

Here come the 'ruppies' as South Loop growth continues

By Marie Balice Ward

Good news about South Loop progress abounded at several recent community meetings and social events.

Substantial new development and renovation are taking place in the area from Jackson Boulevard to Cermak Road and from Lake Michigan to the Chicago River, explained Dennis McClendon, design director at Chicago Cartographics and an officer with the South Loop Neighbors group, which held a community meeting recently. He noted more than 3,270 units are under construction within these boundaries and that another 4,226 units have been announced, although some have not been approved yet.

Among the housing being brought into the South Loop are "weekend home" luxury units, moderately priced condominiums, lofts, rentals, renovations, and multi-bedroom dwellings for all socio-economic groups. In fact, several developments have blended price ranges within a single structure or complex to ensure diversity.

One demographic that is 50,000 strong and growing in the South Loop is students attending area colleges and universities. The



Steve Swartz

Joe and Venetin Edakkonmathu with their dog, Dyson, at the K9 Karnivale.

University Center dormitory at State Street and Congress Boulevard will be joined by a new student rental development on Clark Street just north of the Target store, said 2nd Ward Alderman Madeline Haithcock. It should be completed by the end of 2008.

Haithcock noted the ward ranks second among Chicago's 50 wards for infrastructure and quality of life improvements, and "more improvements are on the way."

Haithcock gave a few examples such as new lighting in Printers

Row, a larger and improved park in Printers Row on Dearborn Street, and school upgrades. In addition, Calumet Avenue and Eighth Street will see new lighting.

Donations of about \$5,000 from the Blackstone Hotel public benefit have been given to various charity organizations, she said.

Haithcock also explained McCormick Place expansion should generate more jobs for area residents, announced work is moving along for the new home of the Pacific Garden Mission, and

said Jones College Prep soon will have the old Pacific Garden land for its expansion.

Here come the 'ruppies'

Kyle Ezell, a certified urban planner and founder of Get Urban America Ltd., was invited by the Chicago Loop Alliance to share his expertise at a meeting on why and how to attract retirees live in downtown areas. He has named this demographic group "ruppies" for "retired urban people."

He was introduced by Ty Tabin, executive director of the Chicago Loop Alliance, an organization formed through merger of the Greater South State Street Council and the Central Michigan Avenue Association. The alliance promotes the Loop as a dynamic, mixed-use district of theater, retail, new housing, the largest college population in Illinois, and some of the world's most recognizable architecture and renowned cultural institutions.

Ezell served as a public sector city planner for 12 years before forming his own firm, which aims "to teach Americans how to live in cities." Ezell told the audience, "Chicago has high urban values." For people to live in downtown districts, they need to be taught

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urban values, he believes. "Ruppies want luxury and need to downsize as many are now empty-nesters. This national trend will continue for ten or 15 years," he stated.

The downtown and areas surrounding it are easily accessible by buses, rapid transit, and cabs, unlike most suburbs. Another advantage for retirees is the mix of a great student population as well as young families living in various communities within the downtown district, so that "age disappears in downtown areas."

For more information about ruppies, visit www.geturban.com. For more information about the Chicago Loop Alliance, visit: www.chicagoloopalliance.com.

South Loop block party

Tumblers, dancers, music, and campaigning were on tap as about 400 people converged at the playground/park area adjacent to the South Loop School on south Plymouth Court for the fourth annual South Loop Block Party on Sept. 9. Sponsors were the Dearborn Park Advisory Council (DPAC), Ald. Haithcock, and

Illinois State Representative Ken Dunkin (D-5th).

"This is an excellent opportunity for the community to come out and get together," said Enrique Perez, DPAC vice president. "Residents of Dearborn Park I and II, Printers Row, and other South Loop areas enjoy this event every year that it has been held."

Working one of the grills was DPAC President Mike Hernandez, who had an ideal vantage point to view the festivities. "It's great," he said. "We have had a beautiful day and everyone here seems to be having a lot of fun."

In addition to the fun and hot dogs and hamburgers, Larry M. Doody and Bob Fioretti, two candidates vying with Haithcock for the 2nd Ward Aldermanic seat, were on hand to meet and greet South Loop residents.

K9 Karnivale

Despite the rain on Sept 10, the K9 Karnivale at the Grant Bark Park between Balbo Drive, 11th Street, Michigan Avenue, and Columbus Drive went on and was well attended by residents of Dearborn Park I and II, Printers Row, and the

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Prairie Street communities—some even without their pups. The event also was a fundraiser for Grant Bark Park maintenance.

Brooke Portmann of Printers Row, attending with dog Tajwar, said it was a "great event even on such a rainy day. It's fantastic."

Several vendors treated dogs and their owners to samples, and canine activities included a costume contest and a most obedi-

ent/best trick competition. Joan Pomaranc of Dearborn Park said of her dog, "Esther is not doing well in the competitions but she's having fun." Stephanie Sauve, who lives on Prairie Avenue, entered her pup Sasha in many events and won several.

"This is great fun for dogs and their owners," concluded Tom Hartmann, a Dearborn Park II resident, who attended the event without his pup, Toby.

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