chicago River, Tribune Tower, the Wrigley Building, and the historic Water Tower. Events will include live music and entertainment along the course.

Now in its 24th year, the event was organized by the Greater North Michigan Avenue Assoc. to promote the Magnificent Mile. For more information visit <https://runmagmile.com/race-details/>.

Homeowners hammered by real estate tax abuse and errors
See page 4

Six-time felon gets nine years for armed robbery of Dior store near Mag Mile

BY CWBCHICAGO

A six-time convicted felon added to his growing résumé Aug. 24 by pleading guilty to robbing the Dior boutique on Rush St. three years ago, court records show.

Judge Sophia Atcherson sentenced Anthony Bowens, 56, to nine years in prison for armed robbery, plus a concurrent seven-year sentence for a separate burglary charge, according to court records.

In August 2023, Bowens allegedly pried through two doors at the back of the Dior store at 931 N. Rush St. at 10:47 p.m. Once inside, he pulled out a firearm and held a Dior security guard at gunpoint while collecting purses and bags from store shelves, prosecutors said. CPD reports estimated the store's loss at between \$40,000 and \$48,000.

Bowens loaded the merchandise into a black Yukon in the alley and drove away. A source familiar with the investigation said detectives quickly zeroed in on Bowens because the license plate on the getaway vehicle was registered to him. The next afternoon, police spotted the Yukon near 63rd and Lowe streets. Knowing the vehicle was potentially connected to the Dior robbery, officers pulled it over.

According to a CPD arrest report, Bowens resembled the robber captured on Dior's security cameras. Officers also learned that his driver's license was suspended and took him into custody. Chicago police inventory records show officers found credit cards bearing the names of three other people during Bowens' arrest.

Bowens has a lengthy criminal record dating back more than two decades, according to Cook County court records. He was convicted of burglary and armed robbery in 2010 and received a 10-year sentence for the armed robbery conviction. His earlier convictions include felon in possession of a firearm and aggravated unlawful use of a weapon in 2004, manufacture-delivery of cocaine in 2000, and possession of a controlled substance in 1999, according to the court file.

His nine-year sentence will be reduced by 50% with good behavior. Court records show he is receiving 432 days of credit from pretrial detention, leaving him with a little more than three years left to serve.



Anthony Bowens

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Time for some Optimized Battery Charging



By Thomas J. O'Gorman

"Optimized Battery Charging." These just might be the most comforting words appearing on my computers. When you see them on your devices you know everything is going to be alright.

Your phone will not run out of juice, your calls will have no interruption, you're still connected to family and friends.

Of course my laptop is on life support.

I've spent the summer being dogged by my MacBook Pro. I think it's jealous of my iPhone.

I've lost the letter-face of two keys, and I am desperate to get a new computer. I still trust it to do everything with me. It's my typewriter. My literary storage center. My television, living dictionary and photo center. And my best pal.

Right about now I think we all could use a double dose of Optimized Battery Charging. The need is written all over the faces of men and women who are frightened, isolated and alone.

We see it expressed in the violence, despair and emptiness in all the crimes taking place across the city.

For instance, Officer Joseph Vecchio was recently arrested one day after a Chicago Police Board announced that two separate disciplinary cases may result in his dismissal. It was acknowledged that he had been part of a troubled tactical unit in his early years where he received more disciplinary complaints than any other Chicago cop. He faces dismissal.

His brutal attack on a woman and holding her against her will

resulted in his immediate arrest. He appears in desperate need of "Optimized Battery Charging."

Quentin Jones, 45, was arrested by police following a series of Gold Coast burglaries. One felony count of theft, alone, was more than \$1 million. Police had been alerted 30 days earlier when a resident on E. Scott St. returned home to find he had been robbed. CPD is still investigating.

Residents in the elegant area are still traumatized. It's a time when many are psychologically victimized as the safety and confidence of the neighborhood is shattered. The need for "Battery Charging" is desperately needed.

A motorist was recently charged in a car wreck on Lake Shore Dr. in which a motorcyclist was tragically killed. The loss of life is a brutal reminder of the unabashed trauma that can unfold in the blink of an eye. Such a loss of life demoralizes the value of human life and the danger all too present on urban thoroughfares. Lives are forever altered by the excess of bad judgement.

How will survivors cope? How is it possible to recharge those batteries?

CPD collected more than 60 shell casings when a man went on a shooting rampage in Garfield Park. In shooting 41 times, Tayvion Reynolds killed a 64 year old cancer survivor, Joanne Perry, the mother of six. This tragic incident is heartbreaking. It leaves six children orphaned. The wounds suffered by so many innocent survivors are hard to heal. The recharging of the human battery drains away with the loss of hope.

Armed robbers fatally shot a 36-year-old man after robbing a gas station in Brighton Park; Three men and two teenage boys, all migrants living in Chicago, were arrested in connection with a \$2 million armed robbery at an Indianapolis jewelry store, and Crime Stoppers is offering a \$10,000 reward for information leading to an arrest in the killing of a 59-year-old man who was found beaten in Greater Grand

Crossing.

David Wilcox, 59, was charged with first-degree murder in the fatal stabbing of his long-time partner, a 61 year old woman. He has had other problems with the police and the public.

The cup runneth over for this newspaper's crime blotter. A cursory examination of Chicago's unfolding crime scenes, tumbling from the minds and limbs of the broken should startle us all. Chicago consistently leads the nation's cities in the total number of mass shootings and mass shooting victims. Memphis, New Orleans, Baltimore, and St. Louis all try hard, but we're still #1.

Such violence creates public fear and terror that is all too much a part of everyday Chicago life. Large swaths of this city today are uninhabitable for civilized citizens.

Who can believe the stats we hear from public officials, when nearly half of all crimes are never reported. The victims go home, lick their wounds, wipe away tears, and hope their batteries will still charge. We see that criminal justice is seldom exercised in Cook County. At best, a thug gets an electronic monitor that no public officials will monitor.

Chicago has long been a gangland city, so there is no genuine expectation that we can quell violent crime. Neither Mayor Brandon Johnson nor the City Council have embraced any plan to end the violence all around us. Police have been neutered, we have no Police Superintendent, and Cook County courts free violent criminals back to our streets with no time served. The only criminal justice meted out now comes from the Feds.

What does this disorganization imply? Has there ever been a lower ebb of justice, safety, intelligence or reason?

This is not going to end with fresh hope restoring the public trust.

Right now Chicago's brighter citizens are hard at work collecting signatures to get new people on the ballots. We need a 'throw the bums out' mentality. Now that has the capacity to charge our batteries.

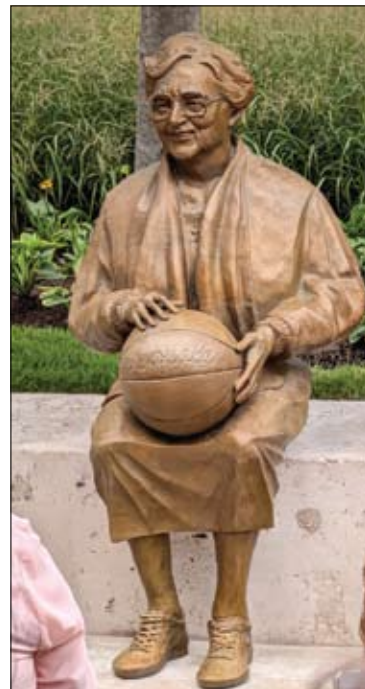
SISTER JEAN: Have you yet visited the bronze statue honoring **Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt**? It was unveiled last month at Loyola Univ. Chicago, in Rogers Park, commemorating the longtime chaplain whose influence continues to resonate across campus. We need more Sister Jean in our lives. Created by sculptor **Littleton Alston**, the statue depicts a seated Sister on a bench outside Loyola's Athletic Center on the west quad lawn, allowing visitors to sit beside her for photos or, as Alston said, perhaps leave with a little advice.

LYRIC OPERA HOUSE: Inspired by **Ferenc Molnár's** 1909 play and later the basis for the musical adaptation of **Rodgers and Hammerstein's** Carousel, "Liliom" traces a haunting story of love and redemption set against the faded glamour of a Depression-era amusement park. It is coming the Lyric starting Sept. 17, go see it.

It is one of **John Neumeier's** most profound artistic endeavors, this theatrical tour de force comes to life with a score by multi-Academy Award-winning composer **Michel Legrand**. For its Chicago premiere, Liliom features live music performed on stage by the 16-piece **Rob Parton's** Jazztech Big Band in concert with the Lyric Opera Orchestra.

GERMAN FEST: Chicago's oldest cultural festival arrives Sept. 11 - 13, the German-American festival in Lincoln Square. Oktoberfest in Chicago. It is run by the German American Societies of Greater Chicago, with the festival committee led by President **Joe Bradtke** and Vice President **Carol Himmel**. Don't miss it.

CONGRATS: Six people have been recognized as 2026 outstanding volunteers of the year for their contributions to conservation on behalf of the Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources among them was **Janice Helge**, of Chicago. Helge has been a dedicated volunteer at the Pullman State Historic Site where she researches and indexes the history of the churches in the historic district and has advocated for saving historic buildings,



Littleton Alston's sculpture encourages people to sit with Sister Jean and take photos.

Photo by Joanne Kitsos

including Reformation Lutheran Church.

PETS: Illinois Treasurer **Michael Frerichs** marked National Dog Day last week by returning \$28,000 in unclaimed property to PAWS Chicago. Most of the money was turned over by a bank to the Illinois State Treasurer's Office, money from an insurance policy. **Paula Fasseas**, Founder and Executive Chair of PAWS Chicago, said she was grateful for Frerichs and his office for connecting PAWS Chicago with these unclaimed funds. "Every dollar makes a difference in our lifesaving work, helping us save and find loving homes for nearly 5,000 homeless pets and perform more than 21,000 spay/neuter surgeries each year, including free and low-cost services that help make veterinary care more accessible to pet owners facing financial barriers." Ald. **Brian**

CHARGING- see p. 12

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INSIDE is published every Wednesday by Inside Publications
6221 N. Clark St.
Chicago, IL 60660
(773) 465-9700
E: insidepublicationschicago@gmail.com

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How our office handles billions — and protects every penny

BY MARIA PAPPAS,
Cook County Treasurer

Two times a year, my office mails nearly 1.8 million property tax bills and collects about \$20 billion. That's not a typo — \$20 billion. As Cook County Treasurer, our office oversees the second-largest property tax collection and distribution system in America.

However, we do far more than send out bills. My office is the financial center of Cook County. We collect tax payments and distribute those funds to nearly 2,200 local government agencies — from school districts and libraries to police departments, parks and public health systems. In turn, they put that money to work so it's ultimately returned to you in the form of government services.

These institutions depend on our accu-

racy and timeliness to keep your neighborhoods safe, your streets lit and your children educated.

Every dollar that comes in must be safeguarded, tracked and reported. That's why we've built an investment policy that prioritizes the safety of your money, and ensures there's always enough cash on hand to meet the County's obligations.

Risk is minimized through investment diversification. While investment returns matter, protecting your tax dollars comes first — always.

This office is also responsible for submitting financial reports to the Cook County Board of Commissioners and for managing trust funds and other special accounts.

When taxes go unpaid, we must prepare delinquency lists, notify taxpayers, obtain court orders and conduct the annual tax sale (a legal process to recover unpaid

taxes). This system is not designed to punish — it's built to enforce fairness. Everyone must pay his or her fair share.



Maria Pappas

My office also handles refunds when you overpay. Whether because of a duplicate payment, a reduction in your property's assessed value, or a court-ordered change in tax rates, we ensure that overpayments are returned. My office currently has \$105 million in available refunds from overpayments going back to 2006. We have an additional \$19 million in missed exemption payments going back to 2022. Those

years are firm legal deadlines. By law, you can only get back overpayments going back 20 years and exemptions going back four. If you don't apply in time, you could lose the refund that you're owed — which we do not want to happen. That's why we've made it easier to check your property's refund status on our website, cookcountytreasurer.com, for free — no lawyer or middleman required.

Government should not be a mystery. My job is to make sure your money is handled with precision, integrity and absolute transparency. When the tax system works fairly, it builds trust. When it builds trust, it strengthens communities. That's the work we do every day — managing billions so that Cook County works.

New law establishes rules for e-bike and scooter road hogs

But who will enforce the laws after Jan. 1?

BY BEN SZALINSKI
Capitol News Illinois

We all see them, and fear their erratic, daredevil driving skills, the double and sometimes triple-riding, and lawless behavior in running through red lights and stop signs.

New rules governing who can use electric bikes and scooters, including where and how fast they go, will go into effect next year following Gov. JB Pritzker's signature on Aug. 26.

Pritzker signed Senate Bill 3484 which establishes regulations on "micromobility" transportation that include age requirements, speed limits and rules on where they can be operated. The bill takes effect Jan. 1, 2027.

Those of a certain age will recall the cartoon with Mr. Quincy Magoo slowly driving down a road being passed by cars speed-

ing past him, as he shouted "road hog!" This cartoon was a masterclass in situational irony, where the humor comes from the total disconnect between reality and the main character's perception.

Our reality is that these speedy micro mobility devices are hogging roads today not with the girth, but with their daring.

So now the new question is what new army will enforce these new laws?

Chicago citizens see daily in Cook County courts, that a lack of criminal enforcement and no punishment rules the day. There is no real reason why the lawless of Cook County will change their ways without some ulterior pressure.

"Technology is evolving, providing expanded mobility options for our neighbors through the rise in popularity of e-bikes and scooters," said bill sponsor State Sen. Ram Villivalam. "But without clear regulations for these devices, we are seeing increased injuries and accidents — jeopardizing

community safety."

The bill passed both chambers with bipartisan support on June 1 following several amendments throughout the spring session. The new law was one of Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias' top priorities during the legislative session. He said unregulated micro-mobility devices have

become a problem in the city.

Indeed, a "road hog" is someone who takes up too much space or blocks others from passing. Mr. Magoo in the cartoon is the literal definition of a road hog in the moment, yet he projects his own driving flaws onto the people he is actively inconveniencing. The cartoon's gag is that Magoo's

pure oblivion somehow keeps him safe. While cars crash and swerve around him, he remains completely unbothered, wrapped in his own cozy, incorrect reality.

In 2026, it is our micro-mobility devices that remain completely unbothered by the chaos they may

RULES see p. 6



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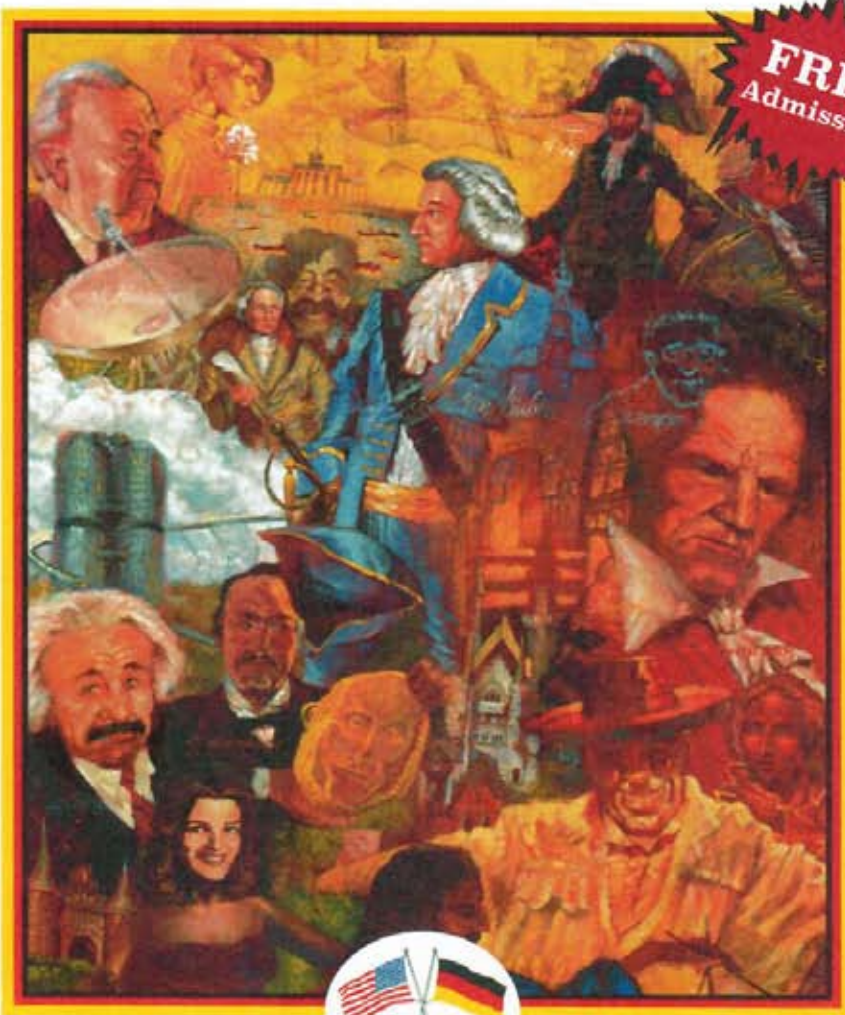
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Twilight Canoe and Kayak Sunday, September 13

The Clark Park Advisory Council is hosting an evening of twilight paddling on the Chicago River, 5:30 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 13, followed by dinner and a silent auction at the WMS Boathouse,

3400 N. Rockwell St.

This is the annual fundraiser for the Clark Park Advisory Council. For more information visit www.clarkparkadvisory.org/.

Chicago Jazz Festival this weekend

The Chicago Jazz Festival will be held this weekend in Millennium Park where guests may enjoy free performances celebrating all forms of jazz, featuring Chicago's local talent alongside national and international artists.

Shortly after legendary composer Duke Ellington died in the summer of 1974, local musicians

organized a tribute concert in Grant Park that drew over 10,000 fans and grew to become the annual Jazz Fest tradition.

It runs Thursday through Sunday, September 3-6 during the Labor Day weekend, and the event is co-hosted by the Jazz Institute of Chicago.

Lake Shore Dr. to close down Sunday

The Active Transportation Alliance [ATA] will once again shut down, and take over Lake Shore Dr. Sunday Sept. 6 for their Bike The Drive fundraiser. Lake Shore Dr. will be closed to traffic from Hollywood south to 57th St. to make way for this event.

Those who may need to travel along the North Lakefront on Sunday morning should make alternative plans. This year all vehicle traffic will be shut down starting at 6:30 a.m. and running through to about noon. North Side residents should anticipate a dramatic increase in traffic congestion on surface streets and plan travel accordingly.

The entire route loop will block about 30 miles of roadway, and is centered at Butler Field, 235 S. Columbus Dr. For those who plan to drive to the event, ATA suggests parking your cars at the Millennium Lakeside Garage, which is offering a special price for the event. It's located across from Butler Field and adjacent to Lake Shore Dr. For more information, visit www.bikethedrive.org.

Scooters, skate boards, motorized bikes and roller blading will not be permitted. Bike riders will be required to show their rider number at checkpoints along the route.



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Homeowners hammered by real estate tax abuse and errors



The Home Front

by Don DeBat

As the old saying goes, everyone suffers two inescapable maladies in life—taxes and death. However, when the problem is Cook County property taxes, the adage should include a few other words: “tax abuse, errors, and bureaucratic red tape”

According to the latest tax-bill analysis by Cook County Treasurer Maria Pappas, homeowners face a sharper increase in property taxes this year compared to businesses—a result of home values climbing much faster than commercial real estate values, which are slumping.

By Oct. 1, local governments across the county are seeking a whopping \$743.8 million in new taxes, bringing the total amount property owners must pay to more than \$19.9 billion, an increase of about 3.9% — well above the annual regional inflation rate of 3.1%.

Over the past 30 years, tax increases have pushed up the total tax tab by \$12.9 billion, or 184%, twice the 91% increase in the local cost of goods and services.

The increase in the overall tax burden is a result of local governments—school districts, cities, villages, the county and park districts—continually seeking more money from property owners.

This year marks the 32nd annual increase in a row.

Homeowners must pay \$593.4 million, or a hefty 80%, of this year's tax increase, with owners of businesses— commercial buildings, industrial plants and large multifamily properties, and vacant land picking up the rest.

It's the fifth year in a row that an increased tax burden has fallen mostly on homeowners as commercial values have declined or grown at a far smaller pace than those for homes, a trend that has continued since the COVID-19 pandemic.



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Source: American Newspapers 2023 Local Newspaper Study conducted by Coda Ventures.

“Local governments need to learn to do more with less, particularly in these precarious economic times,” Pappas advised. “Taxpayers need to vote.”

Tax Errors and red tape add to the burden

Earlier this year, the Home Front column traced the timeline on one senior-citizen property owner's delayed refund based on a whopping 21.5% 2024 tax increase on a Lincoln Park 3-flat.

In 2023, the property owner, living on a fixed income, applied for a long-awaited Senior Tax Freeze Exemption with the Cook County Assessor. The exemption was finally approved with the issuance of a “Certificate of Error” in Jan. 2026. Here are the facts:

Homeowners must pay \$593.4 million, or a hefty 80%, of this year's tax increase, with owners of businesses— commercial buildings, industrial plants and large multifamily properties, and vacant land picking up the rest.

- Income documents and required forms filed with the Assessor in 2023 showing the senior's net income was under \$65,000—the qualifying limit for the freeze.

Unfortunately, no action was taken by the Assessor in 2024. Total 2023 tax bill—after the owner's Homeowner Exemption (\$662) and Senior Exemption (\$529) were subtracted—was \$27,628.

- More documents and required forms were filed again in 2024 showing the property owner's net income was under the \$65,000, qualifying limit for the freeze. Unfortunately, no immediate action was taken by the Assessor.

After Homeowner and Senior Exemptions were subtracted, the property owner paid a total 2024 tax bill of \$33,565.94. The 1st Installment was \$13,409. The 2nd Installment rose to \$20,157.

The total 2024 tax increase was 21.5%. To cover the increase, the property owner's lender increased his mortgage payment to \$7,883 a month from \$5,826 to cover tax-escrow shortage.

- The Senior Tax Freeze finally was granted in Jan. 2026 based on documents submitted in 2023. As a result of the Senior Freeze, the property's assessed value was lowered from \$173,001 to \$130,945.

The assessment reduction created by the Senior Tax Freeze approval resulted in a reduced 2024 total property tax bill on the 3-flat of \$23,068—a savings of \$10,498.

- A Certificate of Error was issued by the Cook County Assessor in Jan. 2026. In February, the lender issued an escrow refund of about \$1,605, and lowered the borrower's monthly loan payment to \$5,446.

- After about 60 days, the senior citizen property owner finally received a 2024 tax refund

of \$10,498 from the Cook County Treasurer.

- However, when the second installment of the 2025 tax bill was posted online last week, despite the freeze, the tax bill on the Lincoln Park 3-flat jumped back up to \$19,286 from the first installment bill of \$12,687.

The shocked senior citizen checked the Cook County Assessor's website and found that his hard fought and won Senior Freeze Exemption for 2025 had not been recorded in the Assessor's office computer.

The homeowner is racing to appeal again, seeking a corrected second installment tax bill to prevent a huge increase in his mortgage escrow payment.

Elderly brain-cramp penalty

Not all errors are the fault of Cook County government. Sometimes they are caused by human error when an elderly homeowner is concerned more with his or her medical appointments and procedures more than paying property taxes on time.

Suffering from cardio issues and chronic back pain, one Northwest Side bungalow owner left town on a lengthy vacation, and simply had a brain cramp. The homeowner forgot to pay the first installment of his real estate taxes, which were due March 1. His taxes were not being escrowed by his lender.

If you pay your property taxes late, the Cook County Treasurer charges you an interest rate of .075% a month. That's 9% a year. So, when the elderly homeowner got back to town, he discovered he was six months late with his first installment tax payment.

Because of the late fee penalty, the first installment of 2025 taxes on the bungalow had grown \$678 to \$4,274. He promptly paid the passed-due first installment online. The elderly homeowner also marked his calendar for Oct. 1 when the second installment of taxes—another \$3,595—is due.

“Mistakes happen every year. Thousands of homeowners also run into problems often when lenders mishandle escrow accounts,” Pappas said. “Some lenders pay late. Some pay on the wrong Property Index Number (PIN). Some simply don't pay at all.”

If you don't notice an error, it could cost you thousands of dollars. “In seriously delinquent cases, an unpaid tax debt can cause your property to be listed in the annual state-mandated tax sale which adds costs and could even cost you your home,” Pappas warned.

After each tax installment due date, property owners are advised to visit www.cookcountytreasurer.com, click on the purple box and enter your address or PIN to confirm the payment.

For more housing news, visit www.dondebat.biz. Don DeBat is co-author of “Escaping Condo Jail,” the ultimate survival guide for condominium living. Visit www.escapingcondojail.com.

Judge tosses \$600K defamation suit filed by two politically powerful attorneys against former pot shop lenders

BY PETER VON BUOL

Citing lack of personal jurisdiction, on Aug. 18 a federal judge in Chicago dismissed a \$600 million defamation lawsuit filed in April that had been brought by two politically powerful Chicago attorneys against their former business partners who had agreed to lend them money for their marijuana-selling operations in New Jersey.

“The Court grants the defendants’ motion to dismiss under Federal Rule 12 (b) (2) without prejudice,” wrote U.S. District Judge Jeremy C. Daniel of the Northern District of Illinois.

Named as defendants in the defamation lawsuit are Leonard and Robyn Tannenbaum; Bernard Berman, Alexander Frank, Thomas Harrison, Robert Levy, Marnie Sudnow and Dan Neville, all of whom are owners and board members of the Florida-based Advanced Flower Capital [AFC], a business which provides loans and credit to the pot industry. An as-yet-unnamed AFC company spokesperson was also included in the lawsuit.

The lawsuit had been filed by Chicago-based attorneys Jon Loevy and Michael Kanovitz, who are partners in the law firm Loevy and Loevy and who also own majority interests in a group of marijuana companies operating as Justice Cannabis [JC].

According to the case file, “JC entered into multiple contracts with publicly traded lending company AFC controls and operates through two entities AFC Agent (Agent) LLC and AFC Management (Manager), LLC.”

In 2024, as a condition for lending money to JC, AFC had required JC to hire a chief restructuring officer, Tim Bossidy, to manage all operations in New Jersey. In Feb. 2025, after a dramatic decline in business, JC blamed Bossidy’s management and asked for his removal. AFC disagreed and instead sent a letter to JC in which AFC said the company was in default of the 2024 Forbearance loan agreement, according to court records.

In April 2025, the defendants had filed a draft Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act [RICO] complaint in the U.S. District Court of New York against the plaintiffs personally, accusing them of committing criminal RICO violations, fraud, and theft of \$50,000,000 from AFC, according to federal court records.

“They followed this with statements to the media... which publicized the complaint to the legal community as a whole and in Illinois specifically.” In this statement, the defendants asserted Loevy and Kanovitz have “defrauded AFC to line their own pockets and prop up other business ventures.”

JC then instituted the second lawsuit in New Jersey. “That court found JC was not in breach or default of the loan agreement and granted a preliminary injunction, barring the defendants from instituting foreclosure proceedings,” wrote Daniel in his opinion.

While Daniel did not dispute Loevy and Kanovitz had suf-

fered harm in Illinois due to the statements by AFC officials and its spokesperson, his ruling was strictly about jurisdiction.

“While the plaintiffs have adequately alleged they have suffered harm in Illinois because of the defamatory statements, the fact that the plaintiffs have suffered harm in Illinois is not enough to establish personal jurisdiction,” according to Daniel.

Daniel denied the defendants’ motion for sanctions against Loevy, Kanovitz and the law firm Norton Rose and Fullbright which has been representing them in court proceedings.

Daniel said a court should not impose sanctions on a party that loses a legal argument, as long as the argument was not entirely groundless.

“This Court [does not have] the impression that the plaintiffs remade identical arguments in this case to harass the defendants,”

wrote Daniel.

One of the most successful and wealthy trial attorneys in the history of the State of Illinois, Jon Loevy, is among those who earlier this year had been awarded direct forgivable loans financed by the state of Illinois through its Cannabis Social Equity Loan Program.

Loevy is a business partner in two separate but related marijuana business entities, Batavia Wellness and Renu. His eponymously named law firm, Loevy and Loevy (his late father Arthur is the other Loevy) has had 27 jury verdict awards of more than \$1 million. These include a \$238 million judgment in a biometrics case against BNSF, a transportation company owned by billionaire Warren Buffet.

Loevy’s cousin, Mike Kanovitz, is his partner at the law firm and he is also a partner in Renu/Bloc cannabis. With Botavi Well-

ness, he is a partner of Mitch Zaveduk, a car wash operator and real estate appraiser. Previously, Zaveduk had been a senior vice president and chief appraiser at MB Financial Bank.

Through the Illinois Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity [DCEO], 95 licensed “social equity businesses” from across all license types (craft growers, retail stores, infusers and transporters) were awarded Direct Forgivable Loans financed by state taxpayers.

The state government does not typically lend money directly to businesses. And a forgivable loan is really more like a gift.

In most instances, the state will provide tax incentives and infrastructure improvements to encourage economic growth.

Because marijuana is still a controlled substance at the federal level, the state has decided to become a lender as banks typi-

cally will not lend money to businesses engaged in a still-illicit activity. Only, bank loans must be paid back.

Illinois has become increasingly reliant on pot sales taxes. Since 2012, state tax revenue for cigarettes has declined steeply as tobacco has dropped out of favor. State officials believe pot to be a viable replacement.

While Illinois was one of the first states to allow legal pot sales, it is now facing stiff competition from surrounding states which tax the product at a lower rate. Illinois has some of the most costly pot in the nation, whereas Michigan, Missouri, Oregon and Oklahoma are all lower in cost.

Michigan and Oregon currently have the lowest cost pot in the United States, with average prices dropping below \$4 per gram. Michigan averages around \$2 to

SUIT see p. 10



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North Branch Works river tour Sept. 10

North Branch Works will be hosting a Chicago River tour cruise fundraiser 6 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 10, at the downtown Wendella boat launch. Tickets are \$105.

The night will include raffles, a catered dinner, drinks, and views of the North Branch of the Chicago River.

The boat will depart from the dock at 400 N. Michigan Ave. For more information write to phoebe@northbranchworks.org.

North Branch Works is a nonprofit community development organization that promotes job creation and economic growth along the North Branch of the Chicago River.

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Small cat sanctuary has big impact on North Side

Touched By An Animal now in second year of "Pets to the Vet" mobile health program for low-income seniors

A small, local cat sanctuary on the North Side is making a big community impact by bringing healthcare directly to the pets of vulnerable neighbors. The Touched By An Animal [TBA] sanctuary, a cageless no-kill haven located at 2131 W. Berwyn Ave., is anchoring a busy season of community initiatives with the second year of its innovative Pets to the Vet program.

Their grant-funded Pets to the Vet initiative helps low-income seniors receive essential veterinary care for their pets without leaving home. The sanctuary coordinates and funds mobile veterinary visits at senior residential living facilities, providing on-site check-ups – inclusive of a standard wellness exam, nail trimming, and basic vaccines – free of cost for those who cannot afford the services.

TBA is now looking to expand this service to qualifying seniors. Representa-

tives from local churches, senior community groups, and senior residential living facilities interested in this resource are encouraged to contact the TBA for additional information.

This initiative is part of the TBA's mission: keeping people and their companion animals together by providing the support elderly and vulnerable pet owners need to maintain that bond.

At the same time, the sanctuary continues to care for kittens and cats until they are ready for loving adoptive homes. Community members interested in taking a cat into their family are encouraged to contact TBA to learn more about available cats, the adoption process, and how adopting locally helps open space for more animals in need.

In addition to its senior healthcare outreach, TBA has recently connected with neighbors through several high-profile local events:

- Lincoln Square Cat Tour Partnership: Opened its doors for a special morning tour on Aug. 8, welcoming approximately 30 visitors for guided walks through its

home facility.

- Meowapalooza Bingo Night: Hosted a packed community fundraiser featuring local TV personality Linda Kollmeyer as the emcee.

- NBC Chicago Today Spotlight: Appeared on NBC's Chicago Today to champion local rescue efforts for the annual national "Clear the Shelters" campaign.

"We are thrilled to showcase our lifesaving work through these community events," said Executive Director Melanee Schoendorff. "Opening our doors and sharing our mission not only brings neighbors together, but it ultimately helps us find more loving, permanent homes for pets in need."

Founded by Sister Marijon Binder in 1984 to nurture the life-changing bond between humans and animals—particularly seniors and vulnerable populations—TBA provides lifelong sanctuary, rescue and adoption services, and specialized care for cats in need.

For more information visit www.touchedbyananimal.org.

RULES from p. 3

be creating as they pass through their own incorrect reality.

"As these high-powered devices become faster and more common on our streets and sidewalks, the stakes are simply too high to leave them unregulated and outpacing public safety," Giannoulis said. "This law brings accountability and common-sense safety standards to our roads while helping prevent serious injuries and ensuring riders, parents and communities understand how to safely share the road."

But do these new laws really usher in accountability? Chicago now depends a great

deal on spy cameras and Artificial Intelligence to police red lights and speeding, is this industrial-strength spying network now going to be programmed to track e-scooters and e-bikes too? If so, how will that work?

The state already has some regulations for low-speed electric bikes and scooters, but regulation often varies at the local level. The bill creates new statewide standards for high-speed electric bikes and scooters, electric motor bikes, and electric unicycles and skateboards.

Will this effort now require a statewide e-mobility police force? Will our peace officers soon be chasing down these scoff-laws through alleys and parking lots, across lawns and in-between traffic on speedy new e-bikes and scooters?

"Municipal leaders have been responding in real time as new electric devices appear on local streets, sidewalks and bike paths," said Illinois Municipal League CEO Brad Cole. "A statewide framework gives communities greater consistency while providing local officials and law enforcement with clearer guidance."

Law enforcement groups were also in support of the bill.

The changing laws create a new tier of regulations for "high-speed" e-bikes, which have electric motors and can travel faster than 28 mph. Those would be regulated similarly to motorcycles and require users to have a driver's license, insurance, an ownership title and register the vehicle with the state. They also must be driven on roads.

"Low-speed" e-bikes are already regulated by the state, but the law creates new tiers that govern how old a person must be to drive them. Drivers must be 15 years old to operate a Class 1 pedal-assist bike that travels up to 20 mph, such as Chicago's Divvy Bikes, and a Class 2 motor-powered bike that doesn't have to be pedaled.

People must be 16 years old to drive pedal-assist bikes that can travel up to 28 mph. But many of the modifications that create these rogue high-speed bikes and scooters, are enhanced privately with kits. It's hard to imagine these users reporting themselves to city and state regulators.

All low-speed e-bikes can be used on streets, bike lanes, paths and trails, but not on sidewalks.

Some high-speed electric scooters can reach speeds of 50 mph, but the new regulations limit riders to traveling up to 28 mph. Riders would be allowed to operate them on paths, bike lanes, roads with speed limits up to 35 mph, or roads with higher speed limits if there is a bike lane. Users must be 16 years old.

Low-speed electric scooters that top out at 20 mph would also be allowed on paths,

bike lanes, and roads by users who are at least 16 years old, down from 18 years old in current law.

Battery-powered devices designed for young children would be unregulated aside from a stipulation they must stay on sidewalks and paths.

How state and local law enforcement will tell the difference between the two classes of users is unexplained. Municipalities and police forces across Illinois will have to deploy specialized enforcement teams, task forces, and tech-driven units to crack down on reckless, illegal, and modified e-scooter and e-bike riders.

Users who violate the regulations could pay fines and have their devices confiscated and impounded by the police. They are also subject to other existing traffic laws and penalties as well. But first they'll need to get caught. That's where having an army comes in handy.

As micro-mobility accidents and pedestrian complaints surge, cities like Chicago will have to move away from simple warnings and aggressively use specialized tactical units, impoundment campaigns, and advanced tech to reign in "rogue" riders who are running red lights and stop signs, speeding, or weaving through traffic and pedestrian zones.

Safety concerns

Supporters of the legislation say the devices create vast new safety hazards for both riders and pedestrians because some can travel more than 40 mph and can often be found sharing space on both sidewalks and busy streets.

The Chicago Dept. of Transportation has installed vast new networks of concrete obstacles and roadway barriers on area streets meaning vehicle traffic frequently is trapped, and traveling at less than 20 mph. Delivery vehicles are also now forced to double park in active lanes of traffic due to privileged bike lanes, so an e-bike moving at 40 mph through traffic creates quite a speed differential that is already creating bad accidents.

Several crashes involving young riders on e-bikes have made headlines this summer in Chicago.

For instance, a 15-year-old on a Lime e-scooter was killed when he lost control and was hit by a semi-truck near the intersection of Western Ave. and Irving Park Rd. in early August. Many other youths have been killed or maimed in e-scooter accidents on the city streets the last few years.

The Secretary of State's office plans to use a public awareness campaign to make people aware of the new law and will be updating driver education materials. Details on any new enforcement armies have yet to be disclosed.

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An adult Black-Crowned Night-Heron (left). Once fully grown these Herons have a dark blue cap and back, grey wings, a white underside and striking red eyes.

Photos by Russ Smith

Rare bird sighting causes stir, excitement for avian lovers

BY PAUL CHANCEY

A rare bird landed on the windowsill of a River North office building in July, surprising office worker Alaina Neiburger. She took a video of the bird, suspecting the species, but completely unsure. The video she took promptly went viral, especially among birdwatchers, who identified it as a juvenile, Black-Crowned Night-Heron.

"I was trying to find a conference room for a meeting [we] were about to have," she told us, and as she did... "I walked into the room, I could tell there was a large bird on the windowsill outside that I had not seen before and couldn't recognize. I kept thinking about how much it looked like a dinosaur."

Neiburger took a video of the bird, audibly wondering what it was, because she couldn't recognize it, and posted it to her socials.

After stepping away for a few minutes, she returned to her socials and found the video had gone viral among the bird-watching set, even making it to Fox 32 News.

"I think at lunch or sometime early afternoon, I opened it up real quick just to look, and I saw [that] there were hundreds of



Young Black-crowned Night-Herons leave the nest at the age of 1 month but cannot fly until they are 6 weeks old.

Photo by Russ Smith

comments," she said about the video going viral.

Black-Crowned Night-Herons are a state endangered species but have found a home in Chicago. Amy Lardner, founder of the Chicago Black-Crowned Night Heron Project, said that the herons started nesting in Lincoln Park Zoo in 2006.

"When we saw the photo of the juvenile in River North, we're like, 'This is such a great opportunity to share the word, and let more people know that Black-Crowned Night Herons are really cool, and they're nesting right here at the zoos,' in Lincoln Park.

She heard about Neiburger's

video through a longtime friend who tipped her off and informed her of the sensation. She proceeded to reach out to Fox 32's Joanie Lum. The story about her experience aired on July 16.

The birds have taken residence in the children's zoo section, which runs up along the zoo's western edge along Stockton Dr. They particularly seem to like living above the wolves and bears, and Lardner suggested it's because those two species, which are of course predators, scare off predators lower on the food chain. The bird in question may have been based there.

Black-Crowned Night Herons

do not resemble the public image of a heron upon first glance. Their resting position is typically hunched, making them look like most other birds, until they extend their neck while hunting. Neiburger noted that this behavior reminded her of dinosaurs, and she compared her bird to one. Juvenile herons, like the one she saw, have brown plumage with spots. They turn mostly white and grey upon reaching adulthood.

According to Lardner, the birds have made the whole city their home, going to every one of the city's 77 community areas. Juveniles like the one Neiburger photographed are literally and figuratively stretching their wings. Spring is their primary breeding season, so there weren't many around when we visited the zoo to talk about the birds. According to Lardner, historically, the herons nested in a handful of sites across Illinois, but the state has lost 85-90% of its wetlands, the heron's main ecosystem, to agriculture. There were approximately 1,600 of these birds in Illinois around 1992. The Univ. of Illinois Urbana-Champaign has been tracking the herons.

But now the bird thrives in Chicago, thanks to the proverbial smorgasbord of food options—Lake Michigan being one of

them. "Starting in 2006, they suddenly appeared nesting on South Pond Island here in Lincoln Park, and Conservation was like, 'what the hell?'" Lardner said. They have adapted well to urban environments, like Oakland CA, as Lardner mentioned. She believes that the city's tall buildings provide some "training grounds" for them.

The herons have become like a secondary exhibit for the zoo,

BIRD see p. 13

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Police Beat...

Four arrested after CPD tracks Grant Park robbery crew

Four suspects are in custody after a Chicago Police Dept. surveillance camera operator spotted them robbing victims in Grant Park on Aug. 25. Officers tracked the getaway car to Chinatown and arrested the crew as they tried to escape on the Red Line.

Shortly after 3 a.m., patrol officers interrupted an auto theft in progress near Sedgwick and Evergreen in Old Town. The thieves sped away, leaving the other vehicle behind with its doors open.

But CPD continued to track the getaway car electronically as it headed south on Lake Shore Dr. When the suspects reached Monroe St. at 3:15 a.m., they targeted a couple walking in the area. A police spokesperson said the victims, a 21-year-old woman and a 28-year-old man, were in the 300 block of E. Monroe St. when four men approached them. All four members of the crew displayed weapons and took property from the victims, police said.

CPD was monitoring the area via a nearby surveillance camera, and an officer directed patrol units to the scene. Those units began chasing the car but terminated the pursuit when it entered the expressway, according to police radio transmissions. Police used other techniques to continue tracking the vehicle and located the crew after they abandoned the stolen gray Hyundai Sonata in a parking lot in Chinatown. Officers then chased all four on foot.

Cops arrested the crew in the 100 block of W. Cermak Rd, police said. At least one weapon was recovered on the Cermak-Chinatown CTA Red Line station stairs.

Initially, the victims declined to sign complaints and would not travel to Chinatown to identify the suspects. Ultimately, however, they agreed to go and confirmed police had arrested the correct individuals. Charges were pending.

Woman says she was shot after leaving Lincoln Park bar

Police are investigating a woman's claim that she was shot in the foot after leaving a Lincoln Park bar early on Aug. 29.

The 33-year-old woman walked into Stroger Hospital around 3:50 a.m. with a gunshot wound to her right foot. She told Chicago police she was a passenger in a vehicle traveling in the 1100 block of W. Wrightwood when she heard gunshots and realized she had been hit, according to a CPD media statement. She was listed in fair condition, police said.

But police received no calls reporting gunfire in the area. Neither the woman nor anyone else in the vehicle called 911 to report that they had been shot at, and officers did not find shell casings or other evidence of a shooting in the area.

If investigators determine the woman was shot as she described, she would be the fourth person shot in Lincoln Park this year. Two of the other shootings, including

one that was fatal, have been linked by city officials to The Dime, a now-shuttered bar in the 2200 block of N. Lincoln Ave. The bar was about four blocks south of where the woman reported being shot.

Lakeview man shot after being forced into apartment

A 33-year-old man told police he was shot after being forced into an apartment at gunpoint near Belmont Harbor Sunday evening. Chicago police are investigating what led to the shooting.

The man called 911 around 7:39 p.m. and reported that he had been shot in the 3600 block of N. Pine Grove Ave. Officers found him with a gunshot wound to the neck. Chicago Fire Dept. paramedics took him to Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center in serious condition. The victim lives in the building where he was found.

The shooting was the third reported shooting victim in Lakeview this year, one more than at this point last year. It remains well below the neighborhood's totals in recent years and is the lowest year-to-date figure since 2018, when one person had been shot at this point in the year.

Scooter thief is stealing rides across the North Side

Chicago police are warning North Side residents about a man suspected of stealing electric scooters in a series of daytime thefts. In a new community alert, CPD linked the man to seven scooter thefts since June.

However, this reporter has received emails from readers reporting similar incidents, suggesting the pattern may extend beyond the cases identified by police.

According to police, the man has been disabling the scooters by carving into their ignition systems, allowing him to bypass the key-start function and ride away. All seven thefts identified by police occurred during daylight or early evening hours, according to the alert. Police described the suspect as a White man in his 50s who has been seen wearing a white shirt, blue shorts and a fanny pack.

The thefts identified by police occurred at the following locations and times: the 700 block of W. Brompton Ave. on June 9 at 1 p.m.; 4100 block of N. Sheridan Rd. on June 21 at noon; 3500 block of N. Lake Shore Dr. on June 30 at 6:30 p.m.; 600 block of W. Briar Place on July 8 at 2 p.m.; 1900 block of W. Roscoe St. on July 21 at 3 p.m.; 4600 block of N. Western Ave. on August 18 at 6 p.m., and on the 4700 block of N. Western Ave. on August 22 at 7 p.m.

Police are asking anyone with information about the thefts or the suspect to contact Area Three detectives at 312-744-8263. Anonymous tips can be submitted through CPDTIP.com using crime pattern number P26-3-028.

CWB Chicago has reported on similar scooter theft patterns in Chicago over the years. In April 2025, a 32-time convicted felon received a six-year prison sentence for stealing scooters. The same man received 10 concurrent eight-year sentences in 2020 for a similar series of thefts. There is no indication from CPD that he is a suspect in the latest crime wave.

Woman accused of killing motorcyclist in fiery DUI crash is released by defendant-friendly judge

A Cook County judge released a woman on electronic monitoring Aug. 22 despite allegations that she rear-ended a motorcyclist on Lake Shore Dr. while drunk, then dumped what appeared to be a liquor bottle in Lake Michigan, leaving the rider fatally injured on the pavement.



Miracle Hall, left, and Mehnoosh Hatam.

Judge D'Anthony Thedford denied a request from prosecutors to detain Miracle Hall, 25, ahead of trial on charges of aggravated DUI causing a fatal accident, instead sending her home on an ankle monitor. It marks the second time this month that Thedford declined to detain a defendant accused of drunk driving in a fatal crash. On Aug. 11, he released a man accused of fleeing the scene of a fatal crash in Lakeview while the victim's body remained inside his vehicle.

During Saturday's detention hearing, Assistant State's Attorney Kevin Nolan said Chicago police surveillance footage shows 49-year-old motorcycling enthusiast Mehnoosh Hatam riding south on Lake Shore Dr. near Jackson Blvd. around 11 p.m. Aug. 19. Hatam, a grandmother and advocate for female riders, was widely known as the "Princess of Persia." Nolan said Hall was driving a 2016 Ford Fusion behind Hatam in the same lane.

As they passed Jackson, Hatam moved into the far inside lane, with video showing her merging in front of a Chevrolet Suburban. Hall then approached at a high rate of speed and "aggressively" merged in front of the Suburban, positioning her Ford between the SUV and Hatam's motorcycle, according to prosecutors.

As the vehicles approached Buckingham Fountain, Hall struck Hatam's motorcycle from behind, Nolan said. The Ford Fusion "mounted" the motorcycle and continued south, dragging it along Lake Shore Dr. The impact caused the Ford to catch fire, with police video showing "what appears to be a ball of fire," Nolan said. The crash destroyed the Fusion's airbags and its "black box" recording device.

Hatam was thrown from the motorcycle as Hall's car dragged it down the drive. The motorcycle eventually broke free and skidded about 150 feet before coming to rest south of the burning Ford, Nolan said.

Another driver stopped and protected Hatam, who was still breathing, from oncoming traffic. She died less than an hour later.

A third witness saw Hall walk away from the burning Ford while talking on the phone and acknowledging that she had struck a motorcycle, Nolan said. The witness then saw Hall run toward Lake Michigan carrying a glass bottle "consistent in size and shape as that of a handle of liquor" and dump the bottle and its contents into the lake before returning to the crash scene, according to Nolan. Police video also allegedly captured the bottle disposal.

When officers arrived, they detected a "strong odor of an alcoholic beverage" on Hall's breath, Nolan said. A Breathalyzer test showed she had a blood alcohol concentration of .100, above Illinois' legal limit of .08, according to Nolan.

Thedford ultimately denied the state's request to detain Hall and ordered her released on electronic monitoring while she awaits trial.

In May, we reported that Thedford denies detention requests nearly twice as often as his colleagues in the Pretrial Division at the Leighton Criminal Courthouse. While the overall approval rate for detention filings in the division is about 69%, we reported, Thedford had approved



A U.S. Customs and Border Protection photo of the seized khat. [Courtesy, U.S. Customs and Border Protection.]

Men packed 750 lbs of stimulant into 12 suitcases on flight to O'Hare

Two men accused of smuggling over 750 lbs of the illegal stimulant "khat" into the United States by packing the stimulant into a dozen checked suitcases and bringing them on a flight from Africa to O'Hare International Airport, according to a state criminal complaint.

Prosecutors said the substance cathinone, commonly known as khat, has "no acceptable medical use" and presents "a high degree of addiction."

Mustapha Fisuru, 24, and Tiekoro Diawara, 25, are each charged with manufacture-delivery of a controlled substance and controlled substance trafficking. Judge James Costello denied the state's request to detain both men.

According to the state's detention filing, Fisuru and Diawara arrived at O'Hare from Senegal, with each man checking six large suitcases and carrying a backpack. Agents with U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Interdiction Trafficking Task Force noticed the men while conducting surveillance at Terminal 5 baggage claim, prosecutors said.

The agents saw the pair split up to look like they weren't traveling together and noticed that both men seemed unsure which luggage belonged to them. The men then eventually asked airport staff to help load the bags onto carts, according to the filing. Customs agents approached them for a secondary inspection as they exited baggage claim.

A search of Fisuru's luggage revealed 83 large bundles of suspected khat, with an additional bundle found in his backpack, prosecutors said. Agents reported finding 82 bundles in Diawara's checked bags and one more in his backpack. In total, prosecutors said Fisuru was carrying 379.51 lbs of suspected khat, while Diawara had 374.83 lbs.

According to the detention filing, Diawara told investigators Fisuru had

recruited him for an all-expenses-paid trip to Africa to pick up suitcases containing what he was told was "Miranga" tea, in exchange for \$1,000 upon their return to the U.S. He said that after landing in Senegal, the two were picked up by car, taken to a hotel for several hours, and later collected by a van that already had the suitcases loaded inside.

Diawara allegedly said he was told while overseas that the material was "Rosemary," which he understood to be used for medicinal purposes. Prosecutors said agents also found text messages containing instructions for avoiding law enforcement in Chicago, but Diawara claimed the instructions were meant to help the men minimize delays so they would make their connecting flight to New York City.

Fisuru allegedly told investigators his brother had recruited him to travel to Africa to retrieve suitcases containing "Raspberry Tea," and that he was asked to bring along a friend, which is how Diawara became involved. Fisuru said he knew little about his brother's tea business and that this was his first time helping with a pickup.

Prosecutors said agents also recovered messages between Fisuru and his brother discussing the pickup of suitcases from individuals at other airports in the northeastern United States, along with payment for delivering them.

In addition to Fisuru and Diawara, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection announced that a third man was arrested at O'Hare on Aug. 20 for smuggling khat. Altogether, the three subjects allegedly tried to bring over 1,170 lbs of the illegal stimulant into the U.S. through the airport, the agency said. It did not identify any of the subjects by name.

just 42% of detention petitions presented to him for non-domestic city felony cases since winning his election on March 17.

Since our story ran in May, Thedford's performance has remained steady. In the past five months, he has rejected detention petitions 60% of the time.

Earlier this month, he refused to detain Miroslaw Ciszek, a 34-year-old man accused of striking a 25-year-old female pedestrian in Lakeview, then speeding away from the scene with her body lying inside his vehicle. He soon crashed and then escaped on foot, leaving the woman inside the wrecked car, prosecutors told Thedford.

Like Hall, Thedford put Ciszek on an ankle monitor. But he didn't order him to refrain from drinking. Rather, he said Ciszek was to have "no excessive or public consumption of alcohol" while awaiting trial, according to a court filing.

Man gets six years for five loaded firearms found after high-speed chase

A felon has been sentenced to six

years in federal prison for illegally possessing five loaded firearms during a high-speed chase southbound on the Kennedy Expy.

On July 30, 2024, Timothy McDowell was a passenger in a stolen car traveling on the Kennedy Expy. as a police helicopter followed overhead. The chase grew to more than 100 mph before they exited the highway and speed through residential streets.

After the vehicle parked in a garage, McDowell ran from pursuing officers and attempted to abandon a backpack he was carrying. He was arrested after a brief chase. Inside his backpack were five loaded handguns, one of which had a defaced serial number while another had a large-capacity magazine attached to it.

McDowell had previously been convicted of multiple felony offenses and was legally prohibited from possessing a firearm.

McDowell, 36, pleaded guilty earlier this year to a federal charge of unlawful possession of a fire-

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Former Budlong Chicken owner goes to prison for COVID relief money fraud

BY CWBCHICAGO

The former owner of the Budlong Hot Chicken chain and other restaurants in Chicago and Denver has been sentenced to 30 months in federal prison after admitting he fraudulently obtained more than \$2.3 million in COVID relief funds and failed to turn over more than \$430,000 in taxes withheld from his employees.

Jared Leonard, 45, of Littleton, CO, was sentenced this month by U.S. District Judge Edmond E. Chang in Chicago. Chang also ordered him to pay approximately \$2.8 million in restitution to the IRS and U.S. Small Business Administration, federal prosecutors said.

Leonard submitted at least 10 fraudulent applications for Pay-

check Protection Program and Economic Injury Disaster Loan funds between April 2020 and March 2021, each containing false information about his businesses, including employee counts, payroll expenses, gross revenue and whether the businesses were operating, according to a government sentencing memorandum.

Rather than using the money to support his restaurants and employees during the pandemic, Leonard used most of it for personal expenses, including the purchase of a sprawling home on more than seven acres in Evergreen, CO, vehicles and international travel.

Just days after receiving more than \$1 million from his first three fraudulent PPP loans, Leonard signed a contract to purchase

the Colorado property and notified other parties involved in the transaction that he was “considering doing this deal with all cash,” the memorandum said. He spent at least \$63,000 on improvements to the home, including \$5,200 for a mattress.

The government said Leonard also used COVID funds to buy a \$31,500 recreational vehicle and a \$74,000 Ford F-450 pickup truck. He also used the money for everyday expenses at restaurants and gas stations, as well as more than \$5,600 in purchases in Las Vegas and more than \$15,000 at the Four Seasons and other locations in Vail. He spent more than \$12,000 at the Four Seasons and other locations in Punta Mita, Mexico, during Oct. 2020, prosecutors said.



Jared Leonard

The sentencing memorandum also said Leonard failed to pay federal income, Social Security and Medicare taxes withheld from his employees. Over 15 months, the unpaid withholdings allegedly totaled more than \$430,000.

He was indicted in Cook County in November 2024 on sales tax

evasion and related charges. A warrant was issued for his arrest after he failed to appear in court two months later. Before long, Colorado authorities seized several of Leonard's restaurants for delinquent taxes, the memorandum said. Disgruntled employees told law enforcement that Leonard was living in Mexico and operating a restaurant there. Leonard was ultimately located and detained by Mexican authorities and removed to Denver before being transferred to federal custody in Illinois.

News reports indicate Leonard sold the Budlong Hot Chicken chain in 2022. At the time they had multiple locations on Chicago's North Side.

City Council to consider deals with two men Foxx believed committed 'heinous' murder

BY JONATHAN BILYK
Cook County Record

The Chicago City Council could move forward, perhaps as soon as September, to potentially pay millions of dollars to two Mexican men who claim they were coerced into confessing to the “heinous” murder of a Chicago couple to allegedly help a woman steal the couple's baby, even as Cook County's controversial former top prosecutor admitted under oath that she and other prosecutors believe the men are guilty of the crime.

On Aug. 11, a federal judge noted in an entry on his court's docket that attorneys for the city and for Arturo DeLeon-Reyes had finalized a settlement deal.

The terms of that deal have not yet been disclosed, and will not until the deal is presented to the City Council's Finance Committee. In a separate entry, the parties indicated the deal is contingent on approval from the City Council and that they are aiming to place the settlement on the Finance Committee's September agenda.

That action comes months after the parties told the court they had also finalized a settlement agreement with Gabriel Solache, which would be advanced to the Council simultaneously with the DeLeon-Reyes deal.

It is expected, however, that the deals will likely be worth millions of dollars in taxpayer cash for each of the men.

Both DeLeon-Reyes and Solache claim they were coerced by former Chicago Police Detective Reynaldo Guevara and at least one other Chicago Police officer into confessing to killing Mariano and Jacinta Soto in 1998.

Solache and Reyes were convicted and sentenced to prison, after they both confessed to assisting in stabbing the Sotos to death in their home in Chicago. Prosecutors said the men allegedly helped kill the Sotos to help abduct their two children on behalf of Adriana Mejia, so Mejia could allegedly fulfill her dream of becoming a mother.

Both men recanted their confessions and accused Chicago police officers of coercing them.

Reyes and Solache were even-

tually exonerated and freed when then-Cook County State's Attorney Foxx declined in 2017 to pursue new trials against either man.

The men swiftly filed lawsuits against the city and the police officers involved.

They were later presented with so-called “certificates of innocence” by Cook County judges in 2022 and 2023, respectively, after Foxx's office again conspicuously declined to contest their innocence claims.

However, those decisions by Foxx's office have become a new focus in court.

In a separate case brought by two women who also claim they were coerced into confessing to murder by Guevara and other Chicago Police officers, Foxx has already been questioned under oath about her office's moves to essentially provide a runway for the lawsuits against the city to take flight.

And in her testimony, Foxx revealed her office decided to not

oppose the innocence petitions, even though she and other prosecutors believed both Solache and DeLeon-Reyes were guilty of the

mations to people against whom their offices had earlier secured convictions.

However, court records re-

In Kim Foxx's testimony, she further confirmed that the decision in 2022 and 2023 to not oppose the certificate of innocence petitions came after high-level meetings with representatives from the Exoneration Project, a Chicago group tied to lawyers who have secured many millions of dollars in payouts from the city on behalf of people who claim they were wrongfully convicted.

crimes for which they had been convicted.

Generally, such certificates of innocence can only be obtained when someone who has been convicted of a crime persuades a judge that they are actually innocent — a legal standard upheld by the Illinois Supreme Court as recently as Oct. 2025.

Typically, that process is adversarial, as prosecutors routinely argue against granting such procla-

vealed that Foxx's office apparently decided to stop opposing certificate of innocence petitions, and particularly from anyone convicted in cases in which Guevara participated.

Guevara has stood at the center of scores of cases accusing him of wrongful convictions, alleging he improperly coerced confessions and framed those later convicted of crimes, including murder.

To date, published reports have

indicated the city of Chicago has paid \$142 million to settle 14 lawsuits in which Guevara is linked to alleged wrongful prosecutions for murder.

There are still dozens of lawsuits pending involving misconduct accusations against Guevara, including Solache and DeLeon-Reyes, and two women in separate proceedings who were granted certificates of innocence after prosecutors essentially allowed them to walk free, despite their confessions to participating in the murder of rival gang members.

In Foxx's testimony, she fur-

MURDER see p. 14



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Patrick is an expert on Chicago's cultural and development history, and has collaborated with the Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development at DePaul University since 2014. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Communications and a Bachelor's Degree in History from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Patrick is a former editor at Forgotten Chicago, an organization that researched and explored Chicagoland's overlooked built environment and infrastructure.

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SUIT from p. 5

\$4 per gram, with many ounces of flower selling for under \$60 to \$90 due to high market saturation and over 1,000 cultivators.

Recreational dope in Illinois typically costs about \$14 per gram for flower, and \$200 to \$400 per ounce before taxes. Those taxes typically add another 37% to Chicago’s high-cost pot.

According to the DCEO, “recipients were determined based on factors including social equity

status, financial need, financial resources, and progress toward becoming operational.”

Seven pot shops co-owned by Loevy each received a forgivable state loan of \$245,000, including Botavi’s Nirvana store in Lincoln Square at 2301 W. Lawrence Ave. That store is situated on a metered city-owned parking lot. It also happens to be across the street from a pre-school/kindergarten and very close to St. Matthias Elementary School.

At the time the loans were

awarded, Illinois Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton said the purpose of the loans was to “break down barriers” and to “expand opportunities for entrepreneurs who had too often been left out of emerging industries.”

Taken at face value, her statement implies the state’s \$31.8 million in loan program was intended to support disadvantaged individuals to open their own businesses, not wealthy lawyers who routinely earn multi-million dollar verdicts.

POLICE BEAT from p. 8

arm. On Aug. 20, U.S. District Judge Sharon Johnson Coleman sentenced McDowell to six years in federal prison.

Venezuelan man gets 5 years for mugging 85-year-old woman in the Gold Coast, claims to be ‘political prisoner’ in his home country

A Venezuelan man was sentenced to five years in prison Aug. 27 for robbing an 85-year-old woman in the Gold Coast, stealing a necklace from another woman in the Loop, and burglarizing a man’s pickup truck in Boystown, according to court records. But he took time to tell the judge that he is a “political prisoner” back home.

Ignacio Linares-Rodriguez, 41, pleaded guilty to robbery of a victim older than 60, robbery and burglary. Judge Timothy Joyce sentenced him to five years on each count, with the sentences to run concurrently.

The crime spree began around 7 a.m. July 25, 2025, when Linares-Rodriguez allegedly followed the 85-year-old woman into her apart-

ment building in the 100 block of W. Oak St. Once inside, prosecutors said, he tore a bracelet from her wrist and tried to take her necklace and ring. When the ring would not come off, he allegedly bit her left ring finger in



Ignacio Alfonso Linares-Rodriguez

an attempt to remove it. The woman resisted, and Linares-Rodriguez fled, according to prosecutors.

Three days later, Linares-Rodriguez rode a Divvy bike through the

Loop and approached a woman who was walking to work in the 200 block of N. LaSalle St. Prosecutors said he ripped a gold chain from her neck and rode away.

Then, on August 9, Linares-Rodriguez climbed into a pickup truck in the 3700 block of N. Halsted St. while the owner was asleep inside. According to prosecutors, Linares-Rodriguez used the man’s cellphone to make several calls. When the victim woke up, Linares-Rodriguez fled with the device.

Later that day, police monitoring surveillance cameras downtown spotted Linares-Rodriguez walking into a pawn shop in the 400 block of S. Clark St. and recognized him, according to a CPD report. Officers were dispatched to the shop and arrested him. Police said he was carrying the Boystown victim’s phone when they arrested him.

Linares-Rodriguez addressed the court before sentencing and said he understood that he could eventually be deported to Venezuela, but he told Joyce that he considers himself a “political prisoner” in Venezuela and believes his life would be in danger if he is returned there.

The case also has potential immigration consequences, though. In the U.S., a sentence of five years or more

automatically eliminates the possibility of having removal proceedings blocked, according to Immigration Equality.

While the five-year sentence stands, Linares-Rodriguez will only have to serve half of that time under Illinois law. He also earned 383 days of credit while in the Cook County Jail.

Man arrested 8 times while on probation for nearly killing man



Roy Pughsley

with a box cutter is accused of Macy’s burglary

Roy Pughsley caught a break last year. The 53-year-old had nearly killed another homeless man with a box cutter inside a River North Walgreens. But instead of going to prison on an attempted murder charge, he pleaded guilty to aggravated battery and walked out with 30 months of probation.

Three weeks later, he was arrested again. And then again. And again. In all, Pughsley has been arrested eight more times since taking that plea deal, according to CPD records, with allegations ranging from possessing a knife to threatening people with knives at Loop businesses. He has repeatedly missed court dates, cycled on and off electronic monitoring and had judges decline to detain him. In his latest arrest, the Cook County Sheriff’s Office linked him to an overnight burglary at the Macy’s flagship store on State St.

Back in March 2022, Pughsley was on probation for yet another case in which he pleaded guilty to threat-

In a 2020 interview with Cannabis Business Times, Darin Carpenter, the CEO of Loevy’s Justice Cannabis Co. (Renu/Bloc), said his company qualifies as a social equity company because Loevy and Kanovitz operate a “social equity” law firm which represents disadvantaged clients.

“Through a merit-based application process, they scored extremely high in the Illinois licensing process and were awarded a license in Illinois,” said Carpenter.

Loewy and Loewy describes

itself as concentrating on “civil rights issues, including wrongful convictions, police shootings, excessive force [accusations], prisoner rights, The First Amendment, freedom of information, electronic privacy, government fraud and whistleblower protection, environmental justice, and other constitutional claims. It is the largest private civil rights firm without paying clients in the country.”

ening two people with a box cutter after they asked him to leave a bank ATM vestibule near State and Huron streets. Late one night, prosecutors said, he walked into the Walgreens at 641 N. Clark St. and started prying on the locked display of shaving products.

Another homeless man who was talking with a Walgreens employee walked over, and Pughsley allegedly yelled at him and swung the knife, striking him in the back of the neck and head. Prosecutors said the tip of the knife broke off in the victim’s forehead. At one point, the victim grabbed a snow shovel from a store display to defend himself while the employee called 911, according to prosecutors. The victim lost about 1½ liters of blood by the time he reached Northwestern Memorial Hospital in critical condition, according to prosecutors.

Police arrested Pughsley three days later and allegedly found him carrying a box cutter. He admitted to stabbing the man with the knife police found on him, but said the other man had been the aggressor. Prosecutors said the altercation occurred out of view of the store’s security cameras.

Court files show that two judges had ordered Pughsley to receive psychiatric treatment and take medication in the months before the Walgreens attack. Judge Michael Hood likewise ordered psychiatric evaluation and care when he put Pughsley on probation for the Walgreens case last May.

But Pughsley has continued to rack up arrests.

In March, he was accused of aggravated assault with a knife at a Loop bank. The following month, prosecutors charged him with three counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon after an incident at a State Street store. CPD records identified the weapon as a knife. Both cases were ultimately dropped. In June,

Pughsley was arrested again, this time accused of possessing a knife and trespassing at a Loop store.

On July 29, Pughsley received a 30-day sentence for the June trespassing case. He didn’t have to serve additional time because the sentence was satisfied by time he had already spent in custody.

Now, officials are accusing Pughsley of burglarizing a department store while on the Walgreens probation, too. According to the Cook County Sheriff’s Office, Macy’s employees contacted the sheriff’s retail crime investigators on June 28 to report an overnight burglary at the State St. store.

Surveillance footage showed a man wearing a backpack wandering through the sprawling store during the overnight hours, taking clothing, putting some of it on and continuing to wander the aisles. Other footage allegedly showed him walking into one of the store’s restaurant kitchens and helping himself to food. He eventually left around 3:25 a.m. with the merchandise, according to investigators. Needless to say, no cashiers were working at that hour.

The case might have remained unsolved. But on Aug. 3, Macy’s employees contacted the sheriff’s retail crime unit again after spotting a man outside the store who looked and dressed like the burglar. Investigators responded and arrested Pughsley, who, court records show, promptly missed his first court date on August 10, leading Judge Robert Kuzas to issue an arrest warrant.

As of Aug. 17, Pughsley is once again in the Cook County Jail. He remains on probation in the Walgreens case and is charged with burglary and felony theft in the Macy’s caper. We’ll keep an eye on his case and let you know how the judges handle it from here.

—Compiled by CWBChicago.com



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This newspaper vs Sudler Property Mngt.

Inside Publications has hired legal representation to defend ourselves in Sudler Property Management’s defamation suit against this newspaper.

But lawfare costs money, and we don’t have a lawfare budget. So we are now appealing for your help, and donations.

Below is a link to a GoFundMe page that we established to help raise funds to fight this case in the Cook County Circuit Court. The page is titled “Your Friendly Neighborhood Newspapers.”

We would appreciate you sharing this link with anyone in your network who might like to help out their friendly neighborhood newspapers.

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Fr. Grassi, former pastor of St. Josaphat, St. Gertrude dead at 79



Funeral to be presided over by Cardinal Cupich

BY BOB ZULEY

Rev. Dominic J. Grassi, 79, passed away on Tuesday, Aug. 25. The lifelong Chicagoan was ordained in 1973 and spent more than five decades faithfully serving the

(Left) Fr. Dominic J. Grassi.
Photo courtesy Northside Catholic Academy

religious needs of the people in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

He was a faculty member of Quigley Seminary [South], as well as a past pastor of St. Josaphat Parish in Chicago before being named pastor of St. Gertrude Parish in Edgewater and former president of Northside Catholic Academy.

Upon retiring, he continued as Pastor Emeritus of St. Josaphat.

Fr. Grassi will lie in state at St. Josaphat Parish, 2311 N. Southport Ave., on Thurs-

day, Sept. 3, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. and on Friday, Sept. 4, from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

His Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 10 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 5 with Cardinal Blase Cupich presiding. Private internment will follow at Mount Carmel Catholic Cemetery in Hillside.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made in Fr. Grassi's memory to Misericordia Home, 6300 N. Ridge, Chicago, referencing #6292A.



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CHICAGO

Tickets for a \$20 returns from Hot Tix

The League of Chicago Theatres has announced the return of Tickets for a 20. Through Monday, Sept. 14, theatregoers can grab \$20 tickets to some of Chicagoland's most exciting shows, exclusively through Hot Tix.

Tickets for a 20 is a limited time promotion offering a special discount code (TWENTY) to select fall shows on Hot Tix (with fees it's \$25.25).

Hot Tix has many other discounted shows that are less than \$20, visit <https://hottix.org/special-offer-tickets-for-a-20/>.

CHARGING from p. 2

Hopkins [2nd] was also on hand to praise PAWS Chicago's work.

JUICY & RARE: Gibsons Restaurant Group has been looking for an opportunity to open a restaurant in Fulton Market for almost 15 years. Late this year, the storied Chicago restaurant operators aim to accomplish that goal. Gibsons Tavern is set to open in November at 925 W. Fulton Market St. The 14,000-square-foot restaurant will seat roughly 600, including in the private dining spaces, said Gibsons CEO **Steve Lombardo**.

GOOD CAT: The Lincoln Park Zoo reports that their beloved snow leopard **Ozzy** died Aug. 27 following a rapid deterioration in his health. Props to veterinary and animal care teams that conducted extensive diagnostic testing and advanced imaging in consultation at MedVet, who provided intensive supportive care during Ozzy's final days.

Ozzy was born in 2018 at Rosamond Gifford Zoo in New York and arrived at Lincoln Park Zoo in 2021 in conjunction

with the opening of Pepper Family Wildlife Center. During his time here, Ozzy always showed an interest in his training sessions and particularly enjoyed chicken puree as a special treat.

RIP: There was no one like **Earle Johnson**, a true Chicagoan, a man of our streets and pavements and a man of the Divine One. Not many tavern owners hold theology degrees, working their lives with the suffering and impoverished and sharing great tastes in world class beers. But that's exactly what Earle did at "Quenchers," his famed Chicago saloon at Fullerton and Western. He recently returned to heaven at 83.

Born in rural Iowa, he came toiling to Chicago for theology school and stayed to chill the wildly imported beers and overheated Chicagoans. And he ran Quenchers as a grand success. He fashioned a niche for hard to find beers making him a favorite of this city for almost 40 years.

He closed Quenchers in 2018 because he felt it was time. Then he traveled the world with his wife and two sons, even going all the way to Antarctica. The world was his oyster and hard to find beer from Argentina or Singapore was his drink. Rest in peace, kind sir.

ZOO BALL: The annual Lincoln Park Zoo Ball, hosted by the Women's Board, raised an extraordinary \$1.8 million dollars on its 50th anniversary. All helping to keep the zoo and all its educational enterprise and conservation at the lakeside center forever free.

WHO'S WHERE: Mark Olley with a fresh trim at Rosehill Barbershop, collecting petitions for mayor's race, and also considering letting his beard grow until **Alexi** is on the ticket... **Helma Wardenaar** in the Netherlands, paid a visit to **Klaas** and **Frieda** who have lived next door to her parents for almost 50 years... **Gibsons' O'Ryan-Lombardo Family** all piled into their ancestral County Limerick, Ireland



Earle Johnson



Ozzy



Student Chefs at "Feld."



Cynthia Olson and Michael Kutza.

at the lovely Adare Manor... **Melinda Jakovich-Lagrange** with **Pam Santoro Capitanini** celebrating their 14th year Friendversary, here's to many more... **Jan Coulbourne** at Sunset Island, Ocean City, MD, where they had a Great Paint Night on that beautiful Island... former U.S Ambassador to Ireland, **James Kenny** and lovely wife, **Margaret**, in Los Angeles with their grandchild, **Baby Bode**... **Rodger** and **Janet Owen** at the Chicago Yacht Club listening to Summer Breeze and taking a short sail on a perfect summer Saturday afternoon... **Eamonn Cummins** had a fantastic time celebrating his buddy **Mike Gottlieb** at a Bachelor Dinner at The Cut... **Cynthia Olson** with dear friend **Mike Kutza**, founder of the Chicago International Film Festival... **Cynthia Espy** memorialized her friend and also a favorite pup out by the Harbor Lighthouse... **Cathy Reidy Ragen** at "Sunday in the Park with Lyric" at the Pritzker Pavilion following recent birthday salutes... Attorney **Brendan O'Connor** joined his parents for West Coast travel for the Cubs... **Karen Zupko** and **Mr. Mike**, a fine man in the kitchen, provided the full "Gumbo Dinner," followed by his Key Lime Pie, the neighbors were charmed guests in their elegant home... **Piccolo Sogno** was jumping for joy when Chef **Gabbino Sotello** of Cafe Ba-Ba-Reeba arrived with his party bringing exotic flavors and intense Spanish charm... **Irene Michaels** had a wonderful

evening at the Fasig-Tipton Saratoga Sale in Saratoga Springs.

FRESH CUISINE: For **Geoffrey** and **Stephanie Leese Emrich** it's "Feld" as in "Field." The chefs energetically preparing the numerous courses in the center. No menu. A trustfall of goodness. Daily grocery plus local sourcing from the very best. A true Chicago story. A young man with a goal, chef **Jacob Potashnick**.

SCHOOL BOARD: **Dan Balanoff** has been at the Elected school board forum at the 25th Ward IPO. They heard from **Hilario Dominguez**, who's running for president, and both candidates from 7A, **Jesus Ayala, Jr.** and **Emma Lozano**.

HOME: Famed architect **Lucien Lagrange** say's he's very proud how his new building, Rosewood Residences of Turtle Creek, is coming along for it was years in the planning stage and it's now close to being finished.

MANGE MANGE: **Julia Jacobs** and **Denise Tomasello** had such a wonderful time celebrating Chicago's Italian heritage at the Taylor Street Little Italy Festival. They loved spending time in one of this city's most historic neighborhoods, enjoying incredible food, music, people, and traditions that make Taylor St. so special. This festival is about so much more than great Italian food, it celebrates the generations of families, businesses, and community leaders who have kept the history and spirit of Chicago's Little Italy.

CHICAGO: Relive **Rob Marshall's** dazzling 2002 Academy Award-winning film "Chicago," featuring iconic on-screen performances by **Renée Zellweger**, **Catherine Zeta-Jones**, and **Richard Gere**, all while the Chicago Philharmonic performs the **John Kander** and **Fred Ebb** legendary score live in sync with the film at The Auditorium, April 3, 2027, when Chicago Philharmonic bringing its brassy swagger and symphonic power to hits like "All That Jazz" and "Cell Block Tango," this one-night-only event delivers Chicago's signature sparkle in a bold, live-to-film performance.

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- **Rahm Emanuel**

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- Catey Sullivan,
Chicago Sun-Times

Jekyll & Hyde

SEP 8 - NOV 8

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Blue Man Group back for the holidays

Shows Nov. 24 - Dec. 13

Their departure from their longtime home on Halsted St. in Boystown was perhaps symbolic of the current times, where arts and theater spaces such as the Briar Street and

Royal George theaters succumb to the demand for high density housing projects on the North Side, forcing out successful arts organizations to make room for overpriced condos and apartments.

Well, Blue Man Group has announced plans to return for the 2026 holiday season.

Last week Broadway In Chicago an-

nounced Blue Man Group [BMG] will bring its first-ever holiday production, “A New Holiday Surprise,” on the road this season.

Chicago audiences will be among the first in the country to be able to buy tickets to the all-new production. Tickets went on sale Aug. 21. The show will be staged at Broadway In Chicago’s CIBC Theatre, 18 W. Monroe St., for a limited three-week engagement, Nov. 24 through Dec. 13.

“Bringing BMG’s first-ever holiday production to Chicago is an exciting milestone and a natural evolution of the iconic expe-

BLUE MAN see p. 14

German-American Fest returns to Lincoln Square, celebrating 106th year

The United German American Societies of Greater Chicago, the parent organization for over 50 German American organizations in Chicago, will be hosting the 60th Von Steuben Parade 2 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 12, on Lincoln Ave. from Irving Park Rd. north to Western Ave.

The Von Steuben Parade is named after Friederich Wilhelm von Steuben, originally from Magdeburg, Prussia (now Germany), who was Inspector General under George Washington during the Revolutionary War.

In 1777, Von Steuben went to Paris to meet America’s Ambassador to France Benjamin Franklin to offer them his military services. The Continental Congress, much impressed by Von Steuben’s title and his refusal to accept any salary while in service, immediately sent him to George Washington at Valley Forge.

Von Steuben had an illustrious military career and with his expertise joined in the war efforts in the American colonies. He was one of Washington’s most trusted generals. A masterful military tactician, he trained countless American regiments — despite not speaking any English and having to rely on an interpreter.

The Von Steuben Parade showcases the many German cultural Clubs and Organizations in the greater Chicago area, includ-

ing musicians, dancers and choral groups.

The parade will be part of the 106th Anniversary of German American Fest, one of the oldest cultural festivals in Chicago.

The free festival takes place Friday, through Sunday, Sept. 11, 12 and 13, on Lincoln Ave., at Western Ave.

The German Day Assoc. was founded in 1920 by dedicated Germans wishing to promote the usage and continuance of the German language, customs and songs in Chicago. At that time the Association became the umbrella organization for all of the German Organizations under the name of the United German American Societies of Greater Chicago.

The festival helps fund the continued education of youth and traditional culture. The location of the German-American Day celebration has changed several times over the years, from Riverview Park, Saint Paul Woods, Navy Pier, Schwaben Center, and Grant Park to Lincoln Square for the last 27 years.

Traditional local singing and dancing groups will perform on Saturday after the parade and on Sunday at 2 p.m. Groups will include the German American Children’s Chorus of Chicago, the Heimat und Trachten Verein Edelweiss, and the Rheinischer Karneval Verein Chicago -Fanfaren.



Black-crowned Night Herons are small herons with rather squat, thick proportions. They have thick necks, large, flat heads, and heavy, pointed bills. *Photo by Russ Smith*

BIRD from p. 7

like many other local animals. The zoo accommodates their presence, even putting up warning signs in the Children’s Zoo area. And yes, they are popular. “These little hatchlings—they’re not so little—but they are so much fun to watch,” said a Lincoln Park zookeeper who happened upon this reporter’s conversation with Lardner, and spoke for herself and not on the zoo’s behalf.

Lardner moved to Chicago from New York City in 2004 after a career in the automotive industry. She also compared the birds to Rodney Dangerfield—“they get no respect.”

Lardner hopes stories like this one helps spread knowledge about the bird, either through media or through word-of-mouth—

and fittingly we encountered a bird photographer, and Lardner told her about the project. “We started as this all-volunteer initiative, and said, ‘wait a minute, no one’s outside the zoo telling people [where] all these crazy birds are—and they’re here 24/7’, and we were like, “Wow, this is such a great opportunity.”

Her group is currently running a photo contest.

Neiburger’s world has, for lack of a better term, turned upside down, although that’s a good thing in this case. “They’re the best,” Neiburger said of the birding community. “I was a bit of a family celebrity for, you know, a few days.”

Her advice was to “just continue to be kind to the birds and animals of the city,” she said, “And hope that we’ll continue to see them grow in their population.”



In addition to flowers and notes, fans have left fake eyelashes and pink hats to memorialize singer, actress, entrepreneur, Dolly Parton. *Photo by Joanne Kitsos*

Edgewater mural becomes site for Dolly Parton tribute shrine

BY BOB KITSOS

Fans around the country are paying tribute to country music legend Dolly Parton following her death on Aug. 25. In Edgewater, fans have designated a mural on the gate of Lytle House, an event venue at 5517 N. Broadway, as a memorial site.

Michelle Lytle, co-owner of the venue with her wife Robyn, created the mural of Parton in 2019. Lytle, who has been a Parton fan for nearly as long as she could remember, praised Parton’s advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights and the LGBTQ+ community, especially in the country music industry.

The mural was partly a community

beautification and anti-graffiti measure, Lytle said. The gate had been targeted by taggers, so she decided to paint her own artwork there to deter vandalism while brightening the North Side.

Following the news of Parton’s death, Lytle joined neighbors and admirers at the site to pay tribute. Lytle said Parton was “a woman who really spoke her mind. She said what she believed in and said it in a way that wasn’t divisive.”

During her career, Parton performed at venues in Chicago and the surrounding area, including at the Chicago Theatre, Allstate Arena, and House of Blues. A concert at Ravinia in 2016 was her last appearance in the area.



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Real Estate For Sale

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY COUNTY DEPARTMENT, CHANCERY DIVISION

FREEDOM MORTGAGE CORPORATION, Plaintiff,	CASE NO. 2026CH05604
vs.	
JULIE FOX, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR IRMA CALVERT; UNKNOWN HEIRS AND LEGATEES OF IRMA CALVERT; CITY OF HARVEY; FOUNDATION FINANCE COMPANY, LLC; UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS,	Subject Property: 14845 Main Street Harvey, IL 60426
Defendants.	

