

For release January 1, 2010

# “Harbor Business Buzz”

## EDC News

### *7<sup>th</sup> Streetscape Project Goes to Bid in January*

At the time of writing this article final preparations were being made to send the long awaited 7<sup>th</sup> Street streetscape project out to bid. The project, which will be constructed under a joint agreement between the Illinois Department of Transportation and the village, will be bid as a part of the January 15<sup>th</sup> regular state letting. It is expected that a competitive bidding process will result in the selection of a contractor to complete the improvement, with work beginning as early as April of this year. The \$2.6 million infrastructure improvement project will take approximately 6 months to complete and will add one more important piece to the overall plan to attract investment and business development to the downtown area.

### *New Sign Code to be Adopted*

The village board is expected to vote soon to adopt a new, more comprehensive sign ordinance for the village. The revised code is intended to move development in the village toward a more modern aesthetic look founded in proven methods that most effectively market business. Existing signs will be permitted to continue until they are replaced while any new signs will be required to follow the updated standards. As with the streetscape, this will be another key step in preparing the village for desired new business growth.

### *Necessity of Change*

The EDC spends a lot of time planning for the future and in doing so attempts to imagine where the village wants to be in years to come. Many times this is done by asking for input from residents or by participating in planning projects like the Comprehensive Plan or the Station Area & Streetscape Plan. Suggestions that come out of these processes can be as varied as those who provide input, but there are always a few consistent hopes: 1) keep what makes Winthrop Harbor a great place to live like family friendly, safe and quiet neighborhoods 2) bring new investment to our business district to provide convenient access to products and services we need and desire and 3) find ways to lessen the tax burden of residential property owners who are paying the lion's share of the cost to provide essential services.

It is in addressing the 3<sup>rd</sup> hope that the EDC spends most of the time. More than 90% of the costs associated with providing services like public works, police and fire are being paid using the village's portion of residential property tax. This formula had been

working, for the most part, okay as new residential development happened over the last number of years. The new development was providing not only new tax revenue but also what was effectively a windfall in the form of building permit fees. Now that building has slowed we are coming to realize that the cost of providing ongoing services to these new homes is expected to increase at a pace faster than property tax revenue.

What does this mean? Well it means that we are on a path where eventually the village may not be able to sustain current services without increasing personal property taxes. That is unless we find alternative sources of revenue. It is the EDC's belief that the best opportunity to increase revenue for the village is through new commercial development. Commercial development (in particular sales tax generating commercial development) has the ability to provide 2 sources of revenue; property tax and business tax. Commercial development also generally requires fewer services, meaning a greater share of that revenue can go to support residential services. In the end the EDC sees that commercial development would be able to help the village maintain current levels of service, while increasing the variety of business products and services available to everyone.

If you have questions about any of the Village's Economic Development plans please contact Pat DiPersio at 847-872-3846 Ext 255 or email [pdipersio@winthropharbor.com](mailto:pdipersio@winthropharbor.com) .

### **Special Events**

#### ***Annual Holiday Parade and Tree Lighting Ceremony***

The annual event that took place in early December was a huge success. Congratulations and thank you to all those involved in making this event another great reason to spend some time in the downtown area.

### **Highlight on Business**

#### **Galaxy of Books, 1702 7<sup>th</sup> Street 847-872-3313**

Looking for a good book to read during the long winter months? How about a collector's copy of your favorite childhood comic book? Galaxy of Books has it all with thousands of books to choose from including a large selection of mysteries, westerns and romance novels to snuggle up with on a cold winter night.

The next time you are in downtown Winthrop Harbor take a minute to stop in and say hi to owner/operator Eileen Donohue. You are sure to be pleased and surprised at all this great store has to offer.

Please patronize all of our local businesses. For a complete list of community businesses check out the Winthrop Harbor Business Directory online at [www.winthropharbor.com](http://www.winthropharbor.com) .

## **Chamber of Commerce News**

If you are a local business owner we would love to see you at one of our networking events. We meet on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month at Norstates Bank from 7:30-9am. Donuts and coffee are provided. In addition, we have a monthly networking mixer located at a Winthrop Harbor business. If you would like to be added to our email list to receive meeting updates, please visit us at [www.cocwh.com](http://www.cocwh.com).

Thank you for shopping local.

Sincerely,

The Winthrop Harbor Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors