



The Conference Reporter

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Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference

June 2011



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HPKCC MISSION

The purpose of the Conference is to attend to the civic needs of the community; work toward an attractive, secure, diverse, and caring community; and to promote participation of residents, businesses, institutions, and organizations in programs and activities that advance the interests and concerns of the community. It serves the community as a watchdog, independent voice, and clearing house in the community's ongoing conversation and decisions about those matters which affect and define community life.

The Conference in Action:

Focus on Development & Preservation

The Role of the HPKCC Board in Harper Theater & Harper Court Development

by *Jay N. Ammerman*

HPKCC Immediate Past President and board member

When Jane Ciacci succeeded me as President in October, 2010, she asked me to chair HPKCC's Development, Preservation and Zoning Committee and continue to track the Harper Court and Hyde Park Theater projects. During my term as President, I followed these projects with great interest and concern. In the August, 2010 Reporter, I highlighted concerns related to the rush to secure TIF Advisory Council Approval for the Harper Court Redevelopment. What I did not publicize at that time was the role that HPKCC was playing in persuading the University of Chicago to preserve the Hyde Park Theater and office buildings along 53rd Street and West of Harper Avenue.

In case you missed the University of Chicago's January 10, 2011 press release, here is a recap:

• **University announces renovation of 53rd Street buildings**

University officials announced at the Jan. 10 meeting of the 53rd Street TIF Council that the University will undertake a major renovation of the theater and office buildings at 53rd Street and Harper Avenue.

Work will begin Thursday on the adaptive reuse project slated for completion this fall, which will provide a home for new restaurant, retail and other tenants. University officials told the TIF Council that they expect to provide news about those tenants in coming weeks and months.

"The University has an interest in saving these buildings," said Ann Marie Lipinski, Vice President for Civic Engagement. "We believe they are a key piece of our shared efforts with the city to revitalize this important Hyde Park corridor."

The University has owned the 13,000 square-foot office building at 1452-1456 E. 53rd St. since 2003. OKW Architects of Chicago will serve as the lead architect on the renovation of that building, while HSA Commercial Real Estate, a national, full-service real estate firm, will serve as the property manager

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The Chicago Theological Seminary Buildings and the Woodlawn Avenue Corridor

by *Jack Spicer, HPKCC board member, and vice-president of Preservation Chicago*

This article was originally published in the Hyde Park Herald on March 9, 2011, and is reprinted here with permission.

Location: North side of E 58th Street between S. Woodlawn and S. University Avenues

Architect: Herbert Riddle, Riddle & Riddle

Built: 1923-28

The University of Chicago has recently purchased the Chicago Theological Seminary buildings on the north side of 58th Street between Woodlawn and University Avenues. The University intends to renovate these buildings and reuse them as the Milton Friedman

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Harper Court and Hyde Park Theater Update

(continued from page 1)

The project scope includes façade work, tuck-pointing and a complete rehabilitation of the interior to make appropriate space for the new tenants and enhance its overall character. Other plans include new windows, signage and outdoor seating capabilities.”

As recently as 2009, University of Chicago representatives were making starkly different statements in public community meetings. They were claiming that the Harper Theatre Buildings were structurally unsound and should be demolished.

HPKCC representatives disagreed and decided to tackle this issue head-on but with discretion. Then President George Rumsey wrote a letter to James Hennessy, University of Chicago’s Director of Commercial Real Estate Operations, to propose that the University consent to a structural engineering assessment of the buildings that would be funded by a Southside Preservation Action Fund grant that Jack Spicer had secured. HPKCC’s proposal was that the results of the study would be shared with the University for comment before it was released to the public.

There were a number of meetings held with Mr. Hennessy. Attendees included George Rumsey, Jack Spicer, and Ruth Knack, President of the Hyde Park Historical Society. By this time I had succeeded Rumsey as HPKCC President and agreed to continue to shepherd the Conference’s efforts.

The University agreed and the structural study was completed in November, 2009. The study’s finding was that the Hyde Park Theater building was structurally sound and could be preserved. It was acknowledged, however, that there would be considerable interior and exterior repairs required.

In early 2010, HPKCC released a copy of the structural engineering report and the Hyde Park Herald covered the news.

The fate of the buildings continued to be in doubt for a long time. You may recall that the University had constructed scaffolding along 53rd St. and Harper Avenue. And they remained in place while confidential negotiations continued with respect to the Harper Court Redevelop-

ment.

Frequently I would check-in with James Hennessy and ask if he had any progress to report. He reassured me that the University was serious about the potential preservation of the Harper Theater and office buildings and on January 10, 2011, I was delighted to hear the good news.

Recent TIF Advisory Council Meetings have highlighted the synergies that appear to be stemming from both projects. The announcements of the Five Guys Restau-

rant, the Five Screen Movie Theatre, and the Hyatt Chicago @ Hyde Park suggest that it is possible for new development and preservation to flourish in a complementary way.

The HPKCC Preservation, Zoning, and Development Committee will continue to monitor these two projects and keep the community posted.

From the Presidents Desk

This issue of the Reporter highlights the Conference’s work in monitoring and influencing development in the neighborhood, with reference to two areas: Harper Court and the vicinity of 58th and Woodlawn. George Rumsey and Jay Ammerman, past presidents of the Conference, were very active in community debate about Harper Court, a major concern of the Conference for some years now, as Jay’s article outlines.

Those of us who have seen and heard about the plans for the hotel phase of Harper Court development by attending recent TIF Council and TIF development subcommittee meetings are happy that the hotel seems to have been designed with sensitivity to its surroundings. We are hopeful that this sensitivity will be reflected in the remainder of the development. The movie buffs among Conference Board members are thrilled with the prospect of a 5-screen art house in the Harper Theater space, as described at the March TIF Council meeting! We also look forward to trying out Five Guys, the popular burger place which is coming to 53rd and Harper.

Jack Spicer, the Board’s resident preservationist, and steward of the Southside Preservation Action Fund, (for which the Conference acts as fiscal agent), writes eloquently about an evolving concern: the ongoing controversy over the University’s re-use of the CTS building, and the future of Woodlawn Avenue from 57th to 58th Street as the campus appears to be moving eastward.

George Rumsey offers an invaluable précis and map of all the developments in the neighborhood that are announced or underway, as well as of those “planned, rumored or potential.”

The Membership Committee co-chairs Jane Comiskey and Irene Freelain are engaged in a campaign to increase the Conference’s membership. Members are encouraged to take advantage of the reminder to renew their memberships, and in coming months the Committee will be reaching out to attract new members too. The annual “membership letter,” which has been mailed out with renewal notices to those whose renewals were due up to May 2011, is reproduced in this issue, and I hope this stimulates you to renew your membership, or join us if you are not a member. When you renew, please give us your e-mail address, so we may communicate with you.

Jane Ciacci

The CTS & Woodlawn Ave...

Institute for Research in Economics.

There are three buildings in the group -- the small Hilton Chapel near the NE corner of 58th and University Avenue, a dormitory to the east on Woodlawn Avenue facing the Robie House, and the main building to the west on University Avenue opposite the University's Main Quadrangle. The Lawson Tower and a bridge straddle the alley between the main building and the dormitory. The buildings were designed by Herbert Riddle and built between 1923 and 1928. Riddle was the architect for Mather Tower in the Loop, as well as many buildings in New York. He lived in Hyde Park at 5626 S. Woodlawn in a house he designed and built in 1912.

There are serious concerns regarding the planned major renovation of these important Orange-rated buildings: the immediate threat to the historic stained glass windows in the chapels and the entrance/stair-tower, threat to the significant interior spaces of the main building, and destabilizing effect on the Chicago Landmark-worthy Woodlawn Avenue corridor.

Historic Stained Glass -- The main building was designed with 28 major neo-Gothic art glass windows from the famed Willet Stained Glass Studio. This was Willet's most significant commission in Chicago. Lorado Taft said, "They are the finest I have seen in America, and come nearer to the splendor of Chartres than I had ever hoped to see in this part of the world." The windows, all displaying Christian iconography, were so perfectly integrated into the building, from both inside and out, that the whole was a unified, living work of art. Seventeen of the windows have already been removed by the University of Chicago. Serious, irreparable damage has been done to the cultural, historic, and aesthetic value of the building and of the removed windows. The eleven most important windows, which include depictions of the twelve New Testament apostles, the nine Old Testament prophets, and the Tree of Jesse, remain in place; but the University intends to remove them as "inappropriate" to the building's new use by the Milton Friedman Institute.

Significant Interior Spaces -- There are six important interior spaces, all in the main building: Hilton Memorial Chapel, Clarence Sydney Funk Cloisters, Graham Taylor Hall, the Library, West Lobby and Stair Tower, and Lawson Tower (with entrance room). The Hilton Chapel is called a "tiny gem" in the AIA Guide to Chicago. Although the loss of all the Hilton Chapel's art glass windows has compromised its integrity, it still features outstanding neo-Gothic vaulting, ceramic tile work, and carpentry. The Cloisters and the Taylor Chapel are even more magnificent. All the interior spaces include important embedded art work and finishes that are expressive of the Chicago Theological Seminary's religious heritage. It is unclear how much of this will be removed and lost as "inappropriate." The University has hired Ann Beha Architects (Boston) to plan and design the renovation. Based on the firm's reputation and past work they appear capable of doing an outstanding renovation that respects and embraces the historic interior spaces and their integrated art and craft. It is hoped the University will take full advantage of Beha's talents and not interfere with the possibility of a high-quality, practical, but historically honest renovation.

Woodlawn Avenue Corridor -- With the occupation of the CTS buildings, the University of Chicago campus continues to move steadily eastward into the residential portion of the Hyde Park neighborhood. The 5700 block of Woodlawn Avenue is one of the most important historic residential blocks in Chicago. This large group of remarkable buildings is unique in Chicago and serves as the graceful transition between the campus and the community. Even more important, these buildings tell the story of how Hyde Park came to be what it is -- a neighborhood of great beauty, surprising diversity and intense creativity. It's the emblem of the neighborhood and should be treated with great care, its stewardship shared by the University and the community. Fifteen of the original residential buildings still remain, including the landmarked Robie House and twelve "Orange-rated" houses. (Four other houses were torn down by CTS to make way for a dorm when CTS was prevented from demolishing the Robie House for

that purpose in 1959.) Only four of the houses are still privately owned. Although the rest are now institutional, luckily the block still maintains the appearance of a residential street. As the 5700 block of Woodlawn continues to evolve, there is no protection against demolition or radical disfigurement of any of the buildings with the exception of Robie House. Eight of the buildings on the block are currently for sale or have recently changed hands, and all will be put to new institutional uses. The repurposing of the Chicago Theological Seminary buildings by the University of Chicago is part of a larger change that could quickly destabilize the historic Woodlawn Avenue corridor.

What can be done? --

1) Write or call the President of the University of Chicago (Robert Zimmer, <zimmer@uchicago.edu> 773-702-8002) and encourage him to preserve the remaining eleven major historic stained glass windows and the significant interiors of the former CTS buildings.

2) Write or call the 5th Ward Alderman Leslie Hairston (<lhairston@cityofchicago.org> 773-3245-5555) and encourage her to start the landmarking process for the 5700 block of Woodlawn Avenue.

For more information go to:

www.CTSthreatened.org

www.preservationchicago.org/

userfiles/file/ctsseminary.pdf

The Conference Congratulates

*our Hyde Park-Kenwood
neighborhood aldermen
(and HPKCC members!)
Leslie Hairston (5th Ward)
and Will Burns (4th Ward) on
their election. We look forward
to working with them.*

Development in Hyde Park-South Kenwood

By George Rumsey, HPKCC Development Committee

With the pending start of construction at two of the neighborhood's largest development projects, it is time to take stock of the state of development in HP-K. There are several announced projects or projects currently underway. However, additional projects could impact the Lakefront, the local parks, and several neighborhoods in the area. The items that are marked with numbers are those which have been announced or are in process. Those marked with letters are planned (but with no specific dates), rumored, or likely candidates for future development. See the map on page 5 for the location of these projects

Announced or Underway:

