



RANCH Reporter

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"I wondered why somebody didn't do something about that; then I realized I was somebody." Unknown

With Sterling Bay's recent purchase of the Finkl Steel site, it appears that there will be one primary developer developing the Clybourn Planned Manufacturing District (PMD) located within the westernmost part of RANCH. Although the ultimate development proposal remains to be seen, the City of Chicago's Department of Planning and Development ("DPD") has held several public meetings concerning the re-zoning of this site. The last meeting was held on December 13, 2016. While much of the parameters of this re-zoning plan have yet to be revealed, the following is a list of some things that we have been told: 1) DPD intends for the property to be mixed-use – commercial, retail and residential; and 2) any greenspace provided for public use is to be developer driven.

Aldermen Michele Smith and Brian Hopkins recently penned an opinion piece in the *Chicago Tribune* voicing their support for increased open, public space in the Clybourn PMD, specifically a public recreational space to be included in the redevelopment plan. Smith, Michele, & Hopkins, Brian (2017, December 22). Commentary: A legacy for the future: Parks in the reimaged Clybourn Corridor. *Chicago Tribune*. Retrieved from <http://www.chicagotribune.com> (Click [here](#) for link to opinion piece). Similarly, at these meetings, members of the public have pointed to the City's own CitySpace Plan as support for the inclusion of a recreational park as part of the overall development plan. (Click [here](#) for link to Chicago's CitySpace Plan). At an earlier meeting, Alderman Brian Hopkins requested that DPD create an additional map to highlight all publicly owned property within the site, thereby providing the public with a more comprehensive understanding of the make-up of ownership of property that comprises the site and allowing for a more informed discussion of the open space issue. As of the last meeting, this map reportedly will be available at the next meeting.

Congestion and improvements to infrastructure are issues that are also frequently raised by members of the public at these meetings. Several considerations have been presented by DPD, but it has acknowledged many options do not yet have an identified funding source and are likely to require years to fully develop.

Finally, community members raised the issue that any residential development would likely have an impact on the schools whose attendance boundaries incorporate the Clybourn PMD site – specifically, Oscar Mayer Magnet and Lincoln Park High School. Therefore, it was suggested that the rezoning and development processes should evaluate any such impact.

The next meeting will be held some time in January of 2017. This meeting will likely be the last public meeting held by DPD before its final plan is unveiled.

- Reatha Kay, President, RANCH Triangle Community Conservation Association

What Was Old Is New Again

The Mulligan School, located on the 1800 block of N. Sheffield Avenue, has quite a history. Built in 1889-1890, the Mulligan School was named after Colonel James A. Mulligan, a Civil War hero.¹ The building backs up to the el tracks, which were built shortly after its completion.² It was a CPS elementary school for over 100 years until the early 1990s, after which it was leased to a private school, and then closed in early 2000.³ “The building remained vacant until the Board of Education sold it to a private developer,” Svigos Development, Inc., who rather than tearing down the structure, decided to renovate it and convert it into high-end apartments.⁴ “The building is a contributing building to the Sheffield Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places...”⁵

The renovation of the interior is quite unique, as it incorporates many of the original and historic features of the building into the design. If you haven’t seen the inside of the building yet, it is worth a tour. Working with the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, and the National Park Service, the developer has kept the building’s original staircases, hardwood floor, built-in furniture, wood paneling, hallway layouts, and pendant lighting intact. Indeed, the wide hallways, soaring ceilings, and imposing 14-foot oak doorways with transoms provide an almost reverent feel. When you enter a unit, you can’t help but notice the height of the 14-foot ceilings and 5 x 9 foot windows. The flooring is another feature of the original structure that was not only maintained, but salvaged from the fire that struck the building during its renovation. It seems that the preservation was more a labor of love, especially when you understand that after the fire, the developer carefully removed the hardwood floors, took them to an off-site location to dry out, then stripped, re-laid and resealed the floors. Finally, the view

¹ (Former) James Mulligan Public School Building, 1855-63 N. Sheffield Ave.. Final Landmark Recommendation adopted by the Commission on Chicago Landmark (February 6, 2014) pp. 8-10. Retrieved from <http://www.cityofchicago.org>. Click [here](#) for link to Recommendation.

² *Id.* at 10.

³ *Id.* at 14.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

from the rooftop is phenomenal. There is an unobstructed view in practically every direction as you stand 65 feet above the sidewalk.

Leasing of this building begins in February 2017, and the developer is happy to provide group tours to be organized by RANCH. In a neighborhood where recent efforts have been made to preserve historic buildings, and in a City where it seems that many old buildings are demolished with little thought to their architectural or historic significance, it is a pleasant relief to have a developer voluntarily make such efforts to preserve some of our community's past.



Picture of the front of the Mulligan School.

What's In Your Water

An open letter to my neighbors:

I'm a RANCH neighbor, living in a townhome built in the early 1980's. I've recently had my water tested by the City, and it tested positive for lead content above the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) action levels. (The EPA's recommended action level for lead in drinking water is 15 parts per billion (ppb)). While our own units are built with copper pipes, the lead contamination is coming from the service lines. The City water mains are not lead, but unfortunately, the service lines, from the main to those homes built before 1986, are. Lead pipes were banned from use in Chicago in 1986. I was told that many of the homes in our neighborhood could be facing the same issues if built before 1986.

You can call 311 to request a lead testing kit. The problem is that there is little they can do once lead is detected other than provide you with the guidelines on how to manage it. (You do first want to ensure that your interior piping/faucets are newer and that you do have copper interior piping. The City will inspect this for you once determined you have lead.)

Anytime your water has been sitting idle for more than 6 hours, especially in the morning, the City's Department of Water recommends letting the COLD water run for at least 5 minutes before using it. The idea is to clear the water that has been sitting idle in the service line. Running your shower and flushing toilets also counts in helping to clear the line, but it's recommended to run COLD water and to run the kitchen faucet, since most consumption comes from there. (Warm and hot water are coming from your home's hot water heater, and won't clear your service line.)

If you use a filter for water/ice in your refrigerator, look for one that is NSF certified to remove lead, as many are not. There are also plenty of options to purchase filtered water, or Costco has water delivery through Hinkley – remember to verify whether your bottled water and/or water delivery service is lead free as well. Remember, you should also take care when cooking rice, pasta, soup, etc., **as boiling your water does not remove lead.**

I did press the Department of Water team that came out to inspect my house, asking about whether the City is taking some responsibility to replace these pipes. They have said that this is not possible at this point, but they are hoping they might offer the same 50/50 program they have with sidewalk repairs in the near future (which means the homeowner would pay ½ of the expense to replace the service line). I plan to meet with Alderman Smith in January to help get a better understanding of where the City actually stands on this important issue. I have also requested another lead test in my home AFTER running the faucet for the recommended 5 minutes, just to have peace of mind that it actually does eliminate the risk of lead. The City has told me that they have never done testing like this, but would like to work with me to have it done. I have escalated my request at the Department of Water, and have the support of Alderman Smith to make sure it gets done.

Below is a link to get a better understanding of the EPA and lead facts: <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water#health>.

I will do a follow-up report after I have met with the Alderman and have more information.

- Susie Linker – Susie is a long-time resident of RANCH, and the person who maintains the RANCH Triangle Facebook page.

Cluck, Cluck, Buzz, Buzz – Hooray!!!

Where in Chicago can you find chickens, bees and hundreds of happy bulldogs in one place? Oscar Mayer Magnet School, of course. If you don't know Turbo Goose, Pepper Snowball or any of the other four chickens who have a home at Mayer, head up to the 2200 block of Clifton. The chicken coop is just south of the main entrance, and a hit among students, neighbors and passersby alike. Who helped bring these chickens to the City? Who maintains the chickens, garden and bee hive? If you said the amazing parent volunteers within the Mayer community, you would be right. The Friends of Mayer Magnet School ("Friends of Mayer"), is a parent led nonprofit organization that supports Oscar Mayer and works to make bees and chickens and many other things possible at Mayer.

