

He who has never learned to obey cannot be a good commander.

— Aristotle

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NEWS OF LINCOLN PARK, LAKE VIEW, NORTH CENTER & LINCOLN SQUARE

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Community groups secure funds to renovate South Lincoln Park

BY JANE LAWICKI

With a \$500,000 grant from the Illinois Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and additional \$100,000 pledged from Ald. Timmy Knudsen [43rd], Lincoln Park community groups plan to repair pathways and enhance the park's southern edge.

The Gold Coast Neighbors [GCN], Lincoln Park Conservancy [LPC], and the Chicago Park District have partnered for the project and announced the funding Nov. 13 via an online Town Hall hosted by the Lincoln Park Conservancy.

Grants will cover site assessment for immediate improvements and the development of a roadmap for future park enhancements.

Calling it the "Gateway to Lincoln Park," the designated project area borders North Ave. on the south, inner Lake Shore Dr. on the east, the LaSalle Dr. extension on the north and, on the west, the History Trail around the Chicago History Museum. It includes the Abe Lincoln monument and gardens.

Vern Broder, director at the GCN, chaired the presentation to about 60 participants who heard

community survey results and were introduced to the project partners, a planning timeline, and intended park improvements. More detailed project plans were shared during a somewhat skeptical question and answer session.

Noting the park's origins as a marsh and later a cemetery, Amy Lardner, meeting co-chair and GCN director, explained there have been multiple projects over time but no holistic planning, particularly as the park borders important historic and cultural institutions such as the Chicago

PARK see p. 12

Fern Hill's proposed Old Town development meets more community opposition

BY ADRIANA FOUSTANOU

The Old Town neighborhood of Chicago remains at the center of a year-long heated debate over Fern Hill's controversial "Planned Development" that includes multiple projects and parcels of real estate.

While the developer claims the project will meet modern housing demands, it has sparked widespread outrage among residents who see it as a direct threat to the neighborhood's character, livability, and infrastructure. The project, which has undergone multiple revisions, exemplifies prioritizing private commercial interests over the public good.

Fern Hill's proposed "Planned Development" spans three sub-parcels, each representing a shift away from Old Town's identity as a historic district.

They met the community again on Dec. 5 during a public presentation to make their pitch.

Under the new plan, the Piper's Alley parcel, currently zoned for commercial use with a modest Floor Area Ratio [FAR] of 2.3, would be rezoned to mixed-use. While Fern Hill's latest submission includes zero residential units for this site, concerns remain about its future role in the developer's larger vision, including the possibility of additional high-rises west of Wells St. encroaching and towering over its intersection at North Ave.

The most contentious element

remains the Walgreens and parking lot parcel at North Ave. and LaSalle St., where Fern Hill plans to erect the 36-story tower. Those plans remained a flashpoint for area residents during the meeting at Moody Church, 1635 N. LaSalle St.

The structure would include 500 residential units—100 designated affordable housing—and 20,000 square feet of retail space. While these figures may seem promising, they are overshadowed by the profound impact the project will have on the surrounding community, adding more density, traffic and congestion.

Critics argue that Fern Hill lacks the expertise and track record to handle a project of this scale. The developer's history raises questions about its ability to deliver a high-quality outcome that respects the unique needs of Old Town— "Based on past performance, many of us have lost confidence in the ability of Fern Hill to develop a project of the size and complexity proposed," James Manusco wrote in his letter on Jan. 14.

The rezoning application includes a provision that could eliminate 392 parking spaces in the Piper's Alley garage, significantly reducing off-street parking in a neighborhood already struggling with congestion. While the plan accounts for 450 parking spaces in the new development, many residents are skeptical.

"You can't expand the streets

to accommodate the traffic, the pedestrians, the cyclists and so forth. It's gridlocked. Be realistic, you have trucks making deliveries. I've been here for 30 years, nothing changes," said a local real estate broker at the Dec. 5 community meeting.

Traffic congestion is another critical issue. The influx of residents and visitors drawn-in by the tower's retail spaces would further strain Old Town's streets, many of which are ill-equipped to handle increased volume.

During the meeting, while Fern Hill's team highlighted potential traffic optimizations, residents were quick to challenge the validity of their studies. A vocal critic stated: "You can spin your traffic study any way you want, but it will never work here. There's just too much density."

While older residents of Old Town expressed disbelief in Fern Hill's projects, younger people supported the new developments, highlighting the potential for affordable housing. Fern Hill's founder and president, Nick Anderson, highlighted the project's commitment to affordable housing, noting that including 100 affordable units would surpass the total number of such units built in the 60614 postal code since 2015, as reported on CoStar.

The statement may have been contrived as the Sandburg Village development with its vast amount

FERN HILL see p. 12



Lane Tech's Dalton Scantlebury blocks St. Ignatius' Napoleon Harris's shot at the Chicago Elite Classic.

Lane Tech falls to St. Ignatius 66-60

BY JACK LYDON

The Lane Tech Champions (2-3) have had a rough start to the basketball season. They came up short 66-60 on Dec. 6 against #11 St. Ignatius at the Chicago Elite Classic at UIC's Credit One Arena. In their first five games, the Champions have faced five ranked teams, #4 DePaul Prep, #11 St. Ignatius, #18 Niles North, who they beat, and #21 Curie.

"I have a lot of faith in this team. This is the best team I think with have had at Lane. It would be great [to now be] 5-0, but we want to be ready in March," Lane Tech head coach Nick LoGalbo said of his tough schedule.

"This team has a chance to do some special things. We lost three heartbreakers. Curie was a last second shot. We have got to put some games together now," LoGalbo continued.

Much is said about win/loss records. Should a team pile up wins or is it better to put tough teams on one's schedule? Fans like a gaudy win loss record but coaches know it's better to have faced tough competition when heading into the IHSA playoffs in March.

LoGalbo is confident about

his team in large part because of the team's "length"—a reference to the size of his players and the ability of his defenders to force outside shots.

"They have a ton of length. That's one of their many strengths," said St. Ignatius head coach Matt Monroe regarding Lane.

"We wanted to hunt good shots. We couldn't just one pass and shoot a three because they were going to have a guy right there. We needed to get our shooters open and get their lengthy guys away from our shooters by driving and kicking," Monroe said.

"We talked a little bit about trying to navigate their length, to finish off two feeds, shot fake around the rim, if you don't get them to bite then kick it out to the shooters. That played a big role in our open shots in the second half."

And that's largely what happened. Just a few points separated the teams throughout the first half as they traded buckets. But in the second half, the drive-kick-pass-shoot offense that St. Ignatius installed resulted with seven

LANE TECH see p. 12

Time to count the birds

Every year on a wintery day in late December or early January, birders across the country sally forth to count birds and contribute their sightings to the oldest continuously running citizen science project in the world. Along Chicago's Lakefront, the Chicago Ornithological Society is hosting their count on Christmas Day.

This is the 125th year of the Christmas Bird Count [CBC], and it is a time honored tradition coordinated by National Audubon Society.

The two societies are seeking volunteers, and the RSVP deadline is Dec. 15. Those who wish to participate may contact Edward

Warden at cbc@chicagobirder.org.

No matter the weather, the CBC search for avian life contributes critical long-term data to bird conservation and generates memories and camaraderie that lasts for years. This year's count will be one of the last actual Christmas Day CBC's in the country.

To learn more about the Christmas Bird Count, its history, and how the data is used to conserve birds, visit www.ChristmasBird-Count.org.

There are about a dozen such counts in the greater Chicagoland area. All CBCs require advance registration.

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We have a passion for knowing and speaking the truth. Well, some of us, anyway.

During the toddler era of my youth, I could always count on Sen. Joseph McCarthy to lead the battle on our primitively small eight-inch TV screen, all set, as he was, to sock it out for the truth.

With miscued vigilance, the senator was searching out the commies that were supposedly hidden away in American government. I didn't understand his political agenda, but his demonstrative aggression was crystal clear. He was hunting for certainty back in the Eisenhower Era. Loosening the floorboards. Greasing the sidewalks and stalking Stalin's "supposed" secret army of American spies.

When he eventually went over the edge, America moved into a different struggle for truth. It's still going on. The question he left the nation with is, "How far can you purge in pursuit until you make yourself the enemy of reason?"

In many ways being Catholic was a great help in that era. From an early age we were trained to search for liars and fibbers. Because lying was a sin. But we were taught to start our search for fibbers with ourselves.

Being truthful to yourself was the ultimate goal. The profound moral achievement.

As early as age seven (what Catholics liked to call "the age of Reason"), we were all supposed to be able to recognize the difference between truth and lies. We studied that in the classroom. We listened closely to the nuns who gave excellent examples of those who fell off the truth wagon.

Even though telling lies made us sinful, it wasn't that easy to spot a lie, especially when you're seven. But relying on the genius of Thomas Aquinas, we knew speaking falsely got in the way of our relationship with God himself.

You see, telling whoppers confused the soul and damaged the brain. But that was only half the lesson.

We also had a lot of lessons and teachings about God's love and mercy. We knew that even if we were sinful children, we were too good not to love. We were wanted. In God's eyes we were "adorable."

The ritual of the Sacrament of Penance was our silent parachute of forgiveness. Unless we were asleep at the wheel, we knew that balance could always be restored. We were worth it.

I was relieved and thought that was fair and reasonable. I've never forgotten that.

The world today, though, is so different from that Eisenhower-era world of certainty and comfort with those who are not afraid of fibs. We live in a psychological eco-system where liars thrive and cause damage to the moral soil on which we walk.

People fib their way to the top, yet are blinded to the larger consequences of their actions by their fibs. Comfortable with their forked tongues and greedy pockets.

We don't have to look very far in 2024 to identify the tellers of tall tales and makers of whoppers. The hoodwinkers, scammers, tricksters and hucksters. Impervious to the heartache they cause. Blind to the value of what's true, emboldened to the deep measure of the evil they unleash.

Recently WFMT, Chicago's fine arts radio station, played some of my favorite carols, like "Once in David's Royal City" and "In the Bleak Mid Winter," sweet words by the poet Christina Rossetti. Hearing them rejuvenated me.

Tunes that still ring of the sound of sacred chapels where great harmonious choirs shaped our Christmas longing for peace and harmony in our homes and in the conflicting relationships that often fall on us.



By Thomas J. O'Gorman



Jackie Hoffman

Perhaps we are confronted by the lies and false truths with people who abuse us, damage our reputations, or break our hearts with the sadness of their false words and promises.

As we move closer to Christmas we might galvanize the truth we live and tell. So let your truth walk before you to paralyze the broken reality some force on us.

Maybe our truth will challenge the lies around us in all areas of life, healing best accomplished by helping others find the truth in life. The truth of human harmony. The truth of sturdy companionship without judgment or bias. The truth of peace that insists we end cruelty in our city and our neighborhoods.

Truth always nourishes humanity, and we all know when it is missing. Just look at who the truth tellers are in your life. Whose word do you trust? Whose truth do you believe? Whose truth would you protect?

Perhaps that cradle eavesdropping wasn't so crazy after all. Perhaps we should measure the volume of the truths we hear in the shaky voices that surround us. And measure in detail those who are fibbers and cheats. Who breaks their word on life's witness stand? Whose judgement do we see on trial? From the White House to the Pentagon, and from Chicago City Hall to the corner tap, or sales clerks in department stores who have their fingers in the till, or greasy thumb in the pie?

It's good to measure the cadence of others' vocabularies. It's completely proper to sniff the verbiage of others in all the right places when they lie. It's OK to eavesdrop on America. How else will we get the lay of the land?

NAZI ART: Too little, too late? The Art Institute of Chicago finally faces reality and steps up efforts to learn the origins of everything in its collection. As scrutiny increases of art stolen by Nazis or looted from archaeological sites, the museum has expanded its provenance team and hired an expert researcher from London. Jacques Schuhmacher, we are told, was hired in August as the Art Institute of Chicago's first executive director of provenance research. "It is vital that a museum has clarity about what it owns," he says. But the institute's initial hesitation damaged its reputation, which has been inflicting much criticism and shame. Glad they are final-

ly doing something. Circling the wagons didn't help.

CITY HALL: The Chicago City Council has just 20 days left to reach a budget deal or risk a government shutdown. A failure would be a new historic low for our town.

IRISH FUNERAL: A Memorial Mass was celebrated for Chicago restaurateur **Billy Lawless** in his hometown of Galway in the great Cathedral there. Billy's life and heart were always in Galway on the Atlantic's edge. He was then buried in his native earth. **The Lawless Family** was joined by many Chicagoans present there for his internment. **Patricia Treacy** carried her violin with her to play this great man to heaven.

PRIMAL YULE: Lincoln Park Zoo explodes with color at Christmas with sparkling lights among the lions and the chimps and giraffes.

CITY LIGHTS ORCHESTRA CONCERTS: Don't miss Maestro **Rich Daniels** and the City Lights Orchestra Dec. 8 at Holy Family Church, and Dec. 13 at Holy Name Cathedral.

CHICAGO ACTOR: **Jackie Hoffman**, a veteran of Chicago's famed The Second City comedy improv group, nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award, and a Critics' Choice Television Award for her role as Mamacita in the miniseries "Feud." But she also co-stars in "Only Murders in the Building", and just celebrated a birthday on Nov. 29.

CHICAGO DUCK: Chef **Bill Kim** and Chef **John Hogan** celebrated their pal Chef **Kevin Hickey** and the team at Bridgeport's Duck Inn Chicago on their 10th anniversary. Chicago's Chef community relishes these milestones.

PREP NEWS: Mount Carmel High School beat Batavia to win a record 16th state championship. A 55-34 win against Batavia on Saturday at ISU's Hancock Stadium. Bravo to Roscoe Village's DePaul Prep who completed a Cinderella playoff run to win Class 4A championship. St. Ignatius College Prep opened up the play-book, beating Whitney Young H.S. to win the 94th Prep Bowl.

NOEL, NOEL: Eight-hundred year old Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris reopened after five years of restoration from the 2019

LAIRS see p. 8

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City defunds pilot sidewalk snow plowing plan

Manaa-Hoppenworth proposes new congestion tax

BY BOB ZULEY



Mayor Brandon Johnson's last budget proposal didn't include \$1 million in funding for the newly proposed sidewalk snow plowing plan. It is a new plan hoping to make Chicago one of the first cities of its size to plow residential neighborhood sidewalks.

"The Johnson administration [is] committed to human rights, equity, and applying an intersectional lens to policymaking and service delivery," noted the executive summary in the city report, "Plow The Sidewalks Pilot Program."

The pilot program identified four, 1.5-square mile community areas across the city – one each on the city's North, South, Southwest, and West sides called for a municipal sidewalk service to clear all city-owned sidewalks of snow and ice during the winter up to seven snowfalls per year during snowfalls of two inches or more.

Without offering any of their data or proof, the city claims to have established the four zones based upon the number of disabled residents, seniors, transit riders, car-free households, and the city's hardship index among other metrics.

On the North Side, the desig-

nated pilot zone was bounded by Foster Ave. to the north, Marine Dr. to the east, Montrose Ave. to the South, and Damen Avenue to the west.

Johnson's Chief Operating Officer, John Roberson, told the Chicago Tribune "our budget challenges" thwarted spending on the pilot. The city faces a \$938 million deficit, while the CTA and Chicago Public Schools also face extreme budget deficits. Additionally, the city just implemented a three-percent across the board cut.

In response to the plan's defunding, Ald. Leni Manaa-Hoppenworth [48th], proposed, with others, a congestion tax that would be added to rideshare rides in the most congested parts of the city, according to her newsletter.

But Lyft, Inc. is asking its customers to urge the City Council to reject a proposed tax on rideshares. The proposed ordinance seeks to raise as much as \$15 million a year by slightly expanding Chicago's downtown zone and extending the surcharge currently levied on rideshare services dur-

ing the weekdays through weekends, noted Lyft.

Manaa-Hoppenworth believes, "Our greatest challenge is implementing a citywide strategy to dismantle structural racism through equitable use of our resources for the benefit of the people and the planet," she replied to a Better Streets Chicago Action Fund survey.

Manaa-Hoppenworth expected the pilot to clear sidewalks in her North Side ward. She was surprised to see no funding appear in the budget, she told the Tribune.

Having undergone two recent hip surgeries, Manaa-Hoppenworth said she knows how difficult it can be to navigate ice and snow with limited mobility.

"I'm very disappointed that it wasn't added to this year's budget, I know a lot of advocates have pushed for this. And I don't think this city [serves] those with disabilities enough," she said.

CPS English learners outdo peers in GPA, graduation

Chicago teaches English to more than 70,000 students

BY BOB ZULEY

Researchers with the Univ. of Chicago say former English learners in Chicago Public Schools [CPS] who graduated from language support programs by the time they reached 9th grade are thriving, according to a report in The74.

Their study of 78,507 CPS students who started high school in the fall of 2014, 2015, and 2016 had better cumulative grade point averages and were more likely to graduate than the district average. Their two-year college enrollment rate was also higher.

"There is this perception that English learners are particularly struggling, that they don't do well ... that they are perpetually behind," said Marisa de la Torre, managing director and senior recent associate at the Univ. of Chicago Consortium on School

Research. De la Torre said the belief that all children associated with English learner programs are forever adrift is misleading and unfair to students and their teachers: It's a far smaller subset of active English learners – those who struggle to make it out of English learner support programs – who tend to have lower grades, she said.

Jorge Macias, now a senior consultant to the Latino Policy Forum, led Chicago's multilingual program for years. He says the narrative must be changed to reflect reality.

Researchers found that while late-arriving English learners struggle with standardized tests, their grades were strong. And they were more successful than their native English-speaking peers – in college, suggesting their poor test performance was not predictive of later success.

Another de la Torre study of

LEARNERS see p. 4

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How can buyers find a reputable exclusive buyer agent?



The Home Front

by Don DeBat

Second of two articles on how realty commissions are changing.

How does a home buyer find a reputable exclusive buyer's agent, who may be worth even more than their commission?

First, check out the buyer-broker's education, usually outlined in the professional designations earned, along with years of service and experience.

Is the broker a Certified Real Estate Brokerage Manager [CRB], the highest level of professional achievement in real-estate brokerage? Or, is the broker an Accredited Buyers Representative [ABR], a Graduate of the Realtor Institute [GRI], or a Certified Real Estate Specialist [CRS]?

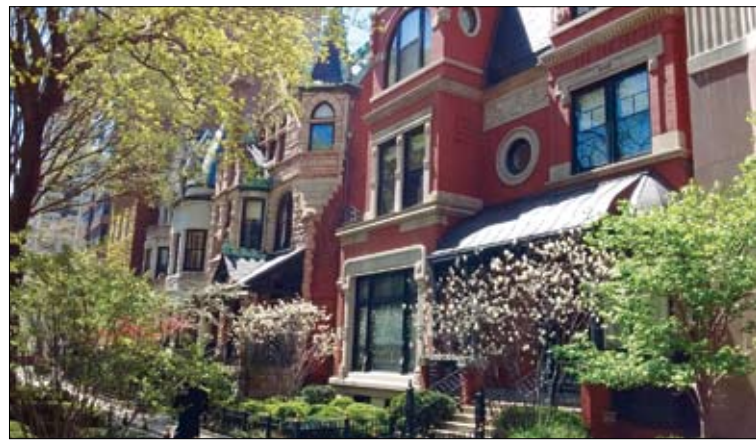
"Some successful realty agents boast about their top-ranked annual sales volume," said Gold Coast buyer broker Sara E. Benson, CRB, ABR, president of Chicago-based Benson Stanley Realty. "However, these agents can be the most-risky for the consumer because they may often have the lowest ethical standards."

According to Benson, while the seller's agent may photograph the property, list the home in the MLS, and host open houses, the buyer's agent is responsible for the lion's share of home-buying expenses, pre-buying research and field work, outlined below:

- Pre-buying activities. In addition to boundless hours of consultation, buyer brokers secure pre-approval letters, conduct limitless property research and market analysis, and check real-estate tax records. Detective work in condominium buying often involves research on a building's finances and the risk of a potential special assessment, which could cost an unwary buyer \$10,000 to \$50,000 in the first year of ownership.
- Field work outside office. Once the property is targeted, the buyer broker schedules and sets up showings, gasses-up their car and takes the buyer on what could be a dozen or more property showings.
- Property targeting. When a suitable property is targeted, the buyer broker develops negotiation strategies, sets up and attends inspections, and gathers repair estimates.
- Contract stage. The buyer broker also prepares the purchase contract, presents the offer, con-



According to Sara Benson [left], while the home seller's agent may photograph the property, list the home in the MLS, and host open houses, the home buyer's agent is responsible for the lion's share of home-buying expenses, pre-buying research and field work.



ducts negotiations, attends the final walk-throughs, and at post-closing, does buyer hand-holding, especially if there are additional questions or concerns.

"The sheer worth of a reputable buyer-broker's network is invaluable," says Benson. "Agents often have private access to properties not even publicly listed on the Internet. Despite all of this, the listing agent dictates their compensation? I applaud the decoupling of commissions."

A study commissioned by a major telephone carrier for 500 corporate relocations over the period of one year found buyer brokers secured homes at 91% of asking price, compared with the 96.5% secured by traditional brokers.

"That's a full 5.5% percent spread—or a buyer savings of \$22,000 on a \$400,000 home," said Benson, who noted that the fall-through rate of "For-Sale-

By-Owner" contracts—without a buyer-broker's guidance—is a whopping 80%.

"For first-time, buyers who think their real estate attorney will provide the services and expertise that an experienced buyer's agent can, they are sadly mistaken," Benson said.

"Attorneys never even set foot on the property," Benson said. "They aren't familiar enough with the market to provide a competitive-market analysis because they don't have the data," she said.

"Attorneys aren't familiar with school districts and neighborhood boundaries. They often select title companies in which they have 'affiliated business arrangements' for their own profit."

Finally, Benson believes that the recent National Association of Realtors' \$418-million federal-court settlement might just get rid of the wicked "double-dip com-

mission," the dirtiest little secret in the real estate industry.

No agent can "represent" both parties in a transaction as neither party is being fully represented, Benson noted. "Dual agency should be illegal in every state in the nation—not just eight states. It's the number one reason agents are sued."


Savvy buyers who continue to seek "professional, buyer-broker guidance will get the full and undivided representation which they pay for and deserve," Benson noted. "And, buyers should be prepared to sign an agreement to receive the full benefits of an exclusive buyer broker."

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.


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LEARNERS from p. 3

CPS found that English learners who demonstrated English proficiency by eighth grade had higher attendance levels through elementary and middle school, better math test scores and core course grades compared to students who were never classified as ELs.

It further found that English learners who did not achieve English proficiency by eighth grade struggled with declining attendance by the middle grades and had considerably lower grade point averages.

The achievements of former English learners, she said, are "a powerful reminder that bilingualism is not a barrier, but a bridge, to greater opportunities," said Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro, vice president of education policy and research for the Latino Policy Forum.

English Learners are students who come from non-English speaking homes and who are learning English. There are about 70,400 students classified as English Learners at CPS, according to CPS.

CPS saw an increase of just over

5,400 English learners during the course of the 2022-23 school year, according to district enrollment data obtained by Chalkbeat. Many are believed to be newly arrived immigrants sent to Chicago after illegally crossing the wide open U.S. Southern border.

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We can help you understand your property taxes in virtually any language

BY MARIA PAPPAS

The property tax system can confound lifelong Cook County residents. Assessments, appeals, exemptions and other parts of the process can be difficult to understand.

Now imagine you immigrated from a place that didn't have property taxes. Many countries in Europe, Asia and elsewhere do not tax real estate. You buy a home and settle in the Chicago area and one day an unexpected tax bill arrives in the mail. You have no idea what it means.

My office has been helping people understand their tax bills and the property tax system in virtually any language for many years. That's why I reach out to so many

different ethnic communities and participate in so many cultural events and activities every year.



Maria Pappas

Our multilingual outreach includes:

- Short informational videos that explain the property tax system at cookcountytreasurer.com in six languages: English, Spanish, Polish, Cantonese, Mandarin and Arabic
- A website that can be translated into 133 languages

• A brochure about the property tax system that is available in English and 27 other languages.

The videos describe how you may be eligible for a refund. They tell you how to use your address to search at cookcountytreasurer.com. Refunds for overpayments are available going back 20 years and refunds for missed tax breaks called exemptions are available going back four years.

At the bottom of the homepage at cookcountytreasurer.com you'll see a prompt where you can use Google Translate to convert the website from English to one of 133 different languages.

My office's brochure, "The Property Tax System," contains useful information for property owners. The brochure is

offered in English and 27 other languages: Albanian, Arabic, Armenian, Assyrian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Croatian, Czech, Filipino, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Lithuanian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovakian, Spanish, Thai, Ukrainian, Urdu and Vietnamese.

Many Cook County residents speak Spanish in their households. My extensive outreach in Hispanic communities includes the weekly 30-minute radio show, "Latino Houses Matter," which airs at noon Mondays on WRLL-AM 1450. Spanish-speaking hosts explain how to check for potential refunds and answer questions from callers.

Housing Preservation Ordinance scheme delayed three months

Ald. Carlos Ramirez-Rosa [35th] has announced that he wants to delay implementation of his plan to give tenants the opportunity to purchase the real estate they live in until March, 2025. The extra time would give property owners within the affected zone time to comprehend and act on whatever consequences they think the program would trigger in their individual instances.

Property owners may choose to put their properties up for sale early, transferring ownership into a trust, or to other family members. The original plan was to implement the ordinance in Jan. 2025.

New legislation typically leads to individual actions by those most affected by a piece of legislation, based on their own primary self-interest.

Ramirez-Rosa pushed the anti-gentrification ordinance, believing it may protect renters across emerging Chicago neighbor-

hoods. The critical element of the legislation is a provision that gives tenants the right of first refusal to buy a buildings their landlord may be selling, before the owner can sell it to another outside buyer.

The Northwest Side Housing Preservation Ordinance [HPO] was approved in September. The hope is that it will protect renters from displacement due to accelerating gentrification in neighborhoods like Humboldt Park, West Town, Logan Square, Avondale and Pilsen. How those most affected by the HPO respond will go a long way in any effort to expand the boundaries of this effort into other Chicago neighborhoods.

One of the more dire elements of the legislation are the higher demolition fees for multi-unit buildings, which went into effect on Oct. 9. The demolition fee for a detached house, townhouse, or two-flat building increased 300% from \$15,000 to \$60,000.

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The fee for a multi-unit residential building or coach house increased 300% from \$5,000 per unit to \$20,000 per unit.

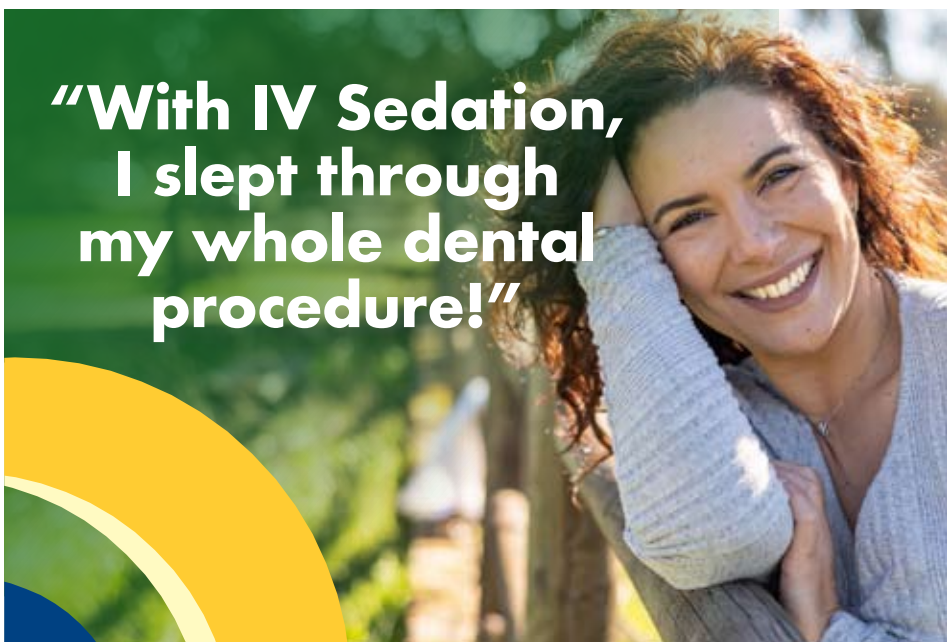
The decision to push the start date back comes in response to concerns from tenant advocates and real estate professionals, who have raised questions about the ordinance's potential unintended consequences.

As the HPO will affect many citizens

primary asset and in many instances their own home, changes to the ordinance will include a requirement for prospective tenant-buyers to prove they are financially capable of purchasing the property.

For smaller buildings with 1 to 4 units, tenants must provide a mortgage pre-approval letter, while larger buildings will require a letter of intent from a lender. Those changes are intended to stop tenants from using the ordinance as a way to stall the sales process, as some property owners fear.

The proposal also offers tenants a second chance to purchase the property if the price drops by 10% or more after their initial offering. Another proposed change in the HPO would add and end date for the program of Dec. 2029, during which the city will study the HPO's impacts before any future expansion of the scheme.



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Police Beat...

In Lincoln Park killer's home cops find 'sniper-like rifle,' written plan to target someone at an event

The concealed carry holder who killed an erratic stranger on a Lincoln Park street Nov. 27 had a trove of firearms, including a "sniper-like rifle," inside his nearby condo, and a "multi-paged plan to harm an unrelated individual at a specific event," prosecutors said Dec. 6.



John Conway

Clark last Nov. 27. Judge Caroline Glennon-Goodman detained Conway pending trial, saying items found in his home heightened his risk to the public.

In a proffer provided by the Cook County State's Attorney's office, prosecutor Mike Pekara said Nesteruk had been acting erratically in the neighborhood, kicking at car doors and pestering passersby and businesses.

Video showed that Nesteruk made an "air kick" toward Conway as Conway walked down the street, according to Pekara. He said the kick did not hit Conway.

Both men came to a stop, standing "a full sidewalk square" apart, and Conway drew a gun from his right pocket, said Pekara. Conway allegedly raised the firearm and shot Nesteruk, who had backed up and had his hands at his sides, one time in the chest.

Conway watched as Nesteruk stumbled away and collapsed before "calmly turning around and walking at a steady pace" south on Clark St., Pekara alleged. The entire shooting was caught on clear video, and some cameras caught images of Conway walking away as emergency vehicles responding to the shooting passed him with their lights activated, according to Pekara.

Nesteruk died last week.

About an hour after the shooting, Conway went to a nearby gym where he is a frequent patron.

CWBChicago reported earlier this week that a reader recognized the shooter as "a weird one" who "always keeps to himself. All black clothing, all the time."

Based on video images, investigators determined that the gunman likely used a specific brand and model revolver, Pekara said. Federal agents found that Conway had purchased one of those revolvers in 2020, and police allegedly found a matching gun inside Conway's condo last night.

After Chicago police released surveillance images of the shooting suspect, "several" people contacted investigators to identify the individual as someone they knew from lo-

cal businesses and his condo building. Conway surrendered to police at the Belmont and Western facility around 1:30 a.m. Wednesday, about eight hours after CPD released the photos. He immediately invoked his right to an attorney, according to a police report.

Detectives executed a search warrant at Conway's home in the 2600 block of N. Lakeview shortly before 7 p.m. Dec. 5. Pekara said they found the revolver, three additional handguns, "a sniper-type rifle with a scope and bi-pod stand," and "multiple types of ammunition, including ammunition for an AR-15." Notes found in the condo indicated Conway had zeroed in the rifle's accuracy to 800 yards. Pekara also reported finding ballistic armor, night vision equipment, and a phone jammer.

Disturbingly, the police also found a map of Illinois with several colleges circled, a written document with "derogatory language," and another detailed plan to kill an unnamed person at an event, Pekara said. The plan involved "notes detailing escape routes," according to Pekara. He said police also found a map of an unnamed Chicago neighborhood with "X's marking locations within that neighborhood."

Armed carjacker strikes twice, gets arrested after returning to the crime scene

Police arrested a suspect after two armed carjackings were reported Dec. 7, one in Old Town and the other outside the migrant shelter across from the Salt Shed. Authorities have not yet announced any charges.

First, a 59-year-old woman was carjacked in the 1400 block of N. Cleveland at noon, according to CPD. She told police a man walked up, displayed a gun, and demanded her property. She complied, and he drove away with her Subaru SUV.

Less than 15 minutes later, a 33-year-old man was carjacked while sitting in his car in the migrant shelter parking lot at 1308 N. Elston. A man walked up, displayed a gun, and ordered him out of his red Ford Mustang, officials said. After robbing the victim of personal property, the hijacker drove away with the Mustang.

And that's when it gets a little weird. The second victim told police that he believed the carjacker returned to the scene on foot while they were waiting for police to arrive. But the suspect was gone again when the cops got there.

Officers found the hijacked Mustang in the 1400 block of N. Magnolia and determined that the carjacker had left the scene in the first victim's Subaru.

Ultimately, police arrested a suspect when he returned to the area near the migrant shelter on foot shortly after 1 p.m. A CPD spokesperson said he is a 39-year-old man who has been detained while detectives carry out their investigation.

Seven injured when stolen Jeep, pursued by state police, barrels through Mag Mile red light

The driver of a stolen car ran a red light and crashed on the Magnificent Mile on Dec. 4, sending seven people, including three young children, to hospitals, according to Chicago police.

Shortly before 9 p.m., Illinois State Police troopers working with a city-

wide hijacking task force mission spotted the stolen Jeep Cherokee on northbound Lake Shore Dr. near the Chicago River, according to an individual familiar with the matter.

Troopers and other task force units pursued the Jeep, which fled north, exited at Belmont, and then headed back south on the drive. The Jeep's 16-year-old male driver exited at Michigan Avenue, ran a red light at Chicago Ave., and crashed into a van, according to the source and a CPD statement. A Jeep Compass and a Honda SUV were also struck, police said.

Cops arrested the 16-year-old after a short foot chase. He was taken to Stroger Hospital in fair condition. His female passenger, whose age was not released, was taken to Northwestern Memorial Hospital in fair condition. CPD said charges are pending against both of them.

EMS transported a woman and a six-year-old girl from the van to Northwestern and Lurie Children's Hospital, respectively. Both were in fair condition.

Three occupants of the Jeep Compass were taken to hospitals: a woman and Northwestern in good condition and children ages 4 and 6 years old in fair condition to Lurie.

CPD records show the Jeep Cherokee was recently stolen from the 3500 block of W. Cullom in Albany Park. The police classified it as a "straight steal," indicating that it was a routine auto theft rather than a carjacking.

Chicago police have relied on Illinois State Police troopers, whose pursuit policy is less restrictive than CPD's, to help with vehicle chases. And ISP has been effective when their units are available.

Serial burglar is charged with breaking into bars and restaurants across Chicago

Hardly a week goes by without the Chicago Police Dept. issuing a new warning about burglars breaking into the city's businesses, especially restaurants and bars. So far this year, more restaurants have been burglarized than in any year since at least 2001, which is as far back as CPD's public data goes.

But there is some good news to report. Detectives have arrested and charged a man with committing six restaurant and bar burglaries since July, but he's suspected of committing many more.

His name is Traivon Dorsey. The 29-year-old is currently on parole for burglarizing restaurants and bars, allegedly taking liquor worth more than \$100,000 from the businesses.

Now, the state is moving to revoke his parole after prosecutors accused him of another half-dozen burglaries: July 11, West Town Bakery, 1916 W. Chicago; July 11, Roots Pizza, 1924 W. Chicago; Nov. 1, The Farm, 15 W. Illinois; Nov. 1, Mott Street, 1401 N. Ashland; Nov. 14, The Daily, 4560 N. Lincoln, and on Nov. 25, at Tao, 832 N. Dearborn.

Police included some of those break-ins in a community alert issued on Nov. 10. Detectives said a solo burglary was using a pry tool to enter businesses so he could take safes, cash registers, and high-end bottled alcohol.

The alert linked the burglar to 15 burglaries from Lincoln Park to the South Loop to Ukrainian Village.

If Dorsey is sent back to prison for a parole violation, he'll be out again soon. His full sentence ends next month. Judge William Fahy ordered him to go on an ankle monitor when he gets out of jail.

His previous restaurant and bar burglary problems began when prosecutors said he stole \$24,000 of that booze during just two burglaries at River North nightclubs in December



Surveillance images from CPD and a Ring network user show the burglary suspect. Images courtesy Chicago Police Dept., Ring

North Side garage burglar, seen in countless surveillance videos, has become 'a regular TV star'

For the past few weeks, residents of a North Side neighborhood have grown tired of a prowler who has been breaking into garages and snooping around yards.

One of many residents who've posted video of the thief on the Ring network said he's been seen in so many surveillance clips lately he "seems to be a regular TV star throughout the neighborhood."

His neighborhood fame got a boost on the night of Dec. 8 when Chicago police detectives released a couple of surveillance images and asked the public to help identify him.

The photos released by CPD show

2021. On one day, he walked through the employee entrance at Clutch, 316 West Erie, and walked out with 18 bottles of liquor in trash bags, officials said.

That Christmas, Dorsey allegedly scaled a rear staircase and used a rock to break the second-floor window of Moe's Cantina, 155 W. Kinzie. Prosecutors said he took \$6,000 worth of liquor there.

Detectives later linked him to six more restaurant break-ins in River North and Old Town, with one of those businesses allegedly losing \$51,700 worth of liquor.

He pleaded guilty to three cases, and prosecutors dropped the charges in exchange for a four-year sentence. State records show he arrived at prison on December 5 last year and walked out on January 9.

Prosecutors said his previous felony convictions included a 2016 theft and three residential burglaries in 2012 and 2013. He was adjudicated delinquent as a juvenile for theft in 2011, burglary in 2010, and aggravated battery in 2008.

Police helicopter tracks GameStop robbers from Rogers Park to the Far South Side

A secret GPS tracker allowed a Chicago police helicopter to locate and follow a carload of armed robbers for more than 25 miles across the city, resulting in one arrest, according to prosecutors.

The robbery occurred at GameStop, 1751 W. Howard, on Nov. 26. Four men walked in, pepper-sprayed a 25-year-old female employee, and took control of keys to access two cash drawers, according to a CPD report.

Dequan O'Neil

Police said the crew escaped in a red SUV with \$1125, a \$25 gamer headset, and that pesky GPS tracker. One of CPD's helicopters located the SUV and followed it all the way to the 13000 block of S. Ellis, where it parked, and the four men ran into a nearby home. The helicopter crew gave ground units the exact address.

Cops went to the home and saw someone run out the back. That person got away. Meanwhile, a woman allowed officers into the house, where they ordered 18-year-old Dequan O'Neil to come out of the bathroom, the CPD report said. He complied.

After the GPS tracking company activated an alarm on the device, cops found it hidden amongst a stack of cash inside a box of "miscellaneous items" in the bathroom O'Neil had been in, according to the report.

the man burglarizing a garage in the 1800 block of W. Balmoral around 2:30 a.m. on Nov. 29. Police said he got two bikes, an electric cargo bike and DeWalt tools and chargers.

Ring video posted online showed how he got in: He crawled over the back fence, pulled a yellow crowbar from his backpack, and easily pried the door open. This video shows the break-in along with shorter clips from a couple of other incidents.

Anyone who recognizes him can contact Area Three detectives at 312-744-8263 regarding case #JH526447.

Two GameStop employees identified O'Neil as one of the robbers, prosecutors said in a detention petition. Judge Susana Ortiz granted the state's request, noting that O'Neil completed juvenile probation less than a year ago for aggravated robbery while armed with a knife.

Man charged with setting 'large volumes' of propane ablaze outside Lincoln Park restaurant

Authorities have charged a Schiller Park man with two counts of arson for allegedly setting propane tanks on fire, causing damage to a restaurant and event venue adjacent to Lincoln Park Zoo. Officials said a Chicago Fire Dept. firefighter suffered a shoulder injury while fighting the blaze.



Stephen Habel

Investigators arrested him when he was discharged from Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center this week.

Firefighters responded to Cafe Brauer, 2221 N. Stockton, around 4:20 a.m. Nov. 22 to fight a fire that began in an outdoor storage area adjacent to the zoo, the report said.

After the fire was out, investigators found about 40 propane tanks of varying sizes in the storage area. According to the report, Habel "tested" the tanks by turning gas valves on and then lit a cigarette, which ignited the gas.

The report stated that prolonged exposure to fire caused some tank valves to partially melt and fail, releasing "large volumes" of gas and causing "explosion like events" that were visible from a distance.

First responders found Habel inside the storage area "unharmful but soaking wet due to firefighting activities," according to the report. News Footage from the morning of the fire appeared to show minimal damage to the Cafe Brauer structure.

Habel, who is charged with arson causing injury to a firefighter and arson, was detained on Thursday by Judge Robert Kuzas.

Shortly after the fire, the Lincoln Park Zoo issued a statement, saying no animals were harmed and the fire did not reach the zoo's gates or the nearby Farm at the Zoo.

— Compiled by CWBChicago.com

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Shoplifting soaring in Chicago after years of decline

Lakeview, Lincoln Park new shoplifting hotspots

BY BOB ZULEY

After a decline during the COVID-19 pandemic, shoplifting numbers have soared 46% this year in Chicago; higher than the same period in the past six years.

This conclusion has been recently reported by WBEZ and the Chicago Sun-Times citing a report by the nonpartisan Council on Criminal Justice [CCJ].

The top five-percent of reported shoplifting locations by address had 68.5% of all reported

thefts from 2018 to 2023. The city saw large drops in reported shoplifting in 2020, likely due to store closures at the start of the pandemic, according to a Univ. of Missouri – St. Louis report.

A small area of shopping in the Lake View and Lincoln Park communities emerged last year as a new hotspot for retail thefts, the CCJ found. Downtown areas such as the Gold Coast and the Loop remained the perennial place for shoplifting in Chicago.

According to the CWBChicago crime site, shoplifting has spiked to a 22-year high in Chicago soaring 45% this year, making 2024 the worst year for retail theft in the city since 2003.

For example, in Avondale, shoplifting reports jumped from 87 during the first half of 2023 to 240 incidents in the first half of 2024. As of July 29, Chicago Police completed 7,584 shoplifting reports compared to 5,275 during the same period of 2023.

The Illinois Retail Merchants Assoc. cites a Capitol One report

that said Illinois merchants lost more than \$2.9 billion in revenue in 2022 due to retail theft.

In October of this year, the Illinois Organized Retail Crime Association [IORCA] was estab-

State officials have said organized theft crews are a big factor in recent theft trends. In Oct. 2023, Suburban Lyons police raided a warehouse on W. Roosevelt Rd. in Chicago's Lawndale community seizing an estimated \$5 million in stolen merchandise.

lished to help in the fight against organized retail crime. With a goal of streamlining coordination between law enforcement, businesses, and loss prevention specialists, making it easier for agencies across jurisdictions to share

information, build cases, and stop crimes.

IORCA is headed by Anne Sagins who previously worked with the Illinois Senate Republican Caucus. "Organized retail crime is a growing threat that requires a unified response," said Sagins.

State officials have said organized theft crews are a big factor in recent theft trends. In Oct. 2023, Suburban Lyons police raided a warehouse on W. Roosevelt Rd. in Chicago's Lawndale community seizing an estimated \$5 million in stolen merchandise.

Retailers have long complained that then-State's Attorney Kim Foxx's office had a stated policy of not pursuing felony charges for retail theft for hauls under \$1,000, unless the offender had at least ten felony convictions, noted a Sun-Times editorial.

Illinois state law says the cutoff amount is \$300, with offenses under that amount considered misdemeanors. Some feel that police are reluctant to investigate misdemeanor retail crimes because

they involve paperwork that will only be tossed out in court.

The new Cook County State's Attorney, Eileen O'Neill Burke, has said she will adhere to the state cutoff of \$300, above which shoplifting is a felony. "That might be a bit low for the cutoff, as inflation has eroded the value of \$300 in recent years, which is something the Legislature might want to take a look at. But \$1,000 is too high," concluded the editorial.

Chicago Park District winter programming, registration now open

The Chicago Park District [CPD] registration is now open for its 2025 winter programming.

Online registration began Dec. 9 for parks located West of California Ave. and for all virtual programs, and on Dec. 10 for parks located East of California Ave. and for gymnastic centers.

In-person registration will begin on Dec. 14 or 16. Most programming runs from Jan. 6 - Mar. 16, 2025.

Winter programming highlights include a free Learn to Swim class, Lifeguard Explorers Training program, gymnastics sessions, basketball and pickleball.

Special Recreation programs are offered for individuals with disabilities. Participants will enjoy a variety of activities, from creating crafts, cooking, and fitness to visiting with friends in CPD social clubs.

Winter Break Camps are available at over 50 parks across the city during the holiday school break. Most park activities are at least six hours with most running the full day. Dates vary but many camps run from Dec. 23, through Jan. 3, 2025, closing on Dec. 25 and Jan. 1.

Programs include activities for all ages.

Full list of winter programming offerings and highlights are available at <https://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/winter-programs>

Learn to be a life guard

In the Lifeguard Explorers Training Program, CPD will teach the required skills and provide supervised practice time needed to successfully pass the Lifeguard Skills Test. Passing the Lifeguard Skills test is a requirement to become a CPD Lifeguard. Open to Chicago residents aged 15-22, participants will receive \$400 upon completion of the program. The next Swim Test is scheduled for 9 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 21, at Whitney Young High School, 211 S. Laflin St.



MARIA PAPPAS
COOK COUNTY TREASURER

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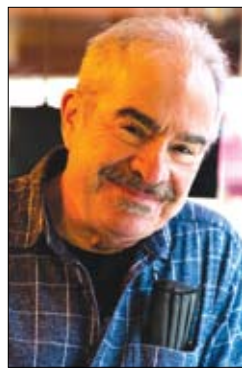
Stories behind Chicago's food inventions, Dec. 14

Italian beef and giardiniera, the Chicago style hot dog, deep-dish pizza and gyros may be familiar foods. But have you heard of these other foods: Akutagawa, Jim Shoe, jibarito, and taffy grapes? All these inventive foods originated in Chicago – many from immigrant cultures.

Award-winning food writers Monica Eng and David Hammond will share the colorful backstories of these foods and many others at a presentation, "The Stories Behind Chicago's Greatest Food Inventions," at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 14, at the Edgewater Branch library, 6000 N. Broadway.



Monica Eng



David Hammond

The interactive program will include prizes; signed copies of their book, Made in Chicago: The Stories Behind 30 Great Hometown Bites, will be available for \$20.

This free program is a partnership with the Edgewater Branch, Friends of the Edgewater Library and the Edgewater Historical Society.

LIARS from p. 2

fire, the real Christmas miracle. It still houses the Crown of Thorns, employed by Jesus' captors both to cause him pain and to mock his claim of authority.

PROMENADING: Todd S. Davis had a Sunday on La Grande Jatte, 1884. At the Art Institute of Chicago, home of the painting. He says "Bedlam," "scandal," and "hilarity" were among the epithets used to describe what is now considered **Georges Seurat's** greatest work, and one of the most remarkable paintings of the nineteenth century, when it was first exhibited in Paris.

KENNEDY BURIAL: Ethel Kennedy buried beside her husband, **Robert F. Kennedy**, 47 years after his assassination, at Arlington National Cemetery with the family and Boston's Cardinal **Seam O'Malley** in attendance.

WHO'S WHERE? It's official. **Dennis Donn** and Santa are close buds... **Jim Kinney** and **Brian White** in Cleveland, Ohio at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame doing their **Andy Warhol** thing... **Desiree Glapion Rogers** did Thanksgiving in New Orleans with her family... **Bruno Abate** helps the good wine breathe at Tocco Tocco Tocco (Touch, Touch, Touch in Italian)... Chicago attorney **Brendan O'Connor** on a memory-laden family trip back to childhood villages and homes with mom and dad in Ireland, with all the grandkids... Former Ald. **Manny Flores** and his birthday girl wife, **Georgina Karas Flores**, sipped favorite beverages to celebrate... **Dolores Thorsen** with four of her six grandchildren - grateful for them all... **Ann Rodriguez Nolan** and daughter did the Walnut Room tradition and then saw "Annie" and sang along... **Kim Duda** with **Cardinal Blase Cupich** at Holy Name Cathedral... **Courtney Pitt** thankful to be with those we could be with and missing all we love who were not. So much to be grateful for this year... **Kiel James Patrick** cut the most balanced of

trees for Christmas, even complimenting his sweater... **Tom McGuire**, **Jim Sharp**, **Tom Hackett**, **Michael Moore** and **Courtney Thompson** lunching at Cafe Deux Magots in Paris on the Boulevard St. Germain celebrating **Leslie Hindman's** birthday week... **Candace Jordan**, **Jennifer Sutton Brieva**, **Anne Sherrill**, **Kristine Kinder** and **Kathy O'Malley Piccone** joined by **Adam Houston** of Giordano Ballet at a stunning table for the Service Club's Christmas Luncheon at the Union League Club.

CHRISTMAS: **Jeff** and **Stephanie Leese Emerich** joined mom, **Georgia Leese**, for Advent Day #2 in the dazzling Walnut Room. All was aglow for their Marshall Field's luncheon tradition. The magnificently soaring red tree, decorations and dramatic lighting reflected a heartfelt tone for the season.

BIRTHDAY: **Sherrill Bodine** and **Debi Catanacci** celebrating **Bobbi Panter's** birthday at RL Restaurant with many Service Club ladies in attendance. Bobbi is Service Club president and a stunning booster of Chicago, filled with reason and common sense, besides her great love of our best friends. She makes the world safe for all.

HUGO'S FROG BAR: **Abdel Afkir**, Hugo's maitre d', was on hand, **Denice Storey** was serving and brought me great welcome. **Dwayne Hayden**, assistant manager, was keeping everything humming as Hugo insisted. **Josiah Neniskis**, an Art Institute trained artist, had me to look after, while veteran server **Brendan** was vigilant and doing heavy lifting. West Coast oysters were impeccable with the savory mignonette. The fish and chips are Chicago's finest. The crisp Spanish white Albarino wine was perfect with this dinner. But I had no bread or dessert.

JOYEUX NOEL: **Christopher Clinton Conway** in Paris at Galeries Lafayette, at 60 Avenue Des Champs-Élysées, Paris. The giant Christmas tree there has always been a passionate affair. The monumental tree takes centre stage below the iconic glass dome, filling the store with all the magic of Christmas.

For this year's special 130th Christmas celebration, the tree is packed with state-



Georgia Karas Flores and Manny Flores.



Stephanie Leese Emerich, Georgia Leese and Jeff Emerich.



Kim Duda with Cardinal Cupich.

of-the-art technology: adorned with a blaze of 20,000 programmable lights, the tree towers like a giant chandelier in the heart of the store, coming to life in a sumptuous sound and light show.

Man is not what he thinks he is. He is what he hides.

— **André Malraux**

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Kayla Shipman as "Elle Woods"
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Letters to the Editor

An informed citizenry cannot be defeated

So glad to see the return of the safe and secure newspaper vending boxes which Skyline replaced on notable street corners. Nice to see neighborhood journalism flourish again with readers on the bus, in the coffee shops and bars and restaurants- all places where people gather to discuss the issues of the day. Or in their home. It is great to know what is going on.

There is a reason that the First Amendment to the US Constitution stipulates Freedom of the Press. An engaged and informed citizenry cannot be defeated. It is the price we gladly pay for our cherished democracy.

*Tim Carew
Old Town*

Grind away

I'm gratified to read that the police were recently able to arrest and charge several offenders with many thousands of dollars in thefts, plus operating a continuing financial crime enterprise [Nov. 27 Inside-Booster.]

Even though I was in law enforcement for 37 years, I am puzzled at "how the fraudulently issued gift cards were converted to cash... (and how they operated thus for three years!)." Sometimes the victim (or its business employees) don't cooperate — was that part of the case here? Is the City really that short-handed as to police? How many of the perpetrators implicated others, and so the investigation just kept unfolding?

A broader picture is to wonder why their jobs seemed insufficient to them. In spite of the perpetual upkeep our own house has required over the years, it would never occur to us to commit crimes to repair or outfit it.

Were the gift cards always an even \$900? We have never bought nor received a gift card for anything close to that amount; It

seems strange that a manager's approval would not be required for any gift card over \$100. Many were issued by the same cashier-offender each time. Seems like something the Home Depot higher-ups really should have been quick to scope out.

This is a sad and infuriating example of why there's no-one capable around to help when we want to ask a few questions in this particular big-box store, which we have visited several times.

No migrants are mentioned as having been involved, so no-one can claim these offenders imported their bad ways along with their bad selves from anywhere other than their own backyards.

It's well known that "The wheels of Justice grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine." To the cops and court personnel involved in this grind, I say: Well done.

*Maja Ramirez
Retired CPD Warrant/Summons
Officer
Avondale*

St. Lucia Procession, Dec. 13

Join neighbors in Andersonville for a traditional candlelit, carol-filled procession. Departing from the Swedish American Museum, 5211 N. Clark St., at 4:45 p.m. and heading north, businesses and volunteers will light the way with lanterns along the sidewalk.

The St. Lucia procession will cross Clark at Catalpa stopping for carols at the Holiday Tree and continuing down to Foster before heading back to the museum. For more information at <https://andersonville.org/holidays/st-lucia-festival-of-lights/>

'Wheel Thru the Season' with Cirque's Experience, Dec. 14

Get ready for holiday magic at the Broadway Armory, 5917 N. Broadway, on Saturday, Dec. 14. Cirque's Experience's "Wheel Thru the Season" brings a Nutcracker-inspired circus extravaganza. Doors open at 3 p.m. for

the Holiday Market and crafting fun before the 5 p.m. performance. Tickets are on sale now at https://www.cirquesexperience.org/event-details/wheel-thru-the-season-1?mc_cid=403891b9dc&mc_eid=f24e72232d



Holiday events in Chicago Parks

Jingle Ball, Dec, 11

Crafts, music, and holiday activities at the Jingle Ball on Dec. 11 from 10:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. at the Lincoln Park Cultural Center, 2045 N. Lincoln Park West.

Admission is free—registration required.

Teen Holiday Party (Deaf & HOH), Dec. 13

Teen Holiday Party event for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing teens on Dec. 13 from 4 - 9:30 p.m. at Horner Park, 2741 W. Montrose Ave. Admission is free.

Teens in the Park Presents: Silent Movie, Dec. 13

Watch The Nightmare Before Christmas (PG) with Silent Disco Headphones on Dec. 13 from 6 - 8 p.m. at Green Briar Park, 2650 W. Peterson Ave.

Admission is free, ages 13-18.

Santa's Secret Workshop, at Horner Park, Dec. 14

Create holiday gifts at the Santa's Secret Workshop on Dec. 14, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. at Horner Park, 2741 W. Montrose Ave.

Admission is 15\$, register at https://anc.apm.activecommunities.com/chicagoparkdistrict/activity/search/detail/525691?onlineSiteId=0&from_original_cui=true.

Do-It-Yourself Nutcracker at River Park, Dec. 15

Join us for the Do-It-Yourself Nutcracker event on Dec. 15, 3 - 4 p.m. at River Park, 5100 N. Francisco Ave.

All Ages, Free Admission — register at https://anc.apm.activecommunities.com/chicagoparkdistrict/activity/search/detail/527732onlineSiteId=0&from_original_cui=true.



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FERN HILL from p. 1

of high-rise affordable housing is located just south of the 60614 Zip Code area.

