



## Sterling Bay goes begging? Story on page 3

Image courtesy Sterling Bay

## Loop security guard shot during gunfight with carjackers

BY CWBCHICAGO

A security guard was shot during a gunfight with carjackers in downtown Chicago Aug. 13, police say. It happened outside the Chicago Board of Trade building.

The victim, 44, was heading to his Dodge Challenger when a carload of carjackers pulled up in the 100 block of W. Van Buren around 4 a.m. Four masked offenders, including one armed with a rifle, exited the car and tried to carjack the victim.

Police said the victim suffered a gunshot wound to his hip during an exchange of gunfire with the

carjackers. Investigators found six casings from rifle rounds and six casings from a handgun at the scene.

EMS took the victim to Northwestern Memorial Hospital in critical condition. The hijackers, who did not get the guard's vehicle, escaped in a black Dodge SUV, police said.

An officer at the scene said the guard believed he shot one of the carjackers. The police were checking with hospitals to see if anyone showed up with mysterious gunshot wounds. In fact, a 29-year-old man walked into Mt. Sinai Hospital, 1500 S Fairfield Ave., shortly after the shoot-

ing with a gunshot wound to his back. He was uncooperative with the police, who said he is in critical condition, but it is not known if his injuries are related to the Loop shooting.

The victim is the 12th person shot in the Loop this year. That's down from 25 at this point last year, which included nine victims shot in two separate mass shootings that officials linked to a nightclub in the 400 block of S. Wells.

The Loop had 18 people shot at this point in 2021, eleven in 2020, and four as of this date in 2019.

## Latin School named in another lawsuit after leaving two students in college limbo

The Latin School of Chicago once again has found itself as targets in a lawsuit over an alleged bullying environment for both students and parents of Latin student.

This newspaper has previously reported on the \$100 million lawsuit filed against the Latin School, 59 W. North Ave., by Rosellene and Robert Bronstein for its role in the Jan. 2022 suicide of their 15-year-old son Nate Bronstein, a former Latin student.

The Bronsteins accused Latin of failing to deliver their son's school records. Their son committed suicide, allegedly due to repeated bullying and cyberbullying at the hands of students at school-sanctioned events.

The families initial suit claimed that Nate was being harassed over his perceived COVID-19 vaccination status. The original wrongful death lawsuit was filed in April, 2022, and a separate suit was filed in June 2023, after the school refused to hand over Nate's records, which included multiple reports of him being bullied. The Bronsteins' complaint says the school assessed Nate for suicidal ideation in Oct. 2021. The family believes Latin School failed to put a safety

plan in place.

In their lawsuit, the Bronstein family claims that Latin never told them when their son went to staff with concerns about cyberbullying from his peers on apps like Snapchat, prior to his suicide. They say they did not learn about the suicidal potential until April, 2023.

(Nearly all of the school administrators, including the Dean of the Upper School, Head of the School, Assistant to the Head of School, Upper School Director, resigned after the Bronstein lawsuit was filed in April, 2022.)

On Aug. 11, Cook County Circuit Judge Scott McKenna struck some language in the suit, and the \$100 million sum the Bronsteins were seeking from Latin in the second amended complaint, because he said the amount did not comport with procedural rules in Cook County.

Now Latin is back in court again, this time being sued by a pair of graduating twins who did not at first receive their diplomas nor transcripts - which are required for college matriculation - reportedly due to a dispute between the school and the twins' mother, Katie O'Dea, a former

school employee.

On June 27, O'Dea filed a lawsuit against Latin along with her husband, Daniel McKee, and their children, Molly and Hugh McKee.

O'Dea was formerly Latin's director of communications. She left her job in Nov. 2022, after 16 years, holding a valid enrollment contract for her children to finish the academic year after paying the agreed upon discounted sum. Yet her children were denied diplomas and transcripts at graduation. (The school later relented and released the transcripts to the two students.)

The main cause of action in the new lawsuit is a common benefit offered to employees of private schools, a reduction in tuition for staffer's children.

While O'Dea resigned from her position in the fall of the 2022, the actual enrollment contract neither referenced any employment agreement nor had O'Dea put anything in writing to that effect, according to the complaint. The O'Dea case now claims Latin breached its contract.

According to the filing, Latin

**LAWSUIT** see p. 12

## Melas Centennial Fountain to flow again



The water will flow once again at Nicholas J. Melas Centennial Fountain at 400 N. McClurg Ct., starting on Aug. 22.

The Nicholas J. Melas Centennial Fountain will be flowing again after being dry and under repair for almost three years.

The fountain, 400 N. McClurg Ct., was named after the former president of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago [MWRD]. It will be turned on again at noon on Tuesday, Aug. 22.

The Centennial Fountain has been dry since 2020. Elizabeth, daughter of Nicholas J. Melas invites you to come show your support with a peaceful protest at the fountain to get the fountain flowing again, in honor of her late father's 100th birthday.

The fountain was named after Melas, who was elected in 1962 to the district's Board of Commissioners. Melas was re-elected five times, serving for 30 years -- the last 18 as President of the Board.

Located on the north bank of the Chicago River McClurg Court, it was dedicated in 1989, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the MWRD, which is perhaps best known for its major achievement in reversing the flow of the Chicago River in 1900.

The fountain, designed by Lohan Associates, every hour, on the hour, shoots a large eighty-foot water arc across the river from a modernist tiered waterfall.

## Commercial real estate still taking hits

*'We're giving the keys back, a lot of stuff going back to the bank'*

Chicago's commercial real estate market has always been among the top commercial markets in the country. Despite the government-imposed pandemic lockdown and the ebbs and flows of real estate in the past few years, the market continues to grow commercial space.

The choice to live in and around downtown Chicago has bolstered commercial and retail space by creating 24/7 neighborhoods. But cultural changes, crime, politics and tax policy are now threatening the future of the local commercial real estate market.

Many real estate speculators see a commercial real estate crash on the horizon. And indeed some giant buildings have already been foreclosed on. The downturn in the commercial office space market has caused an increasing number of distressed property owners to make the decision to simply walk away—from mortgages they either can't pay now or can't afford after they refinance at starkly higher interest rates. That includes owners from small niche property developers to private equity giants such as Blackstone, the world's largest commercial

landlord. The Palmer House foreclosure in late 2020 was the largest foreclosure lawsuit against a downtown Chicago property owner since the pandemic lockdown.

"It's going to be a long haul. There's a lot of stuff going back to the bank," said Vince Schwab, executive managing director of investment managers Marcus & Millichap.

Surging interest rates have made refinancing those loans a losing proposition for office property owners. This year alone, the Mortgage Bankers Association estimates that \$92 billion in non-bank office debt will mature. Borrowers will either need to refinance that debt, default on it or sell the underlying property.

Darin Mellott, vice president of capital markets research with commercial real estate and investment services firm CBRE, agrees.

"There are some market players who have made the determination that, 'We're giving the keys back,'" Mellott said, adding there's a basic problem with that:

**COMMERCIAL** see p. 12

# No changing directions, no U-turns



By Thomas J. O'Gorman

When I took the "The Rules of the Road" test I hadn't quite turned 16. But I met all the requirements asked for by Illinois Secretary of State Michael Howlett. But try as he might, Mr. Howlett could not make my feet actually reach the pedals on my father's Oldsmobile.

Back then, the system for organizing a young man to be a lifetime Chicago driver was far less complicated. There were no real intellectual roadblocks for "changing directions." But you needed to have a working knowledge of that strange rectangular workbook, "The Rules of the Road."

Was there any volume of contemporary literature more frightening or demanding than that slim little work? That skinny text seemed loaded for all that was left to come.

The rumors swirled. You could not get one wrong answer on your test. If you did you were consigned to the oblivion of being an unlicensed driver in high school. No shame was more severe. It was like the Original Sin of Adam. Or wetting your pants at the blackboard.

That's why you studied it morning, noon and night. Before you brushed your teeth or put Wildroot hair tonic in your hair, you were studying that text. You pondered the questions on the ride to school, in chapel, at lunch, in the library, or the bus ride home.

The one thing you never did was to ask someone a question about the text. That was the forbidden rule. No person of any age, schooling, employment, or profession was a fit candidate for a question. Whether that was about where the car key went or what the speed limits were in the State of Illinois. No relative was worth asking a question, not

even Mr. Howlett. A grandparent to query was simply too bizarre to consider. I had four. One was dead and three never drove. It was as if the walls were closing in on me.

I remember the Saturday morning I took the exam, in the Diver's Education trailer at Bogan High School at 79th and Pulaski. I asked my mother if I should mention to someone that we had cousins whose name was Bogan. She said I should keep that info to myself.

The Harvard entrance exam could not be any harder. I was intensely shivering, sweating. Wanting to appear calm and collected. I thought of the expansive format of my automotive knowledge. What I knew from memory. What I could only guess at. And the few pieces for which I had no clue. I wished I could have phoned all my former nuns and asked for prayers.

My mother thought that was a bit eccentric for someone who had studied so hard.

My rosary beads from Ireland were in my pocket and both grandmothers promised to remember me at Mass. I had worn out all conceivable routes to Divine intervention. It was now or never.

One question however haunted my piety. When may an Illinois driver make a U-turn? When I did not have a fast reply, I saw myself going down in flames. Then I remembered the answer. Never.

Last week I dined al fresco at Via Carducci. Cars of all description were parked along the Division St. curb just east of Damen. During the first 15 minutes I sat there sipping a spritzer, seven vehicles in the street made U-turns. Right in the middle of the street. But no drivers were stopped. No tickets were issued.

Recently our Wicker Park neighborhood, aka East Village, once a stronghold of Polish and Mexican cultural expression, went through a series of substantive transitions. Many three- and four- unit condos were constructed, displacing the old-fashioned Chicago bungalows and other single family dwellings.

The strong population of Art Institute-trained artistic alumnae had little choice but to follow the less expensive rents to Logan Square and Humboldt Park.

But many of our neighborhood's



The 'Rules of the Road' booklet provided procedures in operating motor vehicles and obeying traffic laws.

new residents grew up in the Chicago suburbs. Where, I suspect, U-turns flourish.

I see the illegal U-turns as something far larger than a traffic violation. For me its arc is the pitch-battle of Suburbs vs. City currently raging.

Of course that's also how I view dog walking, jogging, the constant need to consume coffee, vapor cigarettes and walking down a city street glaring into an iPhone. To most suburbanites this means success. To most Chicago urban sophisticates it spells disaster. I'd feel warmer towards a Zulu hunter.

I feel the emotional entanglement that arises when the cultural imbalances of the past find themselves at odds with the tried and true standards of the contemporary present.

In our neighborhood we have a lot of round holes and square pegs confronting each other. There appears to be a large cargo of unclaimed values here. Many simply cannot work in the complicated environment of conflicting sentiments and self-adjusted inventories.

The social constructs of American suburban living appear to be at odds with old-fashioned family traditions and values. As well as "The Rules of the Road." The affects, as it were, of violence and crime, are often more easily identified in urban living. Incidents like the U-turn in the middle of Division St. present a curious crisis of the moral value of legislated State Law. It's not just about bad driving.

In some newer, more economically affluent suburban social plateaus some longstanding moral

judgments appear to be socially challenging newer, more economically advanced urban communities. As well as simultaneous issues of race, education, employment, social transition, political independence, religious and gender fluidity.

Young adults raised in the suburbs of middle class America may find living without the scrutiny of an older generation of supervisory adults more to their liking. They may also endeavor to shape more dramatic ethnic observations and fewer religious expectations and practice.

Cultural, religious and social constructs can create appropriate ways of acting. They may also influence the conduct of everyday business such as following normative social customs for the business of restaurants. Independent schools. The prescribed procedures in operating motor vehicles or obeying traffic laws. They define the norms for civil living and protected rights in such mundane procedures as 4-way stops, speed limits, bike lanes and bus lanes.

Life experiences can be more conflicting than at first expectations. The forms of education often differ in urban and suburban life. The social connectedness of urban living might appear to offer a more adhesive grip on the structures and roles of family.

Over the summer of 1964 my limbs grew with shocking speed providing me with legs worthy of a man, or at least a teenage boy, ready for his behind-the-wheel driving exam.

I could reach the pedals on the Oldsmobile.

Perhaps it was the spirit of the Age of Lyndon Johnson. Or the nutrients in my Ovaltine. But I was ready for the duty that came to me as a grandson driver, chauffeuring my Grandmother to her Franciscan Devotions, a spiritual retreat from the 12th century, a pound cake of psalms, chants, mystical poetry and eternal prayer. A liturgical devotion she shared with St. Francis of Assisi and a thousand unnamed saints whose holy lives even now place the U-turn and 4-way stop in their proper proportions before the creation of the world.

**HIGH CRIME:** Bonnie Spurlock notes major crime at 10:45 p.m. at 900 N. Rush involving crazy guy with a gun. Totally unbelievable as neighborhood left vulnerable with all the tourists and residents dining in that area.

**CRAZY CHICAGO REAL ESTATE:** Apparently the owner of the LondonHouse Hotel, 360 N. Michigan Ave., (home of the Old Fort Dearborn) has seized the street level commercial shops there because the tenant who developed the landmark and attempted buying the building has been very slow coming up with cash.

And we've also been told that the Michael Reese developer wants the bright, shiny, "empty" new building housing condos along Mag Mile, at 800 N. Michigan, and is near a deal to buy the building. And there's some sort of kinkiness there too.

**ARCHITECTURE WAR:** Word is a doctor has purchased a vintage Hinsdale mansion and declared his dislike of the home's design. So he plans on tearing it down. Sadly it is the home of the late Fred Krehbiel and the work of famed architect David Adler. Even worse there appears no protection for the rarified domestic structure. Wigs are on the green.

**GO CUBS:** The Cubs are on fire. Recently scoring the most runs in a two-game span by a Cubs team in 126 years. Who's coaching? Harry Potter? It's the first time since 1984 that the Cubs have scored 16 or more runs.

**HEAVEN SENT:** Chicago's most dedicated and faithful celebrity, Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt, BVM, Loyola Univ. Basketball Chaplain, celebrates her 104th birthday Aug. 21. The deeply spiritual member of the BVM religious order is not just about winning. Her Catholic spirituality is an open invitation to talented young athletes who she

U-TURNS see p. 8



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Sterling Bay's Lincoln Yards project seemed like a sure winner, with the large swath of riverfront property on the North Branch of the Chicago River and a sweet TIF deal that meant they kept all the property taxes. Then a commercial glut and high interest rates changed everything. *Image courtesy Sterling Bay*

## Sterling Bay goes begging?

**Developers asking for more help from new mayor**

It was the biggest story in town, a very big deal... until it wasn't. The Lincoln Yards deal was the biggest news on the North Side back when it appeared Sterling Bay could do no wrong. They owned the white hot real estate and the media narrative. That is, until the local real estate market stalled due to a sour mix of pandemic lockdowns, that created a sudden glut of vacant commercial real estate, and high interest rates that spiked up dramatically in the last two years.

So now, much of the speculative development money has dried up, and Sterling Bay is missing deadlines on infrastructure work for its mega-development amid its search for new sources of cash.

They have even asked the Chicago Teachers Union for a loan, asking them to buy into the project at \$100 to \$150 per square foot, potentially raising as much as \$300 million if that deal is ever closed.

Pre-pandemic, the Lincoln Yards deal seemed like a sure thing with the large swath of the North Branch of the Chicago River in hand. Sterling Bay was gifted with what appeared at the time like a super sweetheart deal, when former mayor Rahm Emanuel offered them a big Tax Increment Financing District [TIF] deal. A deal so sweet that incoming mayor Lori Lightfoot let it be, after making it a campaign issue before her election.

The trouble is, to collect those billions in future property tax revenue, you must first get the buildings built, and rent-paying tenants inside them. Empty commercial lots don't generate much property tax revenue.

Today's high commercial interest rates make it very hard for developers to borrow money for new construction. And asking to borrow billions from a bank to add commercial space to the market during a period of high commercial vacancies is a tough sale.

Sterling Bay is now seeking the support of Mayor Brandon Johnson, according to a story by Justin Laurence in Crain's Chicago. They'd like to get the city to step in and front the funds to install roadways on its 53-acre development district along the Chicago River. They are also making claims that former Mayor Lightfoot's administration blew up a deal that would have kick-started

the infrastructure work.

The developers are now struggling to get the stalled Lincoln Yards project going, and are seeking help from City Hall.

is just north up the river, after all.

In 2019, Sterling Bay agreed to front the costs of nearly \$500 million in essential infrastructure work to improve the site and link

***In 2019, Sterling Bay agreed to front the costs of nearly \$500 million in essential infrastructure work to improve the site and link it to the surrounding neighborhoods. Those costs would be repaid from a new \$1.3 billion TIF district, that would have seen all the property taxes collected go right back to the developer and their investors.***

Sterling Bay hopes to convince Mayor Johnson that the economic benefits of the project are worth signing off on an agreement. It's an agreement that was shot down early on by many opponents of the project. The deal was perceived as corporate welfare and a giveaway to a rich developer and their wealthy investors.

The mayor's support could be the difference-maker to finance critical infrastructure projects with taxpayer dollars.

In a sign of weakness, Sterling Bay is now dangling 1,200 units of affordable housing in the development mix, hoping that will draw Johnson's interest.

A vast swath of affordable housing was not included in the tony sales and Power Point pitches the community was getting from Sterling Bay four to five years ago. The CHA's Lathrop Homes

it to the surrounding neighborhoods. Those costs would be repaid from a new \$1.3 billion TIF district, that would have seen all the property taxes collected go right back to the developer and their investors.

**BEGGING** see p. 4

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## Cresco, Columbia

### \$2B dope merger deal called off

Cresco Labs, the owners of Sunnyside Dispensaries located in River North and in Wrigleyville, announced in June that they will not be able to complete the divestitures necessary to secure all necessary regulatory approvals to close on their proposed \$2 billion merger with Columbia Care by the required date of June 30.

In March, Cresco had agreed to acquire Columbia Care, which would have created the largest multi-state operator in the U.S. Both companies described their end of the proposed deal as mutual. Columbia Care is one of the largest, fully integrated recreational weed operators in the U.S., operating in 16 markets across the country. They have one store in Chicagoland located in Villa Park.