Oscar Mayer Magnet School is a Chicago Public School that "was completed in 1956 and dedicated to Oscar F. Mayer (1859-1955), the founder of Oscar Mayer Company... The school was dedicated in his honor to remind those who come here of the opportunity that exists in the country to pursue ambitions for a fulfilling and successful life. In 2008, the school was officially renamed as 'Oscar Mayer Magnet School,' and became a magnet-cluster school with a Fine and Performing Arts focus and introduced a Montessori program and an International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program." School Mission: Our Mission. Retrieved from: <http://www.Mayermagnet.org/about/mission>. Currently, there are only three Montessori schools within all of CPS. While a Montessori program may not fit every child's learning style, the benefits of a Montessori education include individualized learning and self-sufficiency. In addition to being a magnet school, Oscar Mayer is a neighborhood school, and all of RANCH sits within its attendance boundaries.

Parents who live within Mayer's attendance boundaries appreciate and recognize the importance of having the choice of quality public school, but why should this be important to other members of the community? Access to quality public schools impacts all homeowners, as it increases the value and marketability of their property. In fact, several search engines recently have been developed specifically to allow interested buyers to search for properties based on proximity and access to certain schools. "SchoolSparrow, a Chicago-based house hunting site, is rolling out an upgrade that gives buyers an unprecedented ability to sift through the for-sale listings according to many shoppers' top priority: school quality." Rodkin, Dennis (2016, November 17). How to find the best CPS schools – and homes for sale nearby. *Crains*. Retrieved from <http://www.chicagobusiness.com>. In essence, having a good local school, whether or not you utilize it, provides a benefit to the community as a whole. To continue to be a wonderful option for our children and asset to the community, Mayer relies on the support of the community – and that is where Friends of Mayer comes in.

Friends of Mayer does more than just support farming at the school

– it fundraises to pay for: 1) aides for the classrooms; 2) many of the auxiliary teachers that support the fine arts and language programs; and 3) experiential field trips that support what the students are learning in the classroom. It also organizes activities for families to participate in outside of the classroom through its Beyond the Classroom program such as making meals at the Ronald McDonald House, student dances, mom's and dad's nights out, and various other events and activities. Through all these efforts, Friends of Mayer not only supports the school's academic agenda, but helps build a community at Mayer where the students can succeed and flourish and where parents feel welcome.

With all of the wonderful things that have been accomplished by Friends of Mayer, it still needs your support. Like any successful organization, it takes the continued help and support of many to keep that success going. How can you get involved? You can donate money, become a community sponsor, become involved in procuring auction items for its annual auction, assist with grant writing, help maintain the garden, chickens or bee hive (which must be done throughout the year), or email the president (president@friendsofmayer.org) and let her know what talents or ideas you would like to share and discuss how they can best be used. In short, please remember that Mayer Magnet School is part of our community and, for it to continue to be a wonderful asset to our community, it requires your support. To see how you can volunteer or support Friends of Mayer in any way, please click www.friendsofmayer.org.

- Special thanks to Pam Lookatch, President of Friends of Mayer, for her help in writing this article.

A Howlin' Good Time!

Halloween Tricks and Treats on Armitage street, again, was a wonderful event, attended by hundreds of neighbors - adults, children, and dogs alike. We would like to thank Alderman Michele Smith, Alderman Scott Waguespack and Greg Gibbs of Chicago Bagel Authority for judging the costume contests this year. We would also like to thank of our sponsors and volunteers - especially Jill Valentine, Greg Gibbs, Randy Steinmeyer, Anne Phillips, and Bridget Dougherty for all their work in planning and organizing this event. There were so many awesome and creative costumes, great treats and prizes, and fun activities for all who attended. And finally, thank you to all who came out and participated – it is your enthusiasm and creativity that, every year, makes this event so festive and fun!

Upcoming Events

Our next RANCH event will be our annual meeting, which will be held on Sunday, February 12, 2017. Please stay tuned for more details on the time and location. We look forward to seeing you in the New Year!

Please remember to support your local businesses, because they support your community.

Stay in touch with community meetings and happenings by becoming a member of RANCH. Sign up on www.RANCHtriangle.org, and follow RANCH on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/RANCH-Triangle-Community-Conservation-Association-108461592543401/>