

G A Z E T T E

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FREE

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— INSIDE —



Activists call attention to homeless, CHA with sleep-in. See page 6.



Garibaldi Park renovations completed by Park District. See page 18.



State Rep Esther Golar, champion of education, passes away. See page 30.

Other highlights:

Police, privatization, and taxes discussed at 11th Ward forum. See page 3.

Star program to help City College students attend universities. See page 16.

City reviews Pilsen and Little Village communities for development planning. See page 18.

Bridgeport park to offer river rowing access via new Eleanor boat house

By Monica M. Walk and William S. Biko

The Eleanor boat house, under construction on the Chicago River in Bridgeport, in the 2800 block of south Eleanor St., will provide new water recreation opportunities. The site sits between Loomis and Fuller Streets, across the river from Ashland Avenue.

The Eleanor Street project is the

final of four boathouses advanced by Mayor Rahm Emanuel as anchors for future river development and access. Officials expect completion by fall 2016, weather permitting.

"We've made tremendous progress in investing in the Chicago River to make it the city's next great recreational frontier, but this goal will only be achieved when residents from every part

of the city have access to recreational opportunities on the river," Emanuel said.

The Eleanor boat house is the first structure of its type constructed in Bridgeport. Other city boathouses are located in the Chinatown, Roscoe Village, and Ravenswood neighborhoods.

"The Eleanor boat house represents a great opportunity to grow our local economy and

Continued on page 10

New West Loop residential expansion plans are unveiled

By Hayley Carlton

Apartments and condominiums will replace two long-term West Loop institutions. Upcoming projects will transform A&A Auto Shop, 1045 W. Washington Blvd., to a condominium development and the Salvation Army's Freedom Center at Ashland Avenue and Monroe Street to apartments.

While the Salvation Army voluntarily vacated the nearly

Continued on page 14



Photo Courtesy Soul Circus Inc.

UNIVERSOUL—The UniverSoul Circus ran in Washington Park in September and October. See *Around the Neighborhood*, page 20.

Several new developments planned for South Loop area

By Patrick Butler

Perhaps not since the 1871 Chicago Fire has the South Grant Park area gone through the kind of transformation that could be coming if four major highrise developers and their supporters have their way.

John Murphy of MB Real Estate hopes to build a 48-story, 500-unit Solomon Caldwell Bentz-designed apartment highrise at what is now a parking lot at 1326 S. Michigan Ave.

According to Murphy, the average unit will be 730 square feet,

and rentals will run from \$2 to more than \$3 per square foot. The building would also have more than 8,000 square feet of retail space and 240 parking spots.

New York architect Rafael Vinoly has plans for a 76-story development with 506 units in residential twin towers and 100 townhouses. He calls the project Crescent Heights and wants to build it on a two-acre parcel on the southeast corner of Roosevelt Road and Michigan Avenue.

Vinoly's project would go up in three phases, with the two towers sitting just south of Museum Park

and the townhouses going up west of those buildings. Vinoly's towers would have the unique "bundled tube" design found in the Willis Tower, Chicago's tallest building.

Meanwhile, Oxford Capital Group, a Chicago-based hotel developer that owns the Essex Inn, is planning a 48-story, 388-apartment development at 800 S. Michigan Ave., next door to the Essex Inn. The Oxford Tower would go up where the Essex swimming pool and parking garage now stand.

Designed by Hartshorne

Continued on page 8

Bridgeport park to offer river rowing access via new Eleanor boat house

Continued from page 1

provide crucial recreational benefits for our residents,” said 25th Ward Alderman Danny Solis. “Built over a year ago, the boathouse at Ping Tom Park in my ward is a shining example. I applaud the City’s efforts to improve our neighborhoods, and I look forward to continue making our city a great place to live, work, and play.”

Multi-purpose facilities

The Eleanor site will consist of two buildings.

A 5,832 square foot heated training facility will incorporate a workout space, multi-purpose community room, and main office. The open concept exercise area in this building will include 57 “erg” (ergometer) machines, which simulate the action of rowing and measure the amount of work performed.

A second building will provide 13,171 square feet for boat storage and include a rowing office, four team storage bays, a heated boat repair bay, clear-span boat storage space, and a vending area. Five boat storage bays will hold up to 66 rowing shells and support equipment.

Site improvements will include a floating boat launch dock in the river, walkways, lighting, outdoor fitness equipment, landscaping, and eight parking spaces.

The facilities will be open to the public as well as rowing groups within the community, including Recovery on Water, which serves cancer patients and survivors; Saint Ignatius College Prep’s rowing group; the intramural team at the University of Chicago; the Chicago Training Center, which provides rowing opportunities to underserved youth; and the Lincoln Park Boat Club, a private organization rowing out of multiple city locations.

The park district will offer programming at the facility.

“The goal is to have residents from every part of the city have access to recreational opportunities on the river,” said Chicago Park District director of communications Jessica Maxey-Faulkner. “The Chicago Park District will use the success of the boathouses to attract grant funds for similar City projects, while community members can take advantage of the

Continued on page 12

Bridgeport park to offer river rowing access via new Eleanor boat house

Continued from page 10
exciting new programming and employment opportunities.”

Funding from multiple sources

Studio Gang Architects designed the project, which will cost approximately \$8.5 million. Of that, \$8.2 million is coming from Park District funding. Another \$259,000 came from a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Chi-Cal Fund grant.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency already has provided nearly \$1 million in grants to clean up the river and create jobs.

“The sites were chosen to line up with improvements the Chicago Department of Transportation is making to extend trails along the river, providing easier and more consistent river access for runners, bikers, and walkers,” Maxey-Faulkner said of the four new boat house locations. “The boat houses will each contain a concession facility and will serve both as access points and attractions along the river.”

Emanuel attended a groundbreaking held in August, along with Solis, Alderman Patrick D.

Thompson, and Chicago Park District general superintendent Michael P. Kelly.

“This will be a great asset for our community,” Thompson said, noting he also will keep an eye on any problems that may arise.

“Any time you have a destination amenity such as the boat house, there is a concern about traffic and parking,” Thompson said. “We want to make sure that we have adequate parking and that increased traffic will not be a burden to the area.

“There won’t be a lot of activity in the evening,” he continued. “Rowing will mostly be during the day, so we believe the boat house will be compatible to the area and will coexist well with the community. There could be additional traffic, and we’ll be monitoring that.

“We will work with the community,” Thompson said.

When asked about a road or bridge from the boat house area to Ashland Avenue to alleviate traffic, Thompson said no money has been allotted for a roadway.

“It would be very expensive to build a vehicular bridge there,” he explained. “People will be coming



A rendering from the Chicago Park District shows how the Eleanor Boat House will look in relation to the surrounding residential community.

down Eleanor, and we’ll monitor the traffic flow so it doesn’t create a burden on local residents.”

He did note that a pedestrian bridge from the boat house area to Ashland might be possible in the future, however. “We may look at that,” Thompson said, noting that with the Ashland bus and the Orange Line of the CTA close by, a pedestrian bridge could encourage people to use public transportation.

He also said he will work to make sure funding agencies “live up to their end of the bargain. We want to make sure the funding is there.”

Thompson believes the four boat houses are “good for Chicago, and we’re glad one of them is in our community.”

The rowing team from Saint Ignatius College Prep and other groups already are taking advantage of the site.

“Our crew team has been using that area for rowing,” said Ryan Bergin, associate director of development at Saint Ignatius. “They are definitely looking forward to having the new boat house as well.”

For more information, go to www.chicagoparkdistrict.com or call (312) 742-PLAY.

