

SHERIDAN ROAD



SSA #54 Renewal

July 1, 2020 | Virtual Meeting via Zoom | Community Meeting #1

Attendees:

Business and Public Members

Siraj Asfahani, SSA #54 Renewal Advisory Committee
Christine Bell, SSA #54 Renewal Advisory Committee*
Scott Eggers, resident
Heather Hill, SSA #54 Renewal Advisory Committee*
Alea Huggins, resident
Keith Lord, SSA #54 Renewal Advisory Committee
Sara Lukens, SSA #54 Renewal Advisory Committee*

**Current SSA 54 Commissioner*

RPBA, City of Chicago and Consultants

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
Francie Sallinger, Associate, Teska Associates, Inc.

On July 1st, 2020 the first of two community meetings regarding the reconstitution (renewal) of SSA #54 was held via Zoom from 5:00-6:00 pm. There will be a second meeting on July 14th at 8:30-9:30 am which will cover the same information. It is accessible via the same Zoom Meeting Number 830 0320 2463 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
 - RPBA Facebook Events, Rogers Park Community Facebook Pages
- 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 #54, 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 #54 renewal website: www.rpba.org/ssa-54-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.

Sheridan Road SSA #54 Renewal

The Sheridan Road SSA #54 was established in 2012. It is set to expire in 2021 unless renewed. The SSA provides a number of services, such as: snow and litter removal, holiday decorations and landscaping maintenance; outdoor amenities like bike racks; events such as Summer on the Plaza; and provides direct business support services, such as façade rebate programs and 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. Over the course of eight years, SSA #54 has focused on activating the Sheridan Road corridor through business retention, outdoor activities, and streetscape beautification that serves as an amenity for residents and attracts visitors and customers to the area. If the SSA is not renewed, all programs and services currently funded through the SSA will cease.

Cindy reviewed the proposed boundary (see map below) for the Sheridan Road SSA upon renewal, which is the same as existing boundaries.



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 for the City of Chicago. Mark highlighted the fact the establishment and renewal of SSAs are locally initiated processes. City requirements are there 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 additional interested residents and 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 the priorities should be for the district upon renewal.

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

Successes of SSA #54

Erin then spoke about local SSA successes as shared by businesses and stakeholders during outreach. Main highlights include: holiday lights along the corridor, Summer on the Plaza events, and beautification efforts like landscaping and banners on the street poles. Referring to the banners, one business owner noted: "Having businesses on both sides of Devon, I love those banners – they help to bridge the divide between Rogers Park and Edgewater (it's not the Rio Grande!)."

Needs Assessment Survey

Next, Erin shared initial results of the SSA #54 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 #54. The survey is currently open and [can be completed here](#).

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. Preliminary takeaways include:

- Respondents were a mix of residents (58%), business and property owners (30%), and other neighborhood stakeholders (10%)
- More owners (73%) than renters (27%)
- Even split between newer and long-time residents/businesses
- Top Ranked SSA Service Priorities:
 - Litter Removal
 - Community Events
 - Small Business Improvement Fund (SBIF)
 - Security / Surveillance
 - Landscape Program
 - Business Improvement Program
- Open Response comments about services and program needs provided more detailed ideas, excerpts included below

Maintenance + Beautification

"Landscaping on Sheridan is very inconsistent. Some of the anchor businesses on the strip have none (i.e. rocks and gravel, no grass, plants or planters, etc.). I would really like to see this improve."

"Business attraction, business retention, beautification, litter removal, public art, economic development in general."

"Snow removal on sidewalks and activities."

"Security, litter removal, and public art."

Small Business Support

"Help with securing/funding for sidewalk permits; grants for businesses!"

"I think top priorities for me are always safety, the arts, and small businesses. I think by growing those programs it will also help with attracting and keeping residents."

"The vacancies and turnover of businesses along Sheridan is a problem. Rent reductions and concerted promotion of the businesses up and down Sheridan Rd. is needed badly."

Events + Decor

"Seasonal Decor is pretty much at the top of my list. Sheridan and Devon is a very high traffic entry for those who travel north. Wanting it to look good at all times is a must."

"Streetscape and pedestrian improvements, more public art (would love to see murals on some of the big empty walls on Sheridan), maintaining outdoor events in summer."

Costs + Service Priorities

Scott Goldstein then spoke about the SSA levy and tax rate, which the SSA #54 Advisory Committee discussed in depth over the course of two meetings. Weighing the current challenges that businesses are facing while also recognizing a need to think long-term and plan for the future, the Committee's recommendation is two-fold: there should be no increase in the tax levy in 2021 due to the current economic challenges. The Committee also recommended that a long-term view is taken considering that the renewal is for the next 15 years. The SSA may, in the future, want to undertake larger projects as the economy gets better. It therefore recommended a maximum tax rate for the SSA to be 0.0075 (0.75%). Each year, a new SSA budget is prepared and reviewed and approved by the SSA Commission and City of Chicago. If the increase is over 5% there must be an additional community meeting.

As an illustrative example of what this maximum rate would cost SSA property owners, Scott shared two examples: a property with a \$50,000 EAV would pay \$375 per year (\$31.50/month) and a property with \$100,000 EAV would pay \$750 per year (\$62.50/month). Again, 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 0.3798%).

SSA #54, managed by RPBA, has consistently been fiscally prudent, generally coming in below budget and providing the opportunity for carryover funds. The Sheridan Road 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) Community Meeting #2

The next community meeting will be held on July 14th at 8:30 am via Zoom (login and call-in details are the same, available on at www.rpba.org/ssa-54-renewal). This second meeting will cover the same content, but is available for those unable to attend the first meeting.

3) Gather signatures

The deadline for signatures has been extended to August. SSA #54 needs signatures in support of SSA renewal from at least 26 PINs (20% of 126 total PINs) to be eligible for renewal (PIN stands for property index number). Signatures must be the taxpayer or owners, not the tenant. Electronic signatures are permitted. The signature form is available at www.rpba.org/ssa-54-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 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 #54 in the Fall, likely September or October prior to the SSA being adopted by City Council.

Q & A

Does leftover budget in the SSA roll over the following year?

Yes, funds can be carried over from year to year but carryover cannot exceed 25% of the total budget.

Are larger businesses encouraged to participate in the SSA (such as Target, Hampton Inn)?

Yes, any taxpaying property within the SSA must pay the property tax. It is part of the property tax bill, just like any other line item (i.e. fire department, schools, etc.). Also, all businesses are encouraged to be involved in the SSA, and the general manager of the Hampton Inn recently joined as a commissioner.

Holiday lights are a big hit (and obviously a budget tick) but they are handled haphazardly. Our building has declined participation due to this. Are there plans to improve this? Electric service being the main problem here.

Cindy stated that they are working on finding a solution to this –the problem is that Sheridan Road does not have outdoor power access, so individual property owners have to consent to allow for the lights to plug into their power source. For this reason, the SSA didn't do the holiday lights on trees this past year but is still able to do canopy lights at the CTA plaza because there is power access there.

As a condo association, how can we see a return on the SSA investment for our property? Snow removal has been the main return and that is off the list year.

The SSA really wants to have condo owners be part of this process, sharing their priorities for SSA services and programs. There are 61 condo parcels, providing 8% of the tax base—this means that commercial properties are contributing a large share to the SSA budget and condo owners are seeing their investment leveraged tenfold. Also, state legislation was amended to ensure that there is at least one seat on each SSA Commission reserved for a resident. Overall, the best way to see your priorities reflected in the SSA budget is to get involved. As for snow removal, the Commission decided to

discontinue that service this year in order to expand landscape plantings across the corridor. Many properties along Sheridan pay for a private snow removal service that results in a large portion of the sidewalks getting cleared, while all property owners are required to clear the snow per city ordinance. If people want snow removal to be provided in the future, that issue can be revisited.

What is the current number of businesses in the SSA?

There are between 40 and 50 businesses in SSA #54.

What is the process if we want to share ideas for improvements?

SSA meetings are always open to the public – the commissioners are also listed on the website if anyone wants to reach out to any individually. Currently our meetings are held virtually, but typically held in person. Anyone is welcome to reach out to the SSA at any time to propose projects or ideas for the SSA.