“This project would generate about \$2 million per year in property taxes, meaning it would pay for all the transportation improvements proposed. I think we need to allow a lot more of them to happen, so that we can actually generate the tax revenue that’s needed to support all of us here,” said a resident from Sandburg Village during the meeting.

The Moody Church and gas station parcel, intended for cultural enhancements and commercial structures, reflects an attempt to integrate with the community, but many see it as another veneer masking the larger issue: the displacement of Old Town’s unique character in favor of high-density urbanization.

Another issue is what the projects and added congestion could mean for four nearby schools, the Latin School, Catherine Cook, the LaSalle Language Academy and Walter Payton School.

Fern Hill’s project is another example of a developer prioritizing profit over community well-being. The profound negative impacts on traffic, parking, and neighborhood charm overshadow its lofty promises

of affordable housing and retail space.

Presently Ald. Brian Hopkins [2nd] has remained neutral on the project’s fate, and has not signaled his intentions on whether he might approve the plan in his ward or not. His decisions moving forward will be closely watched by all sides of the issue.

Old Town residents at the meeting, and following it online, say they deserve development that respects their community’s history and meets their needs, not a high-rise that sacrifices livability for private gain.

Longtime residents like Tim Carew have voiced strong opposition, calling the proposal “a blatant example of carving up the public right-of-way to serve private commercial interests.”

The fight over this development is more than a local issue, as density is being added to communities all across the North Side and downtown. The effort symbolizes the broader struggle to balance urban growth with preserving the soul of historic neighborhoods. As it stands, many people in the surrounding areas again made it clear that they think Fern Hill’s vision fails to strike that balance, and the community is rightly pushing back against what they say is a misguided project.

LANE TECH from p. 1

three-point field goals.

“They shot 50% from three. We had two tough teams that know each other exceptionally well,” LoGalbo lamented. “They know what we are going to run. We know what they are going to run. They did a good job of taking us out of some of the things we wanted to do. We made some adjustments and we were getting some clean looks. But at the end of the day, we made some bonehead mistakes.”

The Champions move on into Chicago Public League play with upcoming games against Westinghouse, Kenwood, Clarke

and a rematch against Phillips. Lane also travels next weekend to Washington D.C., to play in the Gonzaga high school tournament. This is more of the boot camp to get ready for the March state title run.

The Chicago Elite Classic is a high school basketball “shootout” organized and hosted by legendary CPS high school coaches Tyrone Slaughter and retired Simeon coach Robert Smith. Top teams from the Chicago area are invited play other top teams. Also invited are top teams from around the country. This year, those teams are Mater Dei from Los Angeles, Chaminade from Missouri and Duncanville from Texas.

PARK from p. 1

History Museum.

“If we work together in this way with our wonderful partners the Conservancy and the Park District, not only can we really address some of [our] paving needs and these real priority needs with our state grant, but we can help to build a platform for a better park in the future,” she said.

The project team is made up of partner organizations along with Park District consultant Upland Design, a landscape architecture and park planning firm.

The project’s first phase will focus on pathway and drainage assessment to meet current infrastructure needs while considering open spaces and designing what else might be accommodated for future consideration.

Second Phase

The second phase will address other features that arise during the design process, informed in part by community input, and as funding becomes available.

- The project has the following timeline: Nov. 7, 2024, on-site vision meeting with project partners and trades.
- Nov. 13, 2024, community meeting #1 (survey results).
- Fall/ Winter 2024, pathways assessment plan development (about six weeks).
- Winter 2025, community Meeting #2 (preliminary review).
- Winter 2025, site assessment improvements proposed (including phase 1).
- Spring 2025, community Meeting #3 (final review).
- Spring/Summer 2025, Phase I improvements begin.

Some 710 survey respondents identified priorities such as improving pathways, benches and lighting along with adding plants and trees. Other survey responses included no changes, better security and safety, improved maintenance, a playground and children’s area, and a dog park.

While the presenters’ focus was on improving pathways, open space drainage, and introducing interpretive elements for the Lincoln statue, it was only when concerned participants asked questions that additional project planning details were shared.

Questions ranged from asking about paving materials, path width, way-finding, bike lanes, trees, and security around the Lincoln statue.

The underpass to the beach and the “Redefine the Drive” project were noted as out of scope. When asked who else might be involved in the project, the project partners admitted they had already engaged others.

Other partners

“The answer to those questions is that what you see here are the main partners in this project, but we are not the only stakeholders,” explained Raphael Rosa, LPC’s executive director. “So, for example, we’ve

already met with the Latin School, we’ve met with the History Museum. We’re planning on meeting with Moody [Church]. There are a number of other organizations we want to meet with because it’s important that all voices are a part of this.”

GCN are the folks who got the first grant. “And, since we were already looking at a project around the Lincoln Statue, we came together for this. But part of the reason we’re doing this is to service those other groups that are an important part of the conversation. Specifically, the Latin School is a stakeholder like anyone else, but they are not an official part of the project team so to speak,” Rosa said. “They are a heavy user of that area of the park, so we want to know how they use it, just like we want to know how you use it.”

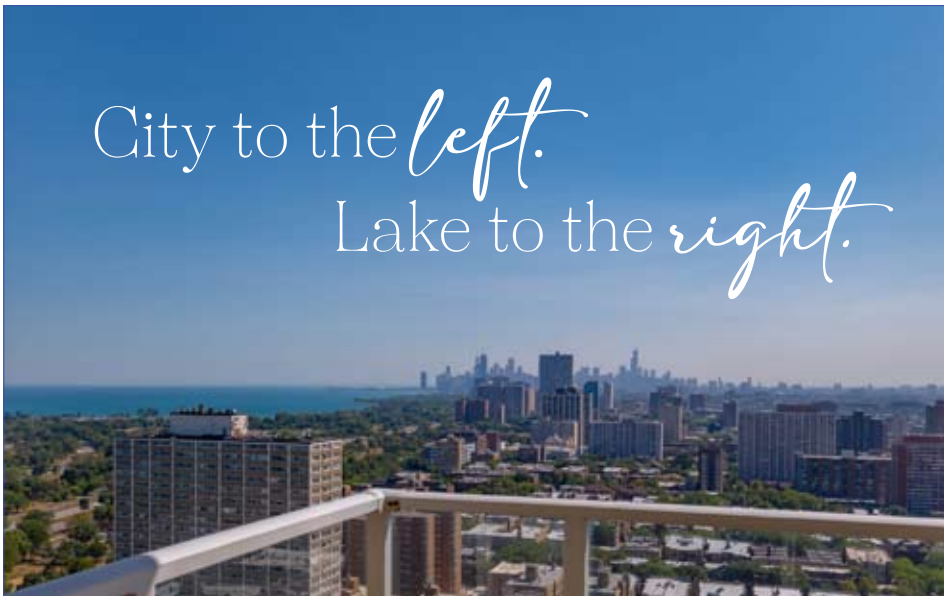
Some 710 survey respondents identified priorities such as improving pathways, benches and lighting along with adding plants and trees. Other survey responses included no changes, better security and safety, improved maintenance, a playground and children’s area, and a dog park.

Lardner noted that Park District plumbers, electricians, and others participated in the Nov. 7 walk through and pragmatic issues arose including where district vehicles could park or turn around for underpass maintenance.

“We need to think of these practical elements of park management with modern day tools and methods and trucks and vehicles,” she said. “I think working together in conjunction with thinking about paths and movement through the park and thinking about priority improvements, we really are going to work hard to optimize the money that we have available now to do as much as we can in this first phase.”

The meeting closed with an invitation for additional comments to the info@lincolnparkconservancy.org with the request to put “South Lincoln Park” in the subject line. A recording of the meeting was to be placed on both the GCNA and Conservancy websites.

Editor’s Note: It should be noted that following the meeting, residents expressed dire concerns that the current effort may be a Trojan horse for further development. Pointing to arrangements made in 2006 by the Latin School of Chicago - that were covered extensively in these newspapers - with the Park District to build an artificial turf soccer facility in the heart of Lincoln Park, residents recall the deal was negotiated in secret and signed without any public scrutiny. Citizen participation can help dissuade the potential of public land being used for private use.



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