In a statement, Cresco CEO Charles Bachtell said that despite the termination of the deal, the company remains committed to its "Year of the Core strategy" which Bachtell described as "restructuring of low-margin operations,

improving competitiveness and driving efficiencies in markets" where Cresco maintains "leading market share, and scaling operations to prepare for growth catalysts in emerging markets."

Cresco Labs could be considered big corporate pot. It is one of the largest vertically integrated multi-state cannabis operators in the United States, employing a consumer-packaged goods approach. They are the largest wholesaler of branded cannabis products in the U.S.

Some of Cresco's brands include High Supply, Mindy's Edibles, Good News, Remedi, Wonder Wellness Co. and FloraCal Farms. Sunnyside is Cresco Labs' national dispensary brand, located in Chicago at 3524 N. Clark, 436 N. Clark St., and at 4501 N. Kenzie.

The companies also terminated a deal to sell some divested operations in New York, Massachusetts and Illinois to an entity owned by Sean "Diddy" Combs for up to \$185 million.

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# Chicago's tailspin housing market showing signs of revival



## The Home Front

by Don DeBat

That sigh of relief you hear when wandering the side streets of Chicago's North Side is home buyers, sellers and Realtors rejoicing that the 2023 residential tailspin market is finally reviving.

"While July of 2023 was the 17th consecutive month of year-over-year home sales declines in Lincoln Park, the Gold Coast, the Near North Side, Lakeview and North Center, we are beginning to see some signs of an improving market," observed Realtor John Irwin, co-author of the Baird & Warner August Market Analysis with broker Jackie Lafferty.

Although benchmark mortgage interest rates continue to creep toward 7%, the August Baird & Warner market analysis noted the following positive trends:

• **Units under contract rise:** Homes that went under contract during the past 16 months have experienced the same double-digit price decreases as unit sales

declines. "However, July was the first month that we have seen an increase in sales volume," noted Irwin.

The 6.6% increase of homes under contract over last year, was fueled by the Gold Coast and Near North Side, which posted a whopping 20.7% increase in July. Lincoln Park eked-out a 1.7% increase, while Lakeview and North Center posted small decreases.

"The July increases are significant in that they will probably turn into August home sales increases and are the first signal of a possible turnaround," Irwin said.

• **Home price increases:** July represented the fourth consecutive month of median home-price increases on the North Side. Traditionally, low-inventory markets can inflate home prices to dangerous levels for home buyers.

"Despite many multiple offers and low-market times, Chicago home prices have remained fairly stable in comparison to the suburbs and other parts of the country," Irwin noted.

In the four neighborhoods surveyed in July, median home prices rose 5.1% over last year, and prices are now 0.3% ahead of year-to-date 2022 median prices.

North Center led the group in July with a 7.2% median price increase compared with July 2022.

Lakeview median price rose of 6.9%, and Lincoln Park saw prices increase 6.9% over the same month a year ago. However, median prices slipped 2.4% on the Gold Coast and Near North Side.

• **Inventory supply:** Months of Inventory Supply (MSI) is a calculation that compares home sales with inventory levels. Traditionally, anything below 6.0 MSI is considered a seller's market and anything above is considered a buyer's market.

In 2023, inventory-supply levels have dropped as low as 1.2 MSI in the past months reflecting the critical shortage of homes for sale. However, MSI levels are slowly starting to rise and have moved from 2.1 in Lakeview to 6.1 on the Near North Side. "This does not mean that the inventory

shortage is over, but it is moving in a positive direction," Irwin noted.

"It is too early to announce a North Side real estate turnaround," Irwin said. However, the three comparatives above are a positive sign.

"There is a strong supply of buyers and while there are no statistics to give us true numbers, open-house attendance and low-market times indicate that buyers are getting more comfortable with higher interest rates," Irwin noted.

### Mortgage rates creep toward 7%

On Aug. 10, Freddie Mac's Primary Mortgage Market Survey reported that benchmark 30-year fixed-rate home loans rose to an average of 6.96% nationwide from 6.90% a week earlier. A year ago, 30-year fixed loans averaged 5.22%.

On Aug. 10, 15-year fixed-rate mortgages averaged 6.34%, up from 6.25% a week earlier. A year ago, 15-year fixed loans av-

eraged 4.59%.

The survey is focused on conventional, conforming, fully amortizing home-purchase loans for borrowers who put 20% down and have excellent credit.

"For the third straight week, mortgage rates continued creeping up and are now just shy of 7%," said Sam Khater, Freddie Mac's chief economist. "There is no doubt that continued high rates will prolong affordability challenges longer than expected, particularly with home prices on the rise again."

However, Khater noted that upward pressure on interest rates is the product of a resilient economy with low unemployment and strong wage growth, which "historically has kept purchase demand solid."

For more housing news, visit [www.dondebat.biz](http://www.dondebat.biz). Don DeBat is co-author of "Escaping Condo Jail," the ultimate survival guide for condominium living. Visit [www.escapingcondojail.com](http://www.escapingcondojail.com).

## BEGGING from p. 3

In a public statement, Sterling Bay says it "took on the responsibility of the municipality by both financing and building" the infrastructure because the city, under former mayors Emanuel and Lightfoot, was "unwilling" to build it itself. "Developers almost never fund construction of infrastructure out of pocket."

Now four years later, Sterling Bay has been unable to raise the upfront capital to fund the roadwork. And now they've gone begging, since they are now behind schedule for the improvements demanded in a redevelopment agreement with the city. Their deal with the city required them to complete work on a bridge connecting the northern and southern portions of the site and several key streets throughout the development by the end of 2022.

The extension of The 606 trail and a complicated realignment of Elston Ave. were meant to start last year. While some prep work

**Former Mayor Lori Lightfoot reportedly rejected the proposal because she said it would upend the way the city has used SSA's. SSA's traditionally fund neighborhood business corridors, collecting commercial property taxes to pay for private security, marketing, plantings, landscaping, and trash and snow removal; but not to pay for hundreds of millions in roads, bridges and sidewalks.**

has been done, construction of those critical projects are already well behind schedule.

While the redevelopment agreement doesn't penalize Sterling Bay for missing the deadlines, this prep work is critical to connect the site to nearby areas and modes of transportation.

A four-year deal presented to the city in January 2022 for The Steelyard, a "mixed use lifestyle district" on the southern portion of the site, estimated that three new buildings would be completed by 2024, but Sterling Bay has yet to break ground and is expected to release an updated plan in the coming months.

Andy Gloor, Sterling Bay CEO, has blamed the slow progress on the former Mayor Lori Lightfoot, telling Bloomberg News, she "put a brake on our entire project." Lightfoot fired back in a statement to Crain's, calling Gloor's comments "unfortunate and demonstrably false."

For now Gloor and his staff are desperately seeking new money to fully fund infrastructure improvements without any support from the city.

According to Crain's, last year Sterling Bay pushed a plan to raise money for infrastructure work with a scheme to create a second special taxing district covering Lincoln Yards. That would allow for the sale of bonds backed by property taxes generated within Special Service Area [SSA] taxing district paid by Sterling Bay and its partners.

Lightfoot reportedly rejected the proposal because she said it would upend the way the city has used SSA's. SSA's traditionally fund neighborhood business corridors, collecting commercial property taxes to pay for private

security, marketing, plantings, landscaping, and trash and snow removal; but not to pay for hundreds of millions in roads, bridges and sidewalks. The city feared that granting the new request would lead to a flood of similar proposals from other developers and community groups. Samir Mayekar reportedly told Sterling Bay she rejected the SSA for fear of bad optics and political blowback.

In 2022 Sterling Bay executives also pitched City Hall on a odd bond deal through the Wisconsin-based Public Finance Authority. The deal would have provided Sterling Bay an undisclosed sum ranging in the hundreds of millions of dollars to begin the infrastructure work.

But that deal also needed city approval, because the transaction would involve the issuance of city notes backed by TIF proceeds. The mayor eventually approved the deal, but Sterling Bay said the new problem was dramatically rising interest rates. Those high interest rates and sinking commercial vacancies soured the deal's economics before they got approval from City Hall. That's when Sterling Bay gave up, blaming the mayor and politics for the failure, while city officials claimed that it was Sterling Bay who did not do the footwork required to allow the bond deal.

The fate of Sterling Bay's plans now rests largely on Johnson, and an effort to cultivate a relationship with the new mayor appears to be underway.

Crain's reports that Gloor attended a fundraising dinner for Johnson's inaugural committee hosted by R4 Services CEO Trisha Rooney. The event was meant to afford members of the

business community the opportunity to meet the mayor-elect. Unlike political campaign committees, the inaugural committee is not required to disclose its donors.

Sterling Bay still believes a bond financing deal remains a viable infrastructure funding option for the site going forward, though Mayor Johnson's office has not received any requests on the Lincoln Yards project and that the administration would need to evaluate.

Another change in the Lincoln Yards project came with the city's new ward maps. Lincoln Yards was removed from the 2nd Ward, represented by one of the project's biggest backer, Ald. Brian Hopkins. It's now in the 32nd Ward, which is represented by Ald. Scott Waguespack, who spoke strongly against the project back in 2018-19.

