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“Harbor Business Buzz”

EDC News

7th Streetscape Project Underway

In early April this long-awaited project broke ground. Right-of-way improvements will be made on 7th Street from Whitney Avenue east to the Union Pacific railway tracks and on Sheridan Road for 300 feet north and south of the intersection. New stamped concrete sidewalks designed to look like a boardwalk will be installed along with decorative street lights, trees, landscaping and other nautically themed elements like an anchor, roped bollards and a new sign fashioned from a wooden boat.

The \$1.5 million infrastructure improvement project will be 80% funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, with the remaining 20% being funded by the village. The project is expected to be completed by the fall and will add one more important piece to the overall plan to attract investment and business development to the downtown area.

New Sign Code Adopted

The village board recently adopted 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 3rd 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 for 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 .

Special Events

Spring and Summer Fun for Everyone!

With spring upon us and summer just around the corner we look forward to another season of special events for our residents and visitors to enjoy. Events like the Memorial Day Parade in May, the Summer Fair in June and the Downtown Summer Concert Series in July are great ways to showcase what makes Winthrop Harbor a great place to live.

Look for the latest schedule and other updates on the village website, www.winthropharbor.com .

Highlight on Business

Galaxy of Books, 1702 7th Street 847-872-3313

Looking for a good book to read? 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.

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 .

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.

Thank you for shopping local.

Sincerely,

The Winthrop Harbor Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors