

HOWARD STREET



SSA #19 Renewal

July 15, 2020 | Virtual Meeting via Zoom | Community Meeting #2

Attendees:

Business and Public Members:

Bob Copeland, Resident, Keller Williams Realtor
David Skora, Resident
Elvin Chan, Resident

Jillian Jason, Rogers Park Business Owner
John Harris, Resident
Patricia Gonzalez, Athena Board Game Café
Renee Labrana, R Public House

RPBA, City of Chicago and Consultants

Carol Brobeck, Associate, Teska Associates, Inc.
Erin Cigliano, Principal, Teska Associates, Inc.
Karen Forte, DPD, City of Chicago
Scott Goldstein, Principal, Teska Associates, Inc.

Cindy Plante, Economic Development Manager, RPBA
Sandi Price, Executive Director, RPBA
Mark Roschen, DPD, City of Chicago

On July 15th, 2020 the second of two community meetings regarding the reconstitution (renewal) of SSA #19 was held via Zoom from 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm. There was a previous meeting on June 30th, from 8:30 am – 9:30 am which covered the same information. Both meetings were accessible via the same Zoom Meeting Number 815 6491 6404 and call-in number 312 626-6799.

The meeting was advertised in a variety of sources:

- 1st Class Mailing
- Newsletter
 - 49th Ward Alderman Newsletter
 - RPBA Newsletters
- Project Websites (dedicated RSVP with pre-meeting question form)
- Social Media
 - Facebook: RPBA Events, Howard Street, Rogers Park Community Pages
 - Howard Street Instagram
- Email
 - to SSA property owners (6/25/2020)
 - to SSA businesses (various dates)

Meeting details were provided along with a link to RSVP and submit questions prior to the meeting (although the RSVP was not required to attend). A link to the web site and Needs Assessment survey was also provided.

Introduction

Cindy Plante of Rogers Park Business Alliance (RPBA), who manages SSA #19, opened the meeting. Cindy gave a brief overview of the meeting agenda, confirmed the meeting was being recorded and stated the presentation had already been posted to and would be available on the SSA #19 renewal website: www.rpba.org/ssa-19-renewal. Cindy requested questions be added to the chat in Zoom and stated they would be addressed after the presentation.

What is an SSA?

An SSA is a designated area in which property owners choose to provide additional services for the benefit of residents, merchants, and visitors. A fee is applied to properties within the SSA via the property tax bill and the funds go directly back into the district based on local priorities.

Howard Street SSA #19 Renewal

The Howard Street SSA #19 was established in 1997, renewed in 2006. It is set to expire from its 15-year extension term in 2021 unless renewed. The SSA provides a number of services, such as snow and litter removal, holiday decorations and landscaping maintenance; organizes events such as Chalk Howard which was a huge success in 2019; and provides direct business support services, such as façade rebate programs, the Live Love Shop shopper rebate program. The SSA also quickly pivoted to provide COVID relief assistance by starting two new rebate programs in March, one to assist businesses creating new e-commerce platforms and the other to help reimburse PPE and take-out materials expenses. SSA #19 is a long-time advocate for the Howard corridor, focusing heavily on local business retention, marketing of the area, and attracting tenants to vacant storefronts. If the SSA is not renewed, all these programs and services currently funded through the SSA will cease. Cindy reviewed the proposed boundary (see map below) for the Howard Street SSA upon renewal, which is being extended to include Jarvis Square (the SSA will be extended via railroad parcels which is allowable). This extension was requested by Jarvis Square businesses.



Cindy then introduced Scott Goldstein of Teska Associates, Inc., the consulting firm assisting with the SSA renewal process. Scott affirmed that Teska's role is to support the efforts of RPBA and assist with the SSA renewal process. Scott then introduced Mark Roschen, the Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) for the City of Chicago and Karen Forte, SSA Liaison for the DPD. Mark highlighted the fact that the City's role is to assist with the SSA renewal process, which was initiated with an application in 2019. City requirements are in place to ensure transparency and oversight. The City requires outreach beyond what the state statute requires for that reason, to ensure that property business owners in an SSA district are part of the SSA process and speak to the priorities for the district.

SSA Renewal Process

Erin Cigliano, also of Teska, then spoke about the renewal process, which began in early 2020 with the creation of the renewal website and meetings with RPBA and business owners. An Advisory Committee for the renewal process was formed consisting of existing SSA Commissioners and Jarvis Square business owners. The Advisory Committee met three times to discuss service needs, successes/challenges, set the proposed SSA boundary upon renewal, and propose the maximum tax rate. An online Needs Assessment Survey gathered initial feedback about what priorities should be upon renewal.

Next steps of this process include gathering signature forms from property owners indicating support of the SSA, and formalizing the SSA District Plan.

Successes of SSA #19

Erin then spoke about SSA successes raised through outreach and engagement, including events like Chalk Fest, rebate programs, beautification efforts, holiday décor and public art.

Needs Assessment Survey

Next, Erin shared initial results of the SSA #19 Needs Assessment Survey. A critical piece in the renewal process, this survey was distributed to local businesses and property owners, employees, neighborhood residents, customers, and other stakeholders. Results from the survey inform service and program priorities going forward and will be used to determine the budget and areas for improvement for the renewed SSA #19. The survey is currently open on the [website](https://rpba.org/ssa-19-renewal): rpba.org/ssa-19-renewal

The survey was shared on social media networks, in RPBA newsletters; and via e-mail communication with businesses and SSA Commissioners. Local businesses, property owners, residents, and visitors to the SSA area were all encouraged to take it. The goal of the survey was to understand priorities and opportunities as they relate to SSA services and program.



More small businesses with a commitment to improving and participating in the community - sol café, smack dab and common cup do a great job with this.

I think investment in small business is crucial; we want the neighborhood to keep its vibrant, diverse identity intact without gentrification.

More safe social gathering locations and events (e.g. coffee houses, bars, block parties, plays in the park)

Help current businesses become more professional and well known (retail, restaurant, entertainment) to draw those outside of the Rogers Park area.

I would love to **holiday lighting carried over to Jarvis Square. Improvement of crime and safety** as this often deters me from visiting Howard more often.

Anything art oriented! The pole designs would be wonderful to distinguish Jarvis square as a place to visit.

Coordination of neighborhood marketing, raising our profile and delivering quality community experiences to **showcase our neighborhood as a destination for visitors and residents to support our small business.**

Preliminary takeaways include:

- Over 75% of respondents are property owners and/or residents
- Participants presented a mix of neighborhood newcomers and long-standing residents —45% have been in Rogers Park between 1 and 5 years, and 29% for over 20 years
- Top Ranked SSA Service Priorities:
 - Small Business Improvement Program
 - Tenant Retention / Attraction
 - Litter Removal / Service
 - Security / Surveillance
- Open Response comments about services and program needs provided far more ideas, estimating 100+ additional insights in total:

Costs + Service Priorities

Scott Goldstein then spoke about the SSA levy and tax rate, noting the Advisory Committee has recommended no change to the maximum tax rate of 0.833% at the April 15th, 2020 Advisory Committee meeting. This rate would cost approximately \$320 per year per \$50,000 in EAV for properties in the SSA. In the short term, the Advisory Committee has recommended not raising the levy for 2021 due to COVID which means the rate will be lower than the maximum rate (it is currently 0.6398%).

SSA #19, managed by RPBA, has consistently been fiscally prudent, generally coming in below budget and providing the opportunity for carryover funds. The Howard Street SSA 2020 budget focused the majority of funds on Customer Attraction and Public Way Aesthetics, which includes events, marketing, holiday décor, rebate programs, snow and litter removal, and landscaping.

Next Steps

1) Gather signatures

As was shared at the April 15th meeting, DPD will accept the required Support Signature Forms via email or via regular mail. The signature forms are posted to the website. The purpose of these signatures is to show that property owners support the renewal of SSA #19 and recognize the cost and benefit to them. Signatures must come from the taxpayer of record, property owner, or a certified agent of the property.

DPD requires a minimum of 20% of property owners to sign in support of the SSA. There are 235 total PINs (parcels) in the SSA boundary, so 47 PINs will constitute the total 20% of signatures needed. Note: if a property owner has multiple PINs, such as a condo PIN and a parking space PIN, each PIN counts for one signature. If the property is owned by the same entity but is registered to a different name, different forms are required for each property.

3) Submit Signatures in August

The deadline for signatures has been extended to mid-August. SSA #19 needs signatures in support of SSA renewal from at least 47 PINs (20% of 235 PINs) to be eligible for renewal. Signatures must be the taxpayer or owner, not the tenant. Electronic signatures are permitted. The signature form is available at www.rpba.org/ssa-19-renewal and must be signed and emailed or mailed back to RPBA. If a taxpayer owns multiple properties, they must fill out a form for each UNLESS the properties are adjacent.

4) Prepare Application / District Plan

The SSA District Plan, a key component of the Application for renewal, is underway and will be finalized in August after the community meetings.

5) Legislative Process in the Fall

Despite current challenging circumstances, the goal is to prepare the SSA renewal application and participate in the legislative process in the Fall of 2020. This will include a Public Hearing regarding the renewal of SSA #19 in the Fall, likely September or October prior to the SSA being adopted by City Council.

Q & A

Q: I am looking for more information for new businesses who may be planning to open up within this SSA -- what additional tax incentives or other programs are available and how is eligibility determined?"

The Business Improvement Program is the longest running resource for businesses in SSA #19. It provides a 50% match, up to \$5,000, for external street-facing improvements—windows, doors, signage, awnings etc. The program is open to new and long-standing businesses and applications are voted on by commissioners. Businesses have used the program to assist with funding for energy efficiency or ADA improvements for their entryway. There have not been any applications this year, so there is still funding available. Additional rebate programs were approved in March to support businesses during the pandemic. One provided a 50% match up to \$500 for businesses pivoting to e-commerce, such as creating or modernizing a website, absorbing fees for delivery services such as Grubhub. A second rebate provides assistance for safety and sanitation expenses.

Q: When are signature forms due?

The goal is to gather signature forms by August 15th. The City will continue to be flexible and work with the SSA, but the ultimate deadline is the legislature process in the fall. There were two public hearings that must take place as part of the renewal process, the first of which is planned for a September Council meeting. The ordinance to pass the renewal must occur in December.

Q: Once the SSA is renewed, including additional properties in Jarvis Square, is there an option to exit the SSA after a period of time?

The term the SSA #19 is seeking is 15 years. It is the intent of the SSA to enhance the business climate and provide value to every business and taxpayer. The SSA encourages anyone who is interested to get involved and become a commissioner as it is the commission that sets the rate each year. Being a commissioner ensures that property owners have a direct impact on planning and budgeting for SSA services and programs. SSA #19 currently has vacancies on the Commission—any interested business owners or property owners are welcome to apply to become a commissioner.

The meeting ended with a discussion on how businesses can encourage their building owners to support the SSA. The local businesses attending the meeting were very interested in reaching out to their building owners to provide support for the SSA through signatures. Cindy Plante and Scott Goldstein offered to provide any information that would be helpful to any building owners and/or businesses that would be helpful to understand how the SSA has been effective and how to get involved.