Ald. Waguespack told Crain's he wouldn't serve as a total roadblock to the development, but he has pushed back on some of Sterling Bay's proposed infrastructure designs, saying they need to benefit the entire area, not just the buildings within Lincoln Yards.

Ald. Waguespack also said he opposes an SSA for Lincoln Yards, but he acknowledges that his council colleagues likely would approve one if Mayor Johnson backs it.

Sterling Bay suffered another setback when two TIF districts near Lincoln Yards expired in 2021 and 2022. Those districts could have been tapped — through a process allowed by state statute known as porting, where funds are shifted from one neighboring TIF district to another — to pay for work supporting Lincoln Yards.

In Dec. 2021, the city's TIF investment committee approved spending \$12.6 million from those adjacent TIF districts to prepare for major improvements at the complicated Elston and Armitage intersection, one of the infrastructure projects Sterling Bay agreed to help finance.

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# Another mail carrier robbed at gunpoint as officials release more pictures of suspects

BY CWBCHICAGO

Another postal worker was robbed at gunpoint on Aug. 11, as authorities released more images of suspects wanted for the recent shooting of a mail carrier in Chicago.

The robbery occurred in the 1900 block of W. Thomas around 2:30 p.m.

The mail carrier was working her route when two masked men robbed her at gunpoint of her postal service master key, also known as an "arrow key," according to a Chicago police report.

Both robbers fled east on Thomas after the robbery. The report said they were both Black males between 15 and 19 years old wearing black ski masks, black hoodies, and dark clothing.

On Thursday, a home surveillance camera recorded the robbery of another mail carrier in the 1500 block of N. Long. A white and black SUV pulled next to the curb and waited for the mail carrier to get closer. As the postal worker stepped into camera view, two masked robbers emerged from the SUV's passenger seats to rob him of his wallet and keys.

Mail theft by crews using stolen postal service master keys has become so widespread that the U.S. Postal Service has advised



Postal inspectors are trying to identify these suspects as they investigate the shooting and robbery of a mail carrier in Chicago. *Photos courtesy USPS*

vised people not to put mail into its blue mailboxes after the last collection time.

Also on Friday, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service issued another bulletin as they try to track down armed robbers who targeted two mail carriers, shooting one, on Aug. 1:

- At about 3:32 p.m., two armed men tried to rob a 52-year-old mail carrier in the 3200 block of N. Kildare. Officials said one of the robbers fired a round, striking the postal worker in the leg.

- About 15 minutes after shooting the mail carrier, the crew targeted another postal worker in the 1800 block of N. Sawyer.

It was the second day in a row that the service released new images of suspects in

those crimes. Officials previously offered a \$50,000 reward for information that led them to the offenders. On Aug. 10, they doubled the offer to \$100,000.

Anyone with information about him can contact postal inspectors at 1-877-876-2455. Refer to case #4088796.

## Why are postal workers being robbed?

Mail thieves might occasionally score a valuable package or an envelope containing a birthday gift card from someone's grandma. But experts say the real value comes from identity theft and check fraud mills, which use information from stolen mail to steal people's identities and checks.

Armed men have frequently robbed mail carriers of their arrow keys in Chicago.

Some keys are stolen from the postal service in less violent ways. Some counterfeit keys have also popped up.

Highly organized identity theft and fraud organizations use stolen postal service master keys to steal large volumes of mail from public mailboxes and residential building mailrooms.

In May, a joint operation involving postal inspectors and Chicago police netted an arrest after investigators allegedly saw a man use an arrow key to steal mail from one of the postal service's ubiquitous blue mailboxes in the West Loop.

And in March, another man was charged with possessing two forged postal service master keys during a traffic stop on the North Side. Prosecutors said the man also had a trove of financial information, including W2 forms and checks.

Prosecutors charged another man in February with burglarizing the mailroom of a single Lakeview apartment building 14 times in nine weeks. Patrick Slagel allegedly admitted to being a "jogger," the slang term for people who collect bulk mail in theft scams, and to using postal service master keys that were either provided by relatives of USPS employees or were bought or stolen.

## What to expect when cash bail ends in Illinois

BY JOE TABOR

*Illinois Policy Institute*

The Illinois Supreme Court on July 18 ruled as constitutional a new law making Illinois the first state to eliminate cash bail, and giving local law enforcement a Sept. 18 start date.

The Pretrial Fairness Act portion of the SAFE-T Act originally suffered from conflicting and layered standards for detaining suspects before trial, but was amended to attempt to address the concerns of prosecutors and law enforcement. The changes established a more uniform standard for pretrial detention and expanded the kinds of crimes that qualified for pre-trial detention as well as allowed judges to detain suspects who pose a threat to the public or to identifiable individuals.

These changes bring Illinois more in line with the bail reform enacted in New Jersey, which has largely been seen as a success even though it has had recent push-back.

Here's what Illinois does now and what will change when the Pretrial Fairness Act ends cash bail starting Sept. 18.

### What's the law been on defendants being release before trial?

Under current law and until Sept. 18, all

arrested persons, regardless of offense, are to be taken without unnecessary delay to the nearest judge in the county. The judge, among other things, determines the bail amount needed for the defendant to go free until trial.

The court has the right to release the defendant on his own recognizance, meaning no bail, given three conditions:

1. If it unilaterally finds the defendant will appear as required before or after conviction.

2. If the defendant does not pose a danger to any person or the community.

3. If the defendant complies with all conditions of bond. Those conditions are determined by a judge and typically include the requirement to obey the law, appear for court dates, to not leave the state without the permission of the court, and to not use drugs or alcohol or possess weapons. They could also include the requirement for electronic monitoring or for the defendant to avoid certain people or places.

Monetary bail is only to be set if no other conditions of release will reasonably assure the defendant's appearance in court, presuming they pose no danger to any person or the community and comply with all conditions of bond. The state has the right to appeal any order of release on personal recognizance.

### What changes Sept. 18?

The Pretrial Fairness Act changes the law by limiting pretrial detention to (1) forcible felonies, (2) any other felony in which the defendant poses a real and present threat to the safety of any person or persons or the community, or (3) if the defendant fulfills one of eight categories

of offenses and meets the corresponding standard of threat to people or possibly the community. These include crimes such as stalking and weapons charges. Any other offenders would be issued a summons to appear within 21 days.

**CASH BAIL** see p. 11

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# Police Beat...

**Pickpocket is working  
CTA trains in the Loop**



Chicago police say this man pickpocketed a woman at the Jackson Red Line CTA station. *Courtesy Chicago Police Dept.*

Pickpockets were hard-hit by the COVID pandemic. With crowds outlawed, CTA ridership down, and nightclubs thinly attended, there weren't many good places to steal wallets while nonchalantly bumping into people.

But one thief is getting back on his feet. And Chicago police mass transit detectives have released pictures of him, so you know who to keep an eye out for.

In a community alert, the transit unit said this man pickpocketed a woman as she waited for a train at the Jackson Red Line station around 5:30 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 5.

Police said he approached the woman from behind and took her wallet and other items. Then he slipped away.

Anyone with information about the man can contact investigators about case JG-372695 at 312-745-4706.

**Kia Boy who ran from stolen, bullet-riddled car in River North gets three years**

Chicago will be short one Kia Boy for a few months while a man accused of crashing a bullet-ridden, stolen Kia in River North spends some time in prison.

Jeremiah Cruz, 22, pleaded guilty to possessing a stolen motor vehicle in



Jeremiah Cruz

exchange for a three-year sentence from Judge Michael Hood. He's scheduled to be paroled on Dec. 20.

In early November, police saw the stolen Kia driving recklessly and weaving through traffic near Dearborn and Erie streets. As they got closer to the vehicle, they realized it was sporting holes.

Prosecutors said Cruz was behind the wheel of the Kia, which was being operated without keys. As he tried to escape, he stepped on the gas and struck several vehicles, including some parked on the opposite side of the street. The Kia sputtered to a stop in the middle of a

traffic lane.

Cops arrested Cruz nearby. The Kia's owner, who lives in River Forest, told police that their car had no bullet holes before being stolen.

Cruz has previous felony convictions for theft in Iowa and driving a vehicle without consent in Minnesota. About four months before the Kia incident, he was charged with criminal trespass to a vehicle and driving without a license after Chicago police allegedly caught him driving a stolen car on the West Side. During a bail hearing for that case, prosecutors said Cruz told cops he "thought it was stolen, but wasn't sure."

"Kia Boys" take advantage of a design flaw that allows them to steal Kia and Hyundai vehicles with little more than a USB cord. Auto theft reports have increased 112% this year compared to the same period in 2022, thanks to the fad and social media how-to videos. Auto thefts are up 229% compared to 2019.

**Driver carjacked in Lincoln Park**

Chicago police are investigating an armed carjacking in Lincoln Park Aug. 14.

A 28-year-old man was in his white Chrysler 300 in the 2400 block of N. Lincoln when another car pulled up around 2:35 a.m., a CPD spokesperson said. Two men got out of the other vehicle and forced the driver out at gunpoint.

They drove away with the man's car, followed by the other vehicle.

The victim is a concealed carry holder, and a preliminary CPD report said his weapon was inside the vehicle when the carjackers took it.