NOTICE BY PUBLICATION
NOTICE IS GIVEN TO YOU:
Unknown Heirs and Legatees of Irma Calvert; Unknown owners and non-record claimants
That this case has been commenced in this Court against you and other defendants, praying for the foreclosure of a certain Mortgage conveying the premises described as follows, to-wit:
Legal description: LOT 18 IN RESUBDIVISION OF BLOCK 21, (EXCEPT THE EAST 87.06 FEET OF THE SOUTH 142 FEET THEREOF) OF YOUNG'S CENTRAL SUBDIVISION OF BLOCKS 46, LOTS 21 AND THE SOUTH 1/2 OF LOT 22 IN BLOCK 50, LOTS 1 TO 12 AND 14 TO 21, INCLUSIVE, OF BLOCK 51 AND OF LOTS 1 TO 6, INCLUSIVE, OF BLOCK 52 ALL IN SOUTH LAWN, A SUBDIVISION OF SECTION 17, AND THE SOUTH 1/2 OF SECTION 8, TOWNSHIP 36 NORTH, RANGE 14, EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, IN COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS.
Common address: 14845 Main Street, Harvey, IL 60426
Tax Parcel Number: 29-08-409-014-0000
And which said Mortgage was made by: Irma Calvert
The Mortgagor(s), to Freedom Mortgage Corporation, as Mortgagee, and recorded in the office of the Recorder of Deeds of Cook County, Illinois, as Document No. 95199900; and for other relief; that summons was duly issued out of said Court against you as provided by law and that the said suit is now pending.
NOW, THEREFORE, UNLESS YOU file your answer or otherwise file your appearance in this case in the Office of the Clerk of this Court,
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY
COUNTY DEPARTMENT, CHANCERY DIVISION, 50 W. Washington St., Chicago, IL 60602
On or before October 2, 2026 (answer period expiration date), A DEFAULT MAY BE ENTERED AGAINST YOU AT ANY TIME AFTER THAT DAY AND A JUDGMENT MAY BE ENTERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRAYER OF SAID COMPLAINT.

FREEDOM MORTGAGE CORPORATION
By: /s/ Charlotte A. Haack
Halliday, Watkins & Mann, P.C.
Attorney for Plaintiff
376 E 400 S, Ste 300
Salt Lake City, UT, 84111
801-355-2886
Email: litem@hwmlawfirm.com

Real Estate For Sale

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY COUNTY DEPARTMENT, CHANCERY DIVISION

FREEDOM MORTGAGE CORPORATION, Plaintiff,	CASE NO. 2026CH05115
vs.	
PATRICE BILL STALLINGS; VILLAGE OF SOUTH HOLLAND; UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS,	Subject Property: 17136 Ingleside Ave, South Holland, IL 60473
Defendants.	

NOTICE BY PUBLICATION
NOTICE IS GIVEN TO YOU:
Patrice Bill Stallings and Unknown owners and Non-record claimants
That this case has been commenced in this Court against you and other defendants, praying for the foreclosure of a certain Mortgage conveying the premises described as follows, to-wit:
Legal description: LOT 56 IN MACCARI'S ADDITION TO SOUTH HOLLAND BEING A SUBDIVISION OF PART OF THE WEST 1/2 OF THE NORTHWEST 1/4 OF SECTION 26, TOWNSHIP 36 NORTH, RANGE 14 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, IN COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED APRIL 29, 1966 AS DOCUMENT 19811976, AND AS RE-RECORDED JULY 12, 1966 AS DOCUMENT 19882450 IN COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS.
Common address: 17136 Ingleside Ave, South Holland, IL 60473
Tax Parcel Number: 29-26-112-020-0000
And which said Mortgage was made by: Patrice Bill Stallings
The Mortgagor(s), to Freedom Mortgage Corporation, as Mortgagee, and recorded in the office of the Recorder of Deeds of Cook County, Illinois, as Document No. 2411020335; and for other relief; that summons was duly issued out of said Court against you as provided by law and that the said suit is now pending.
NOW, THEREFORE, UNLESS YOU file your answer or otherwise file your appearance in this case in the Office of the Clerk of this Court,
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY
COUNTY DEPARTMENT, CHANCERY DIVISION, 50 W. Washington St., Chicago, IL 60602
On or before September 18, 2026 (answer period expiration date), A DEFAULT MAY BE ENTERED AGAINST YOU AT ANY TIME AFTER THAT DAY AND A JUDGMENT MAY BE ENTERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRAYER OF SAID COMPLAINT.

FREEDOM MORTGAGE CORPORATION
By: /s/ Charlotte A. Haack - ARDC No. 6310785
Halliday, Watkins & Mann, P.C.
Attorney for Plaintiff
376 E 400 S, Ste 300
Salt Lake City, UT, 84111
801-355-2886
Email: litem@hwmlawfirm.com

Real Estate For Sale

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY COUNTY DEPARTMENT, CHANCERY DIVISION

FREEDOM MORTGAGE CORPORATION, Plaintiff,	CASE NO. 2026CH05883
vs.	
DEMOND D. EDWARDS; CITY OF CHICAGO, A MUNICIPAL CORPORATION; UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS,	Subject Property: 814 West 68th Street, Chicago, IL 60621
Defendants.	

NOTICE BY PUBLICATION
NOTICE IS GIVEN TO YOU:
Demond D. Edwards and Unknown Owners and Non-Record Claimants
That this case has been commenced in this Court against you and other defendants, praying for the foreclosure of a certain Mortgage conveying the premises described as follows, to-wit:
Legal description: Lot 5 In Fenn's Subdivision of Lots 24, 25 And 26 In Block 1 In Benedict's Subdivision of The Northeast 1/4 Of The Southeast 1/4 Of Section 20, Township 38 North, Range 14, East of The Third Principal Meridian, In Cook County Illinois.
Common address: 814 West 68th Street, Chicago, IL 60621
Tax Parcel Number: 20-20-407-022-0000
And which said Mortgage was made by: Demond D. Edwards
The Mortgagor(s), to Freedom Mortgage Corporation, as Mortgagee, and recorded in the office of the Recorder of Deeds of Cook County, Illinois, as Document No. 2321429407; and for other relief; that summons was duly issued out of said Court against you as provided by law and that the said suit is now pending.
NOW, THEREFORE, UNLESS YOU file your answer or otherwise file your appearance in this case in the Office of the Clerk of this Court,
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY
COUNTY DEPARTMENT, CHANCERY DIVISION, 50 W. Washington St., Chicago, IL 60602
On or before September 18, 2026 (answer period expiration date), A DEFAULT MAY BE ENTERED AGAINST YOU AT ANY TIME AFTER THAT DAY AND A JUDGMENT MAY BE ENTERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRAYER OF SAID COMPLAINT.

FREEDOM MORTGAGE CORPORATION
By: /s/ Charlotte A. Haack - ARDC No. 6310785
Halliday, Watkins & Mann, P.C.
Attorney for Plaintiff
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at 3:00 p.m. Cash only.

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8195SM- Johnson, Nicole
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3500E- Mentor, Marvin
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for public sale.
This sale is to be held on
Tuesday, September 29, 2026, at 2:00PM.
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—Dolly Parton

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Photo by Clarissa Bonet

Artist talk Sept. 4 with famous photographer

Stephen Waiter Gallery will be hosting a discussion with photographer Clarissa Bonet, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Friday, September 4 at the gallery, 230 W. Superior St.

The event is free and open to the public with a RSVP, visit www.stephendaitergallery.com.

Bonet will discuss her work, creative process, and the ideas and influences that shape her photographic practice. Following the talk, guests are invited to continue the conversation and enjoy the reception.

Bonet is a Chicago-based artist whose work explores the built environment in both a physical and psychological context. Her photographs have been exhibited at the

Museum of Contemporary Photography, Bauhaus Archive in Berlin, and the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery among others, and published in The Guardian, The Wall Street Journal, Chicago Magazine, and Harper's Bazaar.

Her work is held in the permanent collections of the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, and other institutions.

In 2026, Bonet received an Individual Artist Grant from the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events and was named a finalist in the Hasselblad Masters competition.

DATA from p. 1

floors three through five for the data center and a new cargo elevator will be added up the entire height of the building. A rooftop steel platform will be built to hold the 10 backup generators. To maintain the look of the building, repairs to the facade's terra cotta will be made.

The project will now proceed to the permitting process. The developer has already received a permit for interior demolition and is awaiting the issuance of renovation permits for the project.

Converting an empty office into a data center can require a complete overhaul of the building's core physical, electrical, and structural infrastructure, as office spaces are typically engineered for human occupancy rather than high-density computing loads. Data centers require hot/cold aisle containment systems to isolate and efficiently exhaust server exhaust air, and will use up to 30 to 60 times more power per square foot than standard office buildings.

RIDES from p. 1

cated express rail service, we will create the best airport transportation experience in America – and one of the best in the world.”

If the new rail line firm could succeed in removing criminals, the mentally ill and vagrant elements that the CTA suffers from, then their service could experience quick growth. Sadly, public officials in Chicago and Cook County have largely abandoned criminal enforcement over quality of life crimes, or observing and enforcing their own long-established policies against vagrancy, leaving the CTA and their passengers to struggle with these societal and security concerns.

The O'Hare Flyer hopes to launch the project within the next five years. Supporters and investors are now meeting with public officials, business, finance, government, and community groups hoping to expand outreach throughout the region.

They claim their partners include top engineering, law, accounting, architecture,

Parolee who tossed machine gun into river in 2023 accused of ditching another machine gun into River North dumpster

BY CWBCHICAGO

Deral Willis made a splash on this page in 2023 when he tried to elude Chicago police by tossing a machine gun into the Chicago River from the State Street Bridge. Unfortunately for him, a Chicago Police Marine Unit diver recovered the weapon. Willis was ultimately sentenced to four years in prison in October, but he was paroled in May.

Now, in a case of déjà vu, the 33-year-old is back in custody on a parole violation after prosecutors say he ran from police with a machine gun and tried to get rid of it by tossing it into a dumpster, just two blocks from the State Street Bridge. At least the cops didn't need dive gear this time.

Shortly after 1 p.m. July 29, a CPD surveillance camera operator alerted patrol officers to a suspected drug deal near State and Grand in River North. Officers went to the area and saw Willis, who matched the description provided by the camera operator, according to a detention filing. The description included a yellow Pikachu backpack, the filing said.

When Willis saw the officers, he took off running. Police chased him into an alley, where officers saw him throw the Pikachu backpack into a dumpster, prosecutors said. Officers recovered the backpack and arrested Willis in a nearby parking garage, according to the filing.

Inside the backpack, prosecutors said, officers found a loaded handgun equipped

with a “Glock switch,” a device that can allow a semiautomatic firearm to fire continuously with a single pull of the trigger. Police also obtained surveillance video that showed Willis throwing the backpack into the dumpster, according to the filing.

The allegations come less than three months after Willis was released from prison following his 2023 arrest. In that case, Willis tried to evade police by throwing a machine gun into the Chicago River from the State Street Bridge. A CPD marine unit diver recovered the weapon, and Willis was later convicted and sentenced to four years in prison.

Prosecutors said Willis has several other felony convictions, including aggravated battery with a deadly weapon in 2016, armed robbery convictions in 2016 and 2011, and an aggravated robbery conviction in 2011.

Judge Antara Rivera granted prosecutors' request to detain Willis, and the state has revoked his parole. He is currently back in the custody of the Illinois Department of Corrections, with a new parole date set for Oct. 7.

He's charged with being a felon in possession of a machine gun and possession of a firearm by a repeat felon.



Deral Willis

They claim their new trains would be a quiet, pollution-free electric trains running on freight rail right-of-way owned by three class one railroads: CSX, Canadian National [CN] and Union Pacific [UP].

urban planning, design, marketing and public relations firms.

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They say that the O'Hare Flyer has reached agreement on terms in a Letter of Intent with CSX and is moving forward with the other carriers as well.

As a private endeavor, they say they are not seeking taxpayer subsidies that could otherwise go to regional transit agencies such as the CTA or Metra.

Indeed, a trip out to O'Hare has long

been dreaded by most North Side residents. It is a time-consuming, traffic-jamming, expensive experience, that could easily consumer an hour or two.

And those who arrived to pick up or drop off travelers were at once set-upon by enforcement officers charged with keeping vehicles moving through the pick up / drop off zones, writing tickets and calling in tow trucks.

A quick, safe rail ride free from crime and harassment fears, would be a game-changer, creating a faster, more reliable connection between the airport and downtown, making it easier to do business in Chicago and serve as a boost for Chicago's conventions, and tourism industries.

“O'Hare Flyer has found a beautifully simple solution to a complicated problem and an unrealized ambition of Chicago's as a leading global city. Their high-speed rail solution was hiding in plain sight – if you're expert enough and smart enough to see it,” said World Business Chicago CEO Phil Clement.

For more information, visit www.ohareflyer.com.



Gregory J. Lindeman
Founder/Director

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