

GAZETTE

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University Village Row Homes offers variety of styles. See page 12.



Workers' skills topic of discussion at Urban Forum. See page 16.



Haley Carlton, Gazette reporter, passes away at 46. See page 31.

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Resurrection Project saves remaining Pilsen SRO. See page 3.

Chinatown SSA progresses, taxes may increase. See page 18.

UI Health System ranks eighth locally and state-wide. See page 30.

Planned bike lanes will mean safer cycling, walking in South Loop area

By Monica M. Walk

Bicyclists in the South Loop will have better and safer access to the neighborhood beginning next year.

At an Aug. 23 residents meeting hosted by South Loop Neighbors at Grace Place on south Dearborn Street, City officials presented a plan for more bike lanes.

Construction will occur in summer and fall 2017, with funding coming from the Federal Highway

Administration's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds.

"It was a very interesting, well attended meeting," said Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) Assistant Director of Transportation Planning Mike Amsden, estimating about 50 area residents attended the two-hour meeting. "Some very vocal concerns dominated the meeting for awhile. When others spoke up, they got excited about the project. The alderman

[Sophia King of the 4th Ward] asked who supported the project, and a majority did."

New bikeways will come to Polk (Dearborn Street to Plymouth Court), Plymouth (Polk to 9th Street), and 9th Streets (Plymouth to Grant Park).

Workers will extend the Polk/Plymouth Neighborhood Greenway's Dearborn Street protected bike lane and upgrade a section of barriers on Dearborn from

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Variety of new projects planned for West Loop

By Dolly Duplantier

A variety of new developments are coming to the Randolph-Fulton Market/West Loop area.

Bridgford Foods and its vice president of industrial relations and safety Richard Bridgford want to turn their properties at 171 and

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Properties located on the 900 block of West Randolph Street will form part of a large-scale redevelopment by Tucker Development and Acadia Realty Trust.

Automatic voter registration veto could be overturned

By Monica M. Walk

Overturning Governor Bruce Rauner's August veto of an automatic voter registration (AVR) bill passed by both houses of the Illinois General Assembly is not a sure outcome, despite bipartisan support of the bill (SB250) by both Republican and Democratic legislators.

"Governor Rauner makes it clear he will attack those not in agreement; some Republicans will 'peel off' over a veto" and not vote to override it, said Cook County Clerk David Orr, an AVR bill proponent.

"This is good legislation," Orr

noted. "It cleans the rolls and protects people. But it's tough to fight a veto."

Senate Bill 250, sponsored in the state Senate by Sen. Andy Manar (D-Decatur) and in the House by State Rep. Robyn Gabel (D-Evanston), passed the legislature in May with broad bipartisan support: 86-30 in the House, 50-7 in the Senate. Rauner vetoed the bill Aug. 12. Legislators are scheduled to reconvene and consider an override in mid-November.

The legislation would make both registering to vote and updating voter registration automatic when individuals apply for a new or updated driver's license at

Illinois Secretary of State facilities. It also would expand the registration system to allow individuals to register to vote whenever they conduct business or interact with the State's Department of Human Services, Department of Healthcare and Family Services, Department of Employment Security, and Department on Aging. Individuals would be free to opt out of registration if they wish.

Currently, Illinois voter registration is "opt in"—citizens seeking services at these sites are asked if they would like to register to vote or update voter registration rather than having their updated

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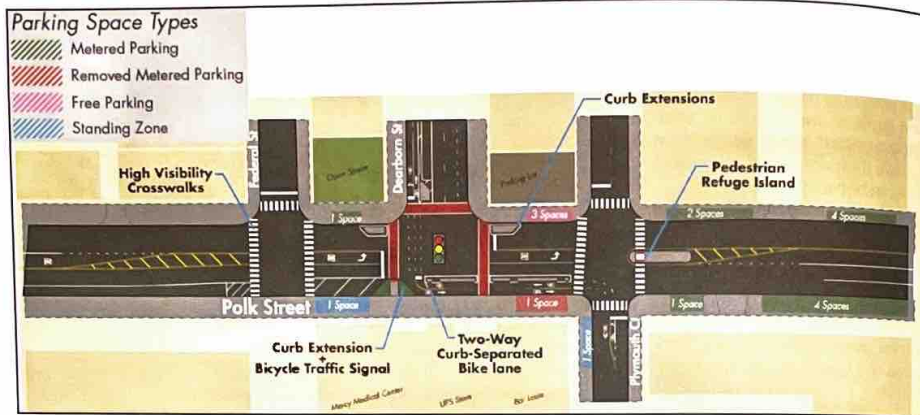
Planned bike lanes mean safer cycling, walking in South Loop