1. Sutherland Hotel (MAC Properties)—Renovate historic hotel (with landmark status), immediate plans call for retaining affordable rental; long-term plans unclear. 1/3 affordable until 2018; tenants granted longer stays, more help, easier priority to return. In process.
2. Village Foods Center (MAC Properties)—Two towers (179 condos or rental units in 2 buildings, 22 stories and 9 stories); 3 levels of retail. Underground parking, 400 spaces. 100,000 sq. ft. of commercial development, 384,000 sq. ft. of residential development. First announced tenant, Whole Foods. Estimated completion 2015.
3. Harper Court (Vermilion/University of Chicago)—14 storey office building for UofC; 26 storey condo tower; 2 apartment buildings; 6-8 storey hotel; 105,000 sq. ft. of retail, including fitness center. 200+ condos/rentals. Still pending final financial agreements, approved by City Council, receiving \$21M in TIF funds. 2 phases, starting late-2011; estimated completion 2015.
4. Hyde Park Theater (University of Chicago)—Restore theater building into 5-screen art house. The New 400 Theaters will offer a mix of art, children's, and wide-release films. Also restore Herald Building along 53rd, with restaurants and office space. In process, first restaurant to open in October.
5. MAC Rental Offices (MAC Properties)—Long-term plans to turn into retail, perhaps a restaurant. No dates.
6. Mac/Mobil (University of Chicago)—Long-term, possibly a graduate student dorm for UofC. No dates.
7. Cornell & 53rd (MAC Properties)— Perhaps short-term parking lot due to Harper Court development. No announced long-term plans.
8. Del Prado (MAC Properties)— Medium to high-end (\$1-1.5K/mo) rental, with
9. Shoreland (MAC Properties)—350 high-end rental apartments, plus upscale restaurant. \$50-60 M. Up to 266 parking spaces. Almost all approved, completion late 2012 or early 2013.
10. Solstice on the Park (MAC Properties/Antheus)—26-story condo tower. Currently on hold.
11. University of Chicago Lab School Expansion (University of Chicago)—Replace Doctors Hospital with a new lower school for the Lab School. Approved, construction to start in fall.

Planned, Rumored, or Potential:

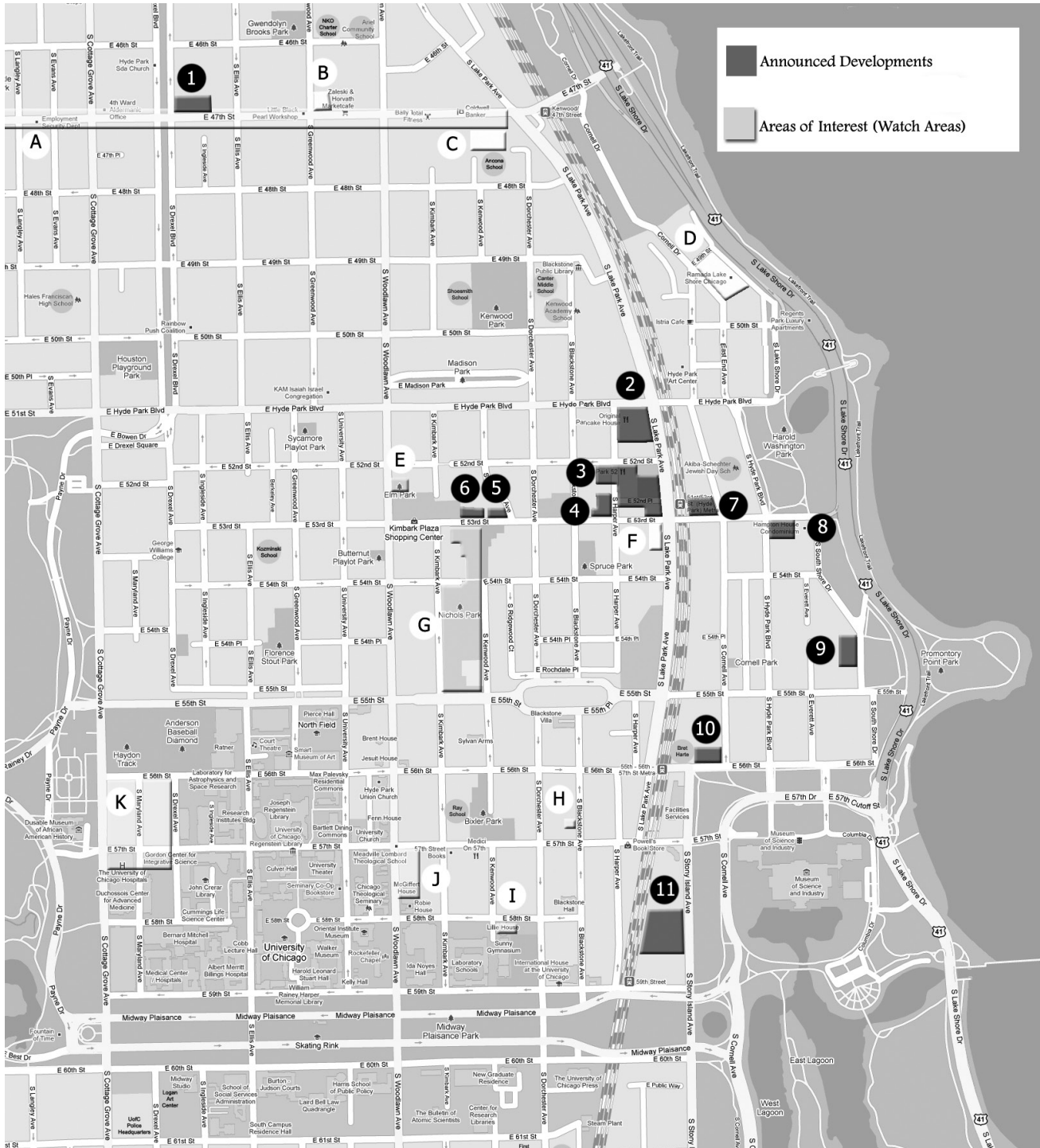
- A. 47th Street—Facelift from the Dan Ryan to Lake Shore Drive. Under discussion and analysis. New development at 47th and Cottage, with Aldi and 72 subsidized rental units.
- B. Muntu Dance Theater—Stalled.
- C. Ancona School—Some discussion of larger development. Stalled.
- D. Ramada Inn—Potential hotspot for development once the new Hyatt opens.
- E. Borders—Big question mark.
- F. Elm Park—Kimbark Plaza wants to convert it to a parking lot.
- G. Nichols Park—Possible facelift to make the park more appealing, better lit, and safer at night.
- H. St. Stephens Church—Stalled.
- I. Lille House—Possible site for Lab School expansion.
- J. Historic Houses on Woodlawn—Possible site for University expansion.
- K. University of Chicago Medical Center Expansion—Removal of housing units between 55th and 59th, Cottage and Ellis.

