

Newsbriefs

Affordable housing coming to Pilsen

Alderman Byron Sigcho-Lopez implemented for the first time the community driven zoning process, which he had promised the 25th Ward during his campaign, as part of planning new affordable housing slated for development at 1850 S. Racine Ave. in Pilsen.

The Resurrection Project (TRP), whose mission is “to build relationships and challenge individuals to act on their faith and values by creating community ownership, building community wealth, and serving as stewards of community assets,” serves as developer.

TRP modified initial building plans after working with Sigcho-Lopez and his ten-member resident advisory board. Sigcho-Lopez said the new board provides proportional representation across the ward to review building projects from beginning to end. He noted resident feedback regarding disability access, density, and parking became especially relevant in the conversation and helped shape revisions to the building plans. Sigcho-Lopez is taking additional action to address parking



TRP reduced the building's size after community residents expressed concerns at several meetings.

congestion through a parking study with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

After three community meetings, TRP made several significant changes in the proposed structure: reducing it from six stories to five and from 45 units to 37; increasing the number of three-bedroom units; and changing the façade color scheme to better complement existing neighborhood buildings.

TRP remained committed to providing 31 parking spaces—acknowledging area parking concerns—when guidelines require

only 26 for the resized structure.

TRP vice president for real estate development Veronica Gonzalez said her organization knocked on doors for two blocks around the property as outreach to about 400 residents, inviting them to engage in community meetings. TRP used social media and flyers to publicize the meetings and sent reminders in English and Spanish via phone and email to residents who shared contact information.

Gonzalez estimated 150 residents attended the three meetings held in July, August, and September.

“We have consensus, and it better reflects what the community wants,” Gonzalez said. “This is one of very few affordable housing projects in Pilsen....the only one I know being proposed.”

“We do need affordable housing,” Sigcho-Lopez said, noting he knows of some seniors who have been waiting for housing for 14 years. “It is important they heard from neighbors. I hope people see the importance of the community driven process. People were skeptical at the beginning, and now they see it moving to a better project—already they have seen changes in density and parking.

“This was the first experience with this process,” Sigcho-Lopez continued. “The neighbors see the importance of participation and see the impact when they participate. It was a learning curve for all of us, with lots of questions. I said we are not going to rush; community driven zoning takes time. I appreciate TRP’s patience, and understanding it’s a new process with more scrutiny. Ultimately, the end result, the outcome, is more satisfying for residents, and that is ultimately the most important thing to me.”

The project’s construction start

date depends on funding, for which TRP applied on Oct. 11. Best case scenario, according to TRP, is a closing date in one year, with construction starting in 2021.

The City of Chicago determines both rent and income limits for affordable housing. TRP reported the building will have units for people with 30% area median income (AMI) and for those with 50% AMI; the City publishes the qualifying income limits annually. TRP updated plans to target better the community’s needs for serving those earning 50% AMI—the current 50% AMI earnings maximum is \$51,700 earned annual income to qualify for those units. (See the City’s website for published limits: https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/doh/general/2019_Income_and_Rent_Limits.pdf).

Officials expect building rents to range from \$458 (lowest 30% AMI unit) to \$1,090 (highest 50% AMI unit), except for voucher subsidized units, where tenants pay 30% of their income.

TRP formed in Pilsen in 1990 when six parishes banded together to address neighborhood blight, violence, and neglect through organizing. It has grown to focus on property management, real estate development, and financial services with the goal of creating healthy communities for residents. For more information

about programming, go online to resurrectionproject.org.

—Monica M. Walk

Encompassing Center, new West Side mental health clinic, opens

Four years in the making, a mental health clinic has opened that is free to all residents of the Near West Side, North Lawndale, and East and West Garfield Park communities.

It exists thanks to property owners who voted in a 2016 referendum to increase their property taxes by \$4 for every \$1,000 they pay in property tax. The result is the Encompassing Center, at 3019 W. Harrison St., which promises compassionate mental health care for everyone in the community.

“Today is a day of great rejoicing,” the Rev. Patrick Marshall said during an opening prayer at the Oct. 15 ribbon cutting. He was one of nine clinic Governing Commission members and numerous others who worked toward opening the center and participated in the ceremony.

The clinic has an array of rooms, ranging from small ones for one-on-one counseling to larger ones to accommodate groups, as well as a children’s area with toys.

Commissioner Jacquelyn
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