Monday's carjacking is the ninth of the year in Lincoln Park, a significant improvement from last year, which had 21 cases as of Aug. 14. This year's total is generally in line with 2019 through 2021.

**Man gets six years for North Center shooting that ended with stolen car crash, foot chase**

A Chicago man has been sentenced to six years for his role in the shooting of a driver in North Center two years ago.

Alexandru Mihai of Albany Park faced attempted murder charges in the case but instead pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of aggravated battery by discharging a firearm on Wednesday afternoon, court records show.

Mihai, 21, was driving a stolen Porsche when his passenger opened fire on another driver in the 4200 block of N. Western Ave. shortly before 2 p.m. Aug. 24, 2021, prosecutors said. The passenger has never been found.

The victim never interacted with Mihai or the gunman before he saw them traveling in traffic with him, prosecutors said. He told police the Porsche followed him from Irving Park Rd. onto Western Ave. and then pulled alongside his car. Officials said he heard a loud "bang," felt pain, and looked up to see the Porsche's passenger pointing a gun at him.

The victim hit his brakes, and the gunman allegedly fired two more shots from the Porsche as it continued northbound. Cops spotted the Porsche and tried to pull it over a short time later near Wilson and Ravenswood. But Mihai sped away from the police and crashed into a building near Giddings Plaza.

The gunman ran into an alley and

got away. Mihai bailed out of the driver's seat and ran through Garcia's Mexican restaurant, 4760 N. Lincoln, where several cops were having lunch in the otherwise sleepy eatery.

Investigators allegedly found two loaded handguns in the Porsche's front passenger door area. Prosecutors said one had a defaced serial number and a 24-round ammunition magazine. Also reportedly found in the car, which was stolen from a residence in Aurora on August 13: 16 grams of cocaine, suspected Ecstasy, and suspected oxycodone.

Judge Shelley Sutker-Dermer sentenced Mihai. Prosecutors dropped 19 felonies in his plea deal, including two counts of attempted first-degree murder.



Alexandru Mihai

Just 20 days before the shooting, Mihai completed juvenile probation for aggravated unlawful use of a weapon, prosecutors said.

In Oct. 2020, prosecutors charged him with felony manufacture-delivery of cannabis after cops allegedly found seven Xanax pills, one oxycodone pill, and 13 grams of cannabis in his car during a traffic stop in Ravenswood Manor, according to court records. He was also allegedly carrying \$1,972 cash. Prosecutors dropped the case two months later, records show.

**Man found shot in Loop was dropped off by driver**

A man found shot in the Loop Aug. 9 was not cooperating with Chicago police. Officers who reviewed surveillance video said it appeared that he was dropped off in the area after being injured.

Police found the 29-year-old man near Michigan and Randolph with a gunshot wound to his left foot around 3:04 a.m.

He refused to provide any information about what happened, according to a CPD media statement.

Surveillance footage showed that he was dropped off near Wabash and Randolph by someone driving a white SUV. He limped over to Michigan Ave., where he encountered police.

**Four shot, dozens of rounds fired near Clark-Division Red Line station**

A gunman sprayed more than two dozen bullets, injuring four people near the Clark-Division Red Line CTA station on Aug. 13. Later, another man was shot a few blocks away in an unrelated incident, according to Chicago police.

Officers found the victims outside in the 100 block of W. Division after receiving calls of shots fired around 11:46 p.m.

Yellow evidence markers dotted the Division St. pavement just outside the mouth of an alley that runs next to a currency exchange. The victims were found steps away from the markers, each placed near a piece of evidence, mostly shell casings expended by the gunman.

In a media statement, Chicago police said a 28-year-old man is in critical condition with gunshot wounds throughout his body. The other victims, all in good condition with gunshot wounds to the legs, are a 22-year-old woman, a 24-year-old man, and a 42-year-old man.

Police said the shooter, described only as a man, escaped in a black sedan. Witnesses said it was a Volkswagen Passat.

In another shooting on the Near North Side, a 32-year-old man was shot in the chest while sitting in his car in the 900 block of N. Cambridge around 3:01 a.m. He drove himself to Northwestern Memorial Hospital for treatment.

His BMW X3, sitting outside the emergency entrance, had a bullet



A Chicago police officer's body camera recorded the cop's struggle to regain control of his firearm after Thomas Tucker (inset) allegedly disarmed the officer and fired two shots in Lincoln Park in March. *Courtesy Chicago Police Department*

**Video shows Chicago cop struggling for control of gun after man disarms him, fires shots**

Newly acquired video from a Chicago police officer's body camera shows a routine "suspicious person" call turned into a struggle for the cop's life when a trespasser took the officer's gun and fired two shots as the men struggled to control the weapon on a Lincoln Park sidewalk.

The footage provides an up-close look as the men grapple for the weapon, and a CPD dispatcher complains that she can't understand what the struggling officer is saying due to the city's low-quality radio system.

It all began when two residents called 911 after hearing a noise outside their home in the 2100 block of N. Cleveland around 8:50 p.m. March 10, the same day the local police district switched over to the city's new encrypted radio system.

A two-person patrol car responded to the call, as did another officer, a 50-year-old man who joined the force in 2000. He was working alone.

The solo officer's body camera, secured by this reporter through a Freedom of Information request, showed the officer searching yards, gangways, and a construction site before he discovered the source of the noise: a man hanging out between two homes.

"You gotta get outta there, come on," the cop orders.

But prosecutors later said the man, identified as Thomas Tucker, 29, took a "crouching position" and maintained that position as he walked toward the cop at an "accelerated pace." They said he spoke about taking the cop's gun while raising a rock over his head.

The footage shows a man emerging from the gangway with something in his right hand. As the officer extends an arm to maintain distance, he tells the man to stay back. Then it all goes south.

A portion of the video that the city provided, starts with the officer finding Tucker in the gangway. Note that CPD said it blurred portions of the video and removed some audio to protect witnesses and victims.

About 70 seconds into the video, the officer asks a dispatcher to send backup.

"Unit coming in? I'm sorry. The radios are not good," the dispatcher replies.

The officer, grappling with Tucker, doesn't have a chance to repeat himself.

At the 1:25 mark, you'll hear him yell

an expletive and then two muffled gunshots as his weapon fires.

The fight rages on as the dispatcher is heard asking if any officers have an emergency.

Finally, a little more than a minute after the gunshots, the cop manages to free a hand to activate his radio while using his other hand to keep his pistol from being used against him.

"1812 EMERGENCY ON CLEVELAND!" he screams.

About 90 seconds after the shots were fired, the dispatcher began relaying information from 911 callers who reported the gunfire.

And, after a two-minute fight, the officer regains control of his gun, and Tucker runs away.

Witnesses directed backup officers to a nearby yard, where Tucker allegedly tried to move toward another officer's gun before being restrained about 20 minutes later. The officer was taken to Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center with bite wounds and abrasions.

Tucker remains jailed in lieu of a \$30,000 bail deposit. He's charged with disarming a police officer, aggravated battery of a peace officer, aggravated assault of a peace officer, reckless discharge of a firearm, and resisting police.

The city's new encrypted radio system is designed to keep the general public from hearing police radio traffic. When CPD began transitioning to the secure network, Mayor Lori Lightfoot insisted that the project was necessary for officers' safety.

Lightfoot refused to allow live monitoring of police transmissions by the public and credentialed media outlets. Instead, the city partnered with a third party, which streams encrypted radio traffic on a 30-minute delay.

While campaigning in December, newly-elected Mayor Brandon Johnson said he would make police radio traffic available to media outlets.

Encryption "makes public safety more difficult for everyone involved—media, [violence] interrupters and even police, whose work is complemented by these entities," Johnson said, according to the Chicago Tribune.

He has not followed through on his promise.

hole in the windshield.

An officer at the hospital radioed that the victim "doesn't talk to the police" and repeatedly told cops, "no statement."

These shootings brought the total number of people shot on the Near North Side this year to 22, according to records maintained by this reporter. That's down from 50 shooting victims at this point last year, a tally that includes nine victims shot by a gunman near the Chicago-State Red Line station on May 19, 2022, and four shot

during a single incident on July 10.

The Near North Side had 28 people shot at this point in 2021; 24 in 2020; and 24 by this date in 2019.

—Compiled by CWBChicago.com

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# Why are there blue bins in the park?

BY ROBYN MICHAELS

I was dismayed to learn that official Chicago Park District policy is to actually discourage recycling. Not just to not to have pick-up, but to put out blue bins in parks among the other bins, leading people to either believe what goes in the blue bins will be recycled, or that it doesn't matter.

In the early 1980s, a friend asked me to join the board of a start-up nonprofit: Uptown Recycling Station. The way she and other do-gooders envisioned it, we'd open a recycling station for glass, metals, and paper, and we'd buy this discarded waste from 'alley entrepreneurs,' mostly refugees. They'd have small businesses, and we'd start getting people recycling.

It was what my father called 'a cute hippie idea.'

Ken Dunn, the father of recycling in Chicago was already starting a curbside collection route in Rogers Park, where I later moved. On the face of it, it was a crazy idea. We had to canvas the neighborhood and convince people to source separate their newspapers, magazines, jars and cans, and collect them. We'd prove to the city that people supported the venture.

At the time, the city hired people to work for the city based on patronage, not skill. We had an overabundance of patronage workers -- especially in the Dept. of Streets and Sanitation.