Ongoing

L. Parking lot north of the Narragansett (1640 E. 50th) in Indian Village—With a significant part of the parking spaces in foreclosure, plans for a high rise have been discussed, with much opposition from neighboring buildings.

*Sources: hydepark.org; hydeparkherald.org; 53rd Street TIF meetings; Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun-Times, Crain's

Map of Development in Hyde Park-South Kenwood



News from the Board

April 2011

The Board discussed Alderman Hairston's recent press release about the privatization of blue cart recycling. Two issues are evident: the provision of efficient, effective recycling service that meets the needs of all residents, including seniors and those with disabilities; and the larger issues of privatizing city services without a transparent review process. President Ciacci was directed to contact Ald. Hairston to ask if there was any way the Conference could support her, and ultimately represented the Conference along with board member Ossewaarde at a press conference held at the 5th Ward Streets and Sanitation office. Here, Alderman Hairston focused her remarks on the privatization issue, displaying a huge binder for another city contract, which she had less than 2 days to review.

The Board heard a report on the Garden Fair Special Projects meeting, at which funds were committed. Project supported include: the maintenance of gardens at the north end of Nichols Park and the south end of Spruce Park (on 54th between Blackstone and Harper); the meadow in Nichols Park; the 4th of July parade on 53rd St. (the Garden Fair has a float every year); and grants to the SECC 53rd St. hanging baskets project; Growing Home; Elm Park, the DARE residence on 55th St., and the OpShop.

Secretary Gail Isenberg requested that the

Board provide a letter of support for the OpShop's ongoing negotiations with the Unitarian Church to rent Fenn House, and this was done. Board member Jack Spicer alerted the board to the wetlands project planned for Washington Park, which would disrupt the original design for the park, and later provided information about becoming an "official consulting party," that is to say having the ability to comment on the project. Unfortunately, we later learned that the Army Corps of Engineers, which is responsible for the project, is no longer accepting requests, and we are questioning the timing of the opportunity for public comment, which has supposedly passed. The Conference will continue to monitor the Washington Park situation.

May 2011

The Board welcomed as a guest Shaz Rasul, the new director of the University of Chicago's Neighborhood Schools program. A request from Schools Committee member Nancy Baum to assist the Friends of Shoemith School with an offer of temporary financial agency was discussed. The following week, President Ciacci attended the May meeting of the Friends, and learned that they are actually quite far ahead with financial agency and ready to open their own bank account. However, the Conference will maintain a connection with this very energetic and active group through Board member Ismail Turay, who is also a member of the Friends.

At the request of the church, a letter

of congratulation was drafted by Vice President Brenda Sawyer for the program book to be produced for the 175th Anniversary gala of First Unitarian Church. Leslie Pennington, one of their former ministers, was instrumental in the founding of HPKCC.

The HPKCC archives, held by Regenstein Special Collections at the University of Chicago, is very heavily used by researchers, and President Ciacci will work with the Regenstein archivists to determine if there is more material in the Conference office that should be added to the archive. The archivists plan to begin organizing the material soon.

The Board voted in favor of a request for a letter to Alderman Hairston and the Jackson Park Advisory Committee in support of naming the north bridge to Wooded Island in honor of long-time Conference member Nancy Hays.

Treasure Island Manger Babe Magnus recently confirmed that TI will once again host the Conference during the sorting period preceding the Hyde Park Used Book Sale. The sale will be co-chaired this year by Board member George Davis and Jane Ciacci.

Board member David Nekimken reported on the recent South Side Transit meeting, held at IIT. This was mainly for the purpose of collecting opinions and ideas rather than presenting ideas, and is one of a series of such meetings.

Board member Jay Ammerman reported on a meeting of the Development, Preservation and Zoning Committee with Chris Dillion of Vermilion Developers. The group was able to ask detailed questions, and was treated to the first view of new renderings provided by the architect. This was only a few days before the news came that Vermilion lost the opportunity for federal stimulus money under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, because financing for the project had not been completed in time.

Garden fair volunteers enjoy a moment of sunshine and fine weather



Dear HPKCC member,

I'm writing to ask you to renew your membership in HPKCC in 2011. What are the benefits of membership? Your dues and donations support the work of the Conference as a community watchdog, and as a contributor to the improvement of community life. For example, you may have seen the January issue of the Conference Reporter, which featured Q&A with the aldermanic candidates in the 4th and 5th Wards, and received wide exposure thanks to the Herald.

Members have the opportunity to serve on the Board and on our committees. Here are just a few examples: The Preservation, Development & Zoning Committee has long been engaged and influential in the community's conversations about development, particularly of Harper Court and 53rd St., and closely monitors current preservation issues. The Schools Committee is working with area principals to actively promote community involvement in public school improvement. The Disabilities Task Force was formed to educate area businesses about accessibility issues and to help ensure that Hyde Park-Kenwood is a navigable community for people of all abilities. The Garden Fair and the Used Book Sale, major events on the community calendar, are run by committees of the Conference with the support of many dedicated volunteers.

The HPKCC Board is working on a long-term project to bring together formal and informal groups in Hyde Park-Kenwood and beyond, with the goal of identifying issues in which groups have a common interest and might work together as a coalition. We're excited about this prospect, and you can look forward to hearing more about it in the coming months. We will soon begin using Constant Contact, a web-based service which will allow us to build an online community and communicate more frequently with our members. To this end, we are asking for your e-mail address, if you have one, on the membership form.

I encourage you to renew today! The categories of membership have changed somewhat in the past year: Family \$30, Individual \$20, Senior/Student \$15, Nonprofit (501(c)3) \$75, Business, \$100, Supporter \$200, and Sponsor \$500.

Should you have questions about the Conference and our activities, or if you'd like to get involved, please don't hesitate to contact me, either by email at janeciacci@aol.com, or by phone, 773-419-1384.

With thanks and very best wishes,



Jane Ciacci
President, Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference

Hyde Park Used Book Sale 2011

The 2011 Used Book Sale will take place as always on Columbus Day Weekend, October 8-10, in the plaza at the Hyde Park Shopping Center. The Conference expresses its thanks to Treasure Island and Hyde Park store manager Babe Magnus for their continued support of the sale with sorting space and banana boxes!

Collection of books on the lower level at Treasure Island will begin on Sunday, August 14, and continue until Saturday, October 1. For those who can't bring their books to the store, pickup service will be available. Watch for our posters and ads during the sorting period. This year's co-chairs are George Davis and Jane Ciacci. For more information, or to volunteer, call 773-419-1384 and leave a message.

Call for Nominees

The Conference holds its annual election of Board members at the annual meeting in September. If you would like to be considered for nomination, or to suggest someone else, please contact Jack Snapper, Chair of the Nominating Committee, at snapper@iit.edu, or leave a message at the Conference office, 773-288- 8343.



Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference
1525 East 53rd Street, Suite 907
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HPKCC

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Vice President: Brenda Sawyer
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PROGRAMS

Chicago Academic Games League
Condos/Co-ops+
Development, Preservation, and Zoning
Disabilities Task Force
Friends of Blackstone Library
Hyde Park Garden Fair
Hyde Park Used Book Sale
Nichols Park Advisory Council
Parks Committee
Schools Committee
Southside Preservation Action Fund
Transit Task Force
WhistleStop/Safety

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