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bollards to concrete.

They also will install shared lane markings and signage, with no parking or travel lane impact, on Plymouth and 9th Street, which currently provides a low-stress route favored by cyclists. Improvements for pedestrian traffic at Polk and Plymouth will add pedestrian bump-outs and refuge islands; changes will cause some minor parking impact.

The lanes on Dearborn (from Polk to Kinzie Street) and Harrison Streets (Desplaines Street to Wabash Avenue) will receive concrete upgrades to provide physical separation between cyclists and vehicles, including parking end caps to define the parking lane and deter illegal driving and parking in the bike lane. The concrete caps also will improve aesthetics over the current bollards, permit storm drainage, and allow maintenance vehicles to access the bike lane.

In his presentation, Amsden cited project goals to improve connections for people riding bikes between the South Loop, the museum campus, Grant Park, and the lakefront trail by creating low-stress routes that provide better way finding, minimize difficult turns, and address critical gaps in the bike network—using existing



Crossing distance will be shortened at Dearborn and Polk Streets, and crossing at Plymouth Court will be easier.

infrastructure. He reported officials also will address pedestrian safety at challenging intersections.

Not everyone supports CDOT's plans, however.

"I was surprised that a group of residents from the 899 and 901 South Plymouth buildings came to the meeting and were very outspoken in their protest of the project proposed," said South Loop Neighbors president Susan Ohde. "They felt that this would endanger their pedestrian activities and that the way finding signs would cause large numbers of tourists

making their way down 9th Street."

She noted members of her group "do not feel this project would be a large change from the current situation. Most bicyclists know that going east on 9th Street is a better way to get to Michigan Avenue and the lakefront bike path. This just makes it official.

"I personally feel that, while the City's support of commuting by bicycle is admirable, not all citizens are cyclists," Ohde said. "Many pedestrians feel that more needs to be done to make sure that bicycles follow streetlights and signs and

yield to foot traffic."

Amsden noted criticism tended to stem from not understanding the project's scope.

"There was concern about access to driveways and parking lots and congestion," he said, noting officials will take this feedback into consideration as the plan moves forward. "The reason for the meeting was to get feedback. We will propose pedestrian safety measures and make sure there is access to driveways."

CDOT will engage with area businesses about proposed changes



Parking endcaps define parking lanes and are designed to minimize illegal parking in bicycle lanes. According to CDOT, 57% of South Loop residents walk, bike, or take public transit to get to work.

and hold more discussions with Alderman King as it works on the plan design's second phase, which includes investigating utilities below street level that could affect the plan. Amsden said the 2017 timeline remains realistic and accurate.

According to CDOT statistics, 40% of South Loop households do not have access to a motorized vehicle and 57% of South Loop residents walk, bike, or take transit to get to work. Another 32% of neighborhood residents drive to work, and eight percent work from home.

The neighborhood has nine Divvy bike-sharing stations. CDOT data shows current bollard-pro-

tected bike lanes on Dearborn Street have decreased user crashes by 30%, while bicycle ridership has increased by 170%. CDOT also pegs traffic signal compliance by bicyclists at more than 90%.

"My vision is to make Chicago the most bike-friendly city in the United States," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel, noting bicycle lane improvements "do not just benefit bicyclists. They also benefit pedestrians, transit users, and motorists by making our streets safer. They will be safer because pedestrians and motorists will have a better knowledge of where and when to expect to see bicyclists."