Say your doofus kid wasn't going to college. You -- the dad -- would contact the ward committeeman, and get your kid hired. In exchange, around election time, you'd work for the approved candidates.

Yes, that was the famous Chicago Way.

We arranged to collect set-outs on a day that the city didn't collect garbage. Even though our project was small, the Streets and Sans staff saw us as a threat, as if there wasn't enough garbage for us all.

I think the real problem was that while on our rounds we saw a lot of them goofing off, and not working. Even sleeping on the job.

We proved our case to elected officials by weighing what we collected (before reselling it as material input for remanufacturing). We knew we were starting to make progress. We then asked for a Diversion Credit. That is, we knew the city paid for landfill space by the cubic yard (yes, it's still done that way), so we wanted to be paid by the ton for the recyclables we collected. We used that money to pay recycling center staff (the refugees).

Because we were a new pilot project, we got a lot of support from area philanthropic groups. What's amazing is that our Rogers Park route was filled with apartment buildings. A very high density neighborhood. Later, I learned that annual turnover of

rental units was about 30%. Yet, we got participation.

We hippie do-gooders strategized and got a lot of support, but our aldermen were mostly company men who took their orders from more influential company men, and so it was slow going. The Streets and Sans garbage men would change their route days and trash our collectibles. We had a lot of meetings with their bosses.

## Commentary

As source separating trash for recycling gained popularity, former Mayor Richie Daley cut a deal with Waste Management. Now, if we wanted to recycle, we had to buy blue bags. So we bought blue bags! The garbage guys of Streets and Sans would collect the blue bags along with the garbage -- it would all go in the same truck and be sorted later.

Riiiiight...

Of course the bags got torn. Waste Management lawyers were told by the EPA that they had to do better. Around 1990, some low density communities started getting blue bins, a separate cart for recyclables. The whole city got them by 2007.

Very little education was done around all these changes. In fact, the rumor was that no matter what we separated for recycling, less than 10% was actually resold as input material. We've been hov-

ering at 8% for decades, as there has never been much actual commitment to recycling since the administration of former Mayor Harold Washington.

Yet, I still source separate.

In grad school, researching curriculum change for environmental science, I learned that it is not necessarily up to the school board to implement curriculum or policy change: the principal of every school has a say, and virtually none have been committed to primary school environmental education, recycling or energy conservation in their schools.

They aren't paying the bills, so why should they, right? Every time there is a principal or Local School Council change, it is as though everyone has to reinvent the wheel.

What got me thinking about all this was... after we got blue bins, they were put in Chicago parks, too.

The Streets and Sans guys would say that people moved (or even stole) the blue bins. Nobody cared. Now, the smart thing to do would be to link a black trash bin to a blue recycling bin, but why would we do something like that if the employees who pick up the trash are paid whether they do a good job or not?

I went to a community meeting the other day. We have lump sum budgeting in Chicago, where every ward is given \$1.5 million to spend discretionally. Our last alderman allowed us to vote on

how \$1 million would be spent.

The meeting wasn't well attended, but one guy who did show up was on the park advisory council. I mentioned calling the ward superintendent about the overflowing blue bins at a park and he shook his head and told me, "That won't work. The city doesn't pick up trash or recycling from the park. There is no recycling, the Park District said it was too hard, and they contract with a waste hauler."

So why are there blue bins in the park?

Some people say residents moved them into the parks. Is that because they see there are not enough trash bins, so they bring over their unused bins?

People don't know that aluminum and glass in the park won't be recycled. They have no idea that the bins are being used for mixed trash. The bottom line is: the Streets and Sans employees started out with this 'culture' of sabotaging recycling, and today the private waste hauler is continuing with this sabotage.

Is it too difficult to ask landlords to get their tenants to recycle? Is it too difficult to address this matter with refugee groups? Why aren't our schools teaching environmental science and what a difference the small actions make?

So glad I don't have children.

## Federal agent robbed on Magnificent Mile as nighttime robbery sprees continue

BY CWBCHICAGO

An off-duty federal agent is among the latest victims of Chicago's ubiquitous street robbery crews.

At least two vehicles loaded with armed men were actively robbing people downtown and on the North and West sides Aug. 2 and 3.

On the Mag Mile, a 33-year-old man who identified himself as a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives [ATF] agent was robbed at gunpoint in the 900 block of N. Michigan around 2:22 a.m.

He told police that two men got out of a dark SUV with handguns and took his valuables. They tossed his badge on the ground before fleeing westbound on Delaware, the man reported.

Around 1 a.m., five men were robbed at gunpoint in the 1200 block of S. Wabash, a CPD spokesperson confirmed. The victims, ages 21, 25, 27, 28, and 33, said they were outside when a red or purple SUV arrived.

Between three and five men exited the vehicle, displayed guns, and took the victims' valuables. They also struck the oldest man in the back of the head with a firearm before fleeing in the SUV.

It's unclear if that incident is related to at least three robberies reported overnight involving a group of gunmen who traveled in a burgundy-colored Dodge Durango. The vehicle was reported stolen from the 2100 block of West Armitage on Aug. 2.

Around 1:20 a.m., the crew robbed some people who were smoking outside a bar in the 2600 block of W. Fullerton. An officer

who responded said up to five people got out of the Durango with guns to rob the victims.

Another man was robbed by the same group near the corner of Milwaukee Ave. and Gale St. shortly before 2 a.m. He told police they pushed him to the ground, put guns to his face, and forced him to reveal his phone password.

Around 1:20 a.m., armed men stepped out of a dark-red Dodge Durango and confronted a man in the 2000 block of N. Milwaukee in Logan Square. They hit him in the back of the head with a firearm and took his wallet and iPhone, a CPD report said.

CPD linked three more robberies to the Durango: in the 1900 block of N. California around 1:15 a.m.; the 2400 block of N. Central around 2:11 a.m.; and the 3400 block of N. Knox at 2:40 a.m.

In a community alert issued Aug. 3, police said the Durango crew consisted of Black males between 15- and 25 years old. They stood 5'-6" to 5'-10" tall, weighed 140 to 160 lbs, and wore black face masks with dark clothing.

In another incident, a 33-year-old woman was carjacked in the 2000 block of N. Whipple in Logan Square around 11:40 p.m. Wednesday. A CPD spokesperson said she was outside her vehicle when two men approached her from behind and demanded her belongings and car keys.

She complied and they drove away with her white Acura ZDX. About two hours later, officers were advised that CPD license plate readers detected the Acura in traffic on Michigan Ave. near Grant Park.

Among other recent robberies:

- Two men robbed a victim at gunpoint near Maplewood and Milwaukee in Logan Square around 3:40 Wednesday morning.

- Armed carjackers took a man's tan Jeep Grand Cherokee in the 2400 block of W. Homer in Logan Square around 7:10 a.m. Aug. 2. They drove away with the victim's SUV, leaving a stolen Kia Sportage at the scene.

- Just before 1 p.m. Aug. 2, three men jumped out of a white vehicle, physically attacked, and tried to rob a man in the 2900

block of N. Milwaukee. They did not get anything from him before escaping in the Kia or Hyundai they arrived in, according to a CPD report.

- In River North, a masked man jumped into a woman's Lexus in the 400 block of W. Ontario around 4:15 p.m. Aug. 2. He drove away, dragging her a short distance, a police report said. The car was recovered nearby a few hours later. The woman was taken to Northwestern Memorial Hospital for treatment.

- Five people were robbed at

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## Chicago Filmmakers celebrate 50th

The Chicago Filmmakers, 1326 W. Hollywood Ave., will be celebrating their 50th anniversary Saturday, Sept. 9, at Le Piano, 6970 N. Glenwood.

Tickets are \$75 per person, and are available at [www.chicagofilmmakers.org](http://www.chicagofilmmakers.org). The evening's honorees include Sharon Zurek, Christine Dudley, Joe Chappelle, and Colleen Griffen.



Stephanie Leese and Jeffrey Emrich.



Marc DeMoss, Cynthia Olson and Stanley Paul.



Cynthia Olson's granddaughter Michelle.

## Permit Parking meeting for Ravenswood, West Ridge

Permit parking may be coming to portions of Ravenswood and West Ridge, adjacent to the new Metra Station. A meeting will be held 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 23 to discuss the prospects.

The "L" shaped parcel west of Ashland, south of Granville to Bryn Mawr, and east of Rosehill Cemetery is being considered for residents only permit parking.

To reserve a spot in the meeting call 773-654-1867.



Judge (ret) Rhoda Sweeney and husband Fred Drucker.



Linda and Richard Robin.

## How's your mental health?

C4 will be hosting an in-person free youth mental health first aid classes at multiple locations in August with C4 trained instructors.

Mental Health First Aid is a skills-based training course that teaches participants about mental health and substance-use issues.

Classes for adults will be offered from the below dates and following times 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Aug. 16, at the C4 Belle Plaine-Multi-Purpose room, 2014 W. Belle Plaine Ave. On Aug. 18, and Aug. 30, C4 will be holding at 4740 N. Clark St. For more information call 773-769-0205.

### U-TURNS from p. 2

helps embrace the gospels and prayerful discipleship. Winning games is their response. Not their objective.

Sister Jean's latest book, "Wake Up with Purpose! What I've Learned in My First Hundred Years," is well worth reading.

**DING-DONG:** The Univ. of Chicago will soon be having 10 new bells, cast in England, installed on campus. To keep everyone on key. The 10 new clangers are dedicated in honor of some larger-than-life Chicagoans. Real, not fictional. The bells weigh more than 2,000 pounds and honor such local big wigs as **Barack Obama, Jean Baptiste Pointe du Sable, Jane Addams and Carl Sandburg.** Deceased folk musician **Steve Good-**

**man, WFMT culture talker Studs Terkel, civil rights activist Timuel Black, Georgiana Rose Simpson,** the first African American woman to receive a Ph.D. in the United States; U of C's founding president **William Rainey Harper** and legendary bell ringers **Arthur Nichols and Bruce and Eileen Butler.**

**WHO'S WHERE:** **Jim and Gracie Bacino Banks** getting cozy meeting folks and sharing drinks with Gold Coast celebs at their new Bellevue Restaurant on Rush St... **Lionel Ritchie** at the United Center really packed restaurants in the River North/Grand Ave. 'hoods... **Stephanie Leese and Jeffrey Emrich** continue to share their lives together, so now it's their 204th date, having met 17 years ago, he was the Captain of Stephanie's heart after dating for just four weeks... and mom and pop, Senior Leeses, Coach **Jack and Georgia,** find love a tremendous friend lifting hearts high... Big salute to my old

pal **Conor Lucas** from City Hall days on the coming of a memorable birthday... Enjoying a wonderful summer evening at the new Astor Club was **Cynthia Olson, Maestro Stanley Paul, Marc DeMoss, and Roderick Branch.** Lots of fabulous memories of this Chicago treasure. **Adam Bilter,** you've done a great job... and darling **Sugar Rautbord** agrees... while Cynthia says love of horses runs in her family. Her great granddaughter **Michelle** and equine friend keeps everyone busy... dear friends of the late **Vonita Reescer** remembering her and missing her especially at celebratory RL lunches where she always excelled... MartAnthony's was alive and jumping on Saturday with many **Lionel Ritchie** concert goers, but **Joan and Betty** held court at the bar as the rains passed over... delighted also to see the Queen of Empanada herself, **Inez Melendez** at MartAnthony's... Charming Chef **David Koehn** created some memorable Steakfrites at Mon Ami Gabi on Thursday with a dynamic Rocquefort cheese... **Linda and Richard Robin** organized the details for "Casino Night" at Bryn Mawr Country Club... Judge (ret) **Rhoda Sweeney** and husband **Fred Drucker** enjoyed a summer day at Wrigley Field cheering the Cubs to victory... **Christopher Clinton Conway**

with his Irish twin **Kate Donegan** at Grotto Palazzese, Italia with her Donegan boys, **Miles, Garrett and J. Wiley** in the heart of Puglia.

**DANCE:** The Joffrey Ballet holds open auditions for the Children's Cast of **Christopher Wheelton's** The Nutcracker at its downtown studios in Joffrey Tower, 10 E. Randolph St, Thursday, Sept. 7 and Sunday, Sept. 10, with a video submission audition for a specific role that closes at 9 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 9. All students in the Chicagoland area with dance experience that meet casting criteria are welcome to audition.

**BIRTHDAY THANKS:** **Janet Owen** feeling grateful and happy to be spending her birthday in sunny North Carolina. **Patsy and Paul Kuhn** welcomed Janet and **Rodger** with high hospitality.

**RAVINIA:** Recognized as one of the outstanding harpsichordist, **Jory Vinikour** has a highly diversified career that takes him to the world's major festivals. He returns to Ravinia Sept. 2 for an afternoon featuring Bach's French Overture and Rameau's D-major Suite from Pièces de Clavecin.

**Have you ever noticed that anybody driving slower than you is an idiot, and anyone going faster than you is a maniac?**

- George Carlin

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# Beekeeping at The Admiral at the Lake

BY KATIE O'BRIEN

At The Admiral at the Lake, an Edge-water area senior living community at 929 W. Foster, a retired schoolteacher turned beekeeper truly has things “buzzing.”

Not only that, but that teacher – Al Renslow – has assembled a corp of like-minded ‘bee-lievers’, The Admiral Bee Buddies.

Renslow, a resident of The Admiral at the Lake, developed this hobby as a passion project, a way to learn new skills and contribute to the environment. As a bonus, Renslow now has an outlet that benefits his mental well-being.

Renslow is preparing for his fourth year of beekeeping on campus as his operation expands beyond his expectations.

Urban beekeeping is the practice of working with bees in cities. This can include honeybees as well as solitary bees such as masons, leaf cutters, diggers, and some social bees like carpenters and bumbles.

Most people work with honeybees because of the long history of the practice, dating back over 9,000 years.

For urban beekeeping using honeybees, the practice includes founding colonies with queens and worker bees, housing them, providing supplemental feeding when needed, helping them to fight off pests, and when surpluses exist, harvesting honey.

Some may find the idea of keeping bees in cities strange, perhaps because we think of suburbs and rural areas as more natural environments, and cities as largely man-made spaces largely devoid of nature. But cities are far from being eco-



Beekeeper Al Renslow with a package of 10,000 bees.

logical deserts. Cities offer bees a surprisingly diverse choice of pollen-bearing plants among parks, playgrounds, backyards, street trees, and median strips.

The Admiral at the Lake being located adjacent to Lincoln Park gives Renslow’s bees a wide swath of real estate to work with.

Renslow launched The Admiral’s beekeeping program in 2019 based on his belief that we must be good stewards of the environment. With the support of The Admiral community, he began dedicating time to the start-up. Through his research, he self-taught himself how to bee keep

*DNA samples collected from honey have shown that urban bees pollinate eight times more species than suburban bees. Urban beehives have higher winter survival rates and produce 56% more honey than their country cousins.*

and, in the process, discovered how unique the colony’s urban honey is. City bees create exquisite-tasting honey due to the diverse native plants, and this unique honey can only be found within The Admiral’s campus.

The Admiral Bee Buddies have expanded over the years and now there are eight residents helping maintain the bees. The Bee Buddies help Renslow set up the hives at the beginning of the beekeeping season and in the late months of the summer, the group will harvest the honey in preparation for their annual honey sale. Last season, over 400 bottles of urban honey were harvested, bottled, labeled and distributed with the help of Admiral

community members who reside in the memory care unit, who volunteered to package the Bee Buddies’ prized possession.

DNA samples collected from honey have shown that urban bees pollinate eight times more species than suburban bees. Urban beehives have higher winter survival rates and produce 56% more honey than their country cousins.

If urban beekeeping is proving to be so productive, why aren’t there more urban hives and urban beekeepers?

*If you’d like to see the beehives or chat with Renslow, email Katie O’Brien at kobrien@admiral.kendal.org.*

## Pickleball comes to Lake Shore Park



America’s hottest new sport is coming to Streeterville. After completion of the resurfacing of the tennis courts and painting of stripes for tennis and pickleball, the courts were unlocked last week.

Players report that the new court surface is a significant improvement over the prior

court surface and there is still some work to be done.

The striping of one pickleball court on top of each tennis court was the preferred format in a community survey, which allows fights over bad calls in both sports.

## Bikers to block Lake Shore Dr. Sept. 3

The annual bike ride on Lake Shore Dr. where an estimated 16,000 bikes will be allowed to block traffic on Chicago’s main in-city vehicle thoroughfare will take place this year on Sunday Sept. 3.

The 22nd annual Bike the Drive event will once again bring out thousands of people to create massive traffic backups in an event hosted by the Active Transportation Alliance, the government-funded activist lobbying group and anti-car organization dedicated to bicycling, walking, and public transit.

Those who may be planning a family excursion to the lakefront that day in a car should reconsider their plans, as access will be limited by the bikers.

Bike the Drive will start at 6:30 a.m. between Bryn Mawr Ave. and 57th Street. The event includes a pancake breakfast, post-ride festival with live music, beer drinking, and activities at Butler Field in Grant Park from 8 a.m. until 12:30 p.m.

The full route stretches 30 miles, and block traffic wishing to head to the lakefront in every North Side neighborhood. Riders can sign up for the 30-mile challenge during registration and receive a commemorative medal.

The event is also seeking volunteers who will receive a free t-shirt, a pancake breakfast, and an invite to a pizza party. For more information visit [www.activetrans.org](http://www.activetrans.org) or call 312-427-3325.

### Letters to the Editor

#### The present perfect

Mr. O’Gorman - I understand your angst. I’m an older white woman living in the Gold Coast, for over 50 years. But I do see movies before I make them the platform on which to construct my rants.

If Barbie can’t conjugate the verb “to be” (let’s face it, conjugation is likely not

taught today), I can. The present perfect of that verb is “has been,” and perhaps you are. Barbie is a wonderful movie!

Ann Boland  
Gold Coast

#### Ode to Chicago’s manipulators of truth

Thank you, Thomas J. O’Gorman. You’ve done it again! Your column resonates so close to my heart. Should you ever decide to garner all of your writings into a book, I will be the first in line to purchase one.

Your recent column (Aug. 9-15) regarding the “manipulators of truth”; how Chicago is “the home of the professional American liar” reminded me of a few who I have met and prompted me to write a tribute just for them. It is titled, The Clique:

There’s a clique.  
It’s filled with rumors and with lies,  
Yet each one within this clique  
Feels PROUD - so WISE and MIGHTY  
(At least in their own eyes).  
Who cares about their neighbor,  
Or even their own soul,  
When it is the clique instead of heaven  
That truly is their goal?  
They’ve no time to think of God above  
Or eternity in hell.  
They’re too busy spreading lies and toxic  
venom to the others -  
‘Wicked sisters, ‘wicked brothers;  
As they live within the darkness of their  
own making -  
FAKING, while from others always taking,  
Sworn unto their motto, God forsaking:  
DO NOT TELL!

Daleen Reed  
Sandburg Village

#### Pick on someone your own size

It’s amusing that Thomas O’Gorman appears so threatened by a movie about a 11 1/2-inch tall Barbie doll (Aug. 2).

A grown man griping about all the pink in a movie he never saw, espousing what the movie is about and yet he assures his readers that he will never see the film.

Perhaps Mr. O’Gorman would be threatened by Ruth Handler, as well.

Handler, co-founder of Mattel, was the American businesswoman who created Barbie, and she broke all the rules.

Not only did she create a doll that businessmen thought people wouldn’t buy, she ran TV commercials for Barbie and other toys, year-round. Breaking the advertising mold of marketing toys only in the lead up to Christmas.

And she broke another standard by running those TV commercials on children’s shows, marketing directly to kids, as opposed to marketing to the parents.

Handler created a much beloved doll for generations, a true American success story.

I bet she’d get a real kick out of Mr. O’Gorman’s opinions on a film about her doll. She’d know how to handle him, as I’m sure she had to deal with a lot of men like him in her day.

R. McFall  
Uptown

Write a Letter To The Editor  
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**COMMERCIAL** from p. 1

“Lenders don’t want to be asset managers.” And that’s bad news, as loan losses will flow substantially to investors in securities backed by expected cash flow from commercial mortgages.

After his election win, Mayor Brandon Johnson announced plans to boost the city’s finances by raising taxes on business, high earners and real estate.

But the investors know that Chicago is already home to the second-highest commercial property taxes in the nation. At 3.78%, it is more than double the U.S. average for the largest cities in each state, a study found. Only Detroit has higher commercial property taxes at 4.21%, according to the study by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and Minnesota Center for Fiscal Excellence.

The study found Chicago’s high rate is because of high local government spending and because the tax system shifts a higher burden to businesses. And now the ground is shifting under some property managers’ feet, as some older properties slip into foreclosure.

High costs and long-term cultural changes brought on by the pandemic lockdown continue to wreak havoc on the commercial real estate market. The city’s central business district hit an all-time high vacancy rate of 22.4% in the last quarter. Nationally, delinquency rates on U.S. commercial office property reached 4% in May, more than double the 1.7% rate of just six months ago.

A metric called “net absorption,” which measures the delta between space occupied vs the space tenants have gotten rid of, fell below zero for the first time since fall 2021. The net absorption in the first quarter 2023 in Chicago was negative 323,000 square feet.

Chicago’s central business district currently has 7.5 million square feet of space available for rent, more than double from the 3.3 million it had available at the beginning of the pandemic.

There is evidence, however, that new construction and Class A buildings are faring better than traditional or class B buildings. Class A buildings’ vacancy rates dropped from 20.1% to 17.9% over the last year, while Class B buildings’ vacancy rate rose from 22.1 to 26.6%. The softening vacant rates are part of the reason why properties

along Lasalle St. in the Financial District are being converted to residential uses.

Chicago’s commercial property taxes have been rising rapidly in recent years. In the past decade, total taxes billed have increased from \$1.98 billion in tax year 2011 – payable in 2012 – to \$3.82 billion in tax year 2021 – payable in 2022. That represents a 93% increase in 10 years.

Chicago commercial property taxes are already 2.5 times higher than residential property taxes because Cook County assesses commercial property at far higher values than residential property. Commercial property taxes in central Chicago now average nearly \$150,000 annually, with some of the city’s largest businesses being hit with substantial increases.

Willis Tower saw an \$11 million increase (+29%) in property taxes for taxes due in 2022, bringing its bill to more than \$50 million annually. Prudential Plaza saw more than a \$5 million increase (+24%) in property taxes due in 2022, bringing its total to over \$27 million last year.

Cook County commercial property taxes are on pace to rise by \$1.6 billion through 2026. That could easily rise even higher based on calls for higher taxes and the fact Mayor Johnson will be sitting across the bargaining table from the Chicago Teachers Union peers he used to lobby on behalf of. Donations from unions made up over 90% of Mayor Johnson’s campaign funding.

Research has shown a large share of

**LAWSUIT** from p. 1

then referred O’Dea to the Employee Handbook stipulating reduced tuition applies only to current employees of the school.

Based on the complaint, both Molly and her brother Hugh had been upstanding members of the Latin student body. The kids had attended the school since junior kindergarten.

A statement on the lawsuit provided to Chicago Contrarian by Danielle Gould, the attorney representing the O’Dea/McKee family, read:

“After filing the lawsuit and informing [Latin School] that the family would be seeking a court order to ensure transcripts would be sent to the O’Dea/McKee children’s respective colleges in a timely manner so that they can attend college this fall, Latin agreed to provide the transcripts and

**Cook County commercial property taxes are on pace to rise by \$1.6 billion through 2026. That could easily rise even higher based on calls for higher taxes and the fact Mayor Johnson will be sitting across the bargaining table from the Chicago Teachers Union peers he used to lobby on behalf of. Donations from unions made up over 90% of Mayor Johnson’s campaign funding.**

Chicago’s commercial property taxes are simply passed on to tenants in the form of higher rents. Higher property taxes mean higher rents in a weakening market, with fewer tenants leasing space in the city and other tenants trying to sublease out their existing unused space.

Commercial property owners who absorb the tax costs will see a reduced return on investment, slowing growth in the city. Higher financing costs, taxes and interest rates in a soft market mean future sales will be more difficult to close.

And those who are seeking a new city income tax on “high earners” making over \$100,000 annually may further drive down the market. An additional city income tax would take away more income, making Chicago even less competitive for attract-

ing and keeping those high income earners, some who are already leaving town for lower-tax cities and states. New IRS data confirmed Illinois lost residents of every age and income level in 2021, with the majority leaving earning over \$100,000. Of the residents who left, 51% made more than \$100,000 per year, 25% made less than \$50,000 and 24% made \$50,000 to \$100,000. Particularly troubling is 64% of residents lost on net were from tax filers age 26-54 and their dependents. Those ages 65 and up represented only 14% of Illinoisans who left the state while 5% were below age 26.

Just like commercial property taxes, the city’s residential property tax burden has seen out-of-control growth, increasing 164% in the last 20 years. In that same time, average residential property tax bills climbed from \$1,805 in 2000 to \$3,342 in 2019.

In recent years, surveys of residents indicated those property tax burdens are also driving them out of the city, contributing to the city’s population loss. In 2022, Chicago lost a net 33,000 residents, accounting for one-third of the population loss suffered by the state as a whole. Last year, only New York City lost more residents than Chicago and surveys continue to show Chicagoans citing property taxes, crime and schools as major concerns.

*Justin Carlson of Illinois Policy contributed to this story*

diplomas. While the family is relieved that their children’s futures are no longer hanging in the balance, that does little to impact the strain and distress Latin caused this family. Also, it is deeply concerning that the Head of School would not meet with the children or their parents to figure out a solution, and that it took a lawsuit to ensure the colleges would get the transcripts. While the school has now provided the transcripts, Latin still claims that the family owes an additional \$45,000 intuition, which is contrary to the plain and clear language of the re-enrollment contracts. We will address all remaining issues in due course.”

Both students were accepted into college, but high school seniors are required to have their high schools submit final transcripts to their chosen colleges. Prior to Latin turning over the transcript, neither student could move onto college because Latin refused to send transcripts saying the parents needed to pay up their full tuition at a cost of approximately \$70,000.

When O’Dea referenced the enrollment contract with the school, Latin refused to acknowledge the contract.

When Latin allowed the children to walk during graduation, the two received only a blank diploma at the graduation ceremony.

According to the lawsuit, they were driven to tears at the slight, as they were surrounded by peers, all of whom had received valid diplomas.

In the complaint filed by the Bronstein family they cited the school’s student-family handbook and specifically its section titled “Parental Access to School Files,” which reads: “The school keeps cumulative files on all students while they attend Latin. The files contain copies of all grade reports, progress reports, standardized test scores, correspondence involving the student, the original copy of the student’s application, notes from teachers, the student’s disciplinary records and other miscellaneous records and papers. Parents/guardians who wish to examine their child’s folder should call the division director for an appointment...”

According to the Bronsteins’ initial lawsuit, the bullying escalated as junior varsity basketball team members bullied Nate in a group chat and the social media app.

The second amended complaint claims that Latin School blamed Nate for its failure to contact the Bronsteins, suggesting that Nate “advised” Dean of Students Bridget Hennessy not to contact them when he reported cyberbullying on Dec. 12, 2021.



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