



President's Message

A quarterly publication about your community

Neighbors' Rights

Hard to believe it is November already and 2006 is just around the corner. As I look back on 2005 for Lincoln Central Association, the **dominant issue all year has been zoning**. Lincoln Central has become the neighborhood where every building project seems to request an exception or variance to current zoning laws. Even the new zoning laws that were just enacted in November of 2004 have not slowed the number of requests.

I frequently hear comments about "owner's rights" when zoning issues come up. It seems to be the American way that owning property gives you the right to do whatever you want with that property. Imagine in the old west trying to influence a local rancher about the size and look of his or her new house: depending on how you made your comment, you might have a bullet flying past your head. Today in Chicago, **zoning laws control what you can build on your property**. You can build the ugliest house you want, but you do have to stay within zoning laws regarding how large and tall your house can be and where it sits on your land – unless you ask for exceptions and variances to those laws. That's when I think neighbor's rights come into play.

Today's system is set up so that if you are asking for an exception or variance to the current laws, you first have to **notify your neighbors**. It is either a letter to the immediate neighbors or a sign on the front of the property announcing you are asking a favor of the city and the neighborhood. The Zoning Department also notifies our Alderman who in turn notifies Lincoln Central of these requests. These are very good things.

Unfortunately, some individuals circumvent this process, and that, I think, is wrong. Too many projects in our area have not come to their neighbors through Lincoln Central and its Zoning Committee – and we need that to change.

We continue to work with the Alderman's office so that all requests for an exception or variance are routed through Lincoln Central, including requests for demolition permits. But you can help. If you receive a letter about a project near your house asking for a zoning change or if you see the "orange" signs announcing a zoning request, contact Lincoln Central (www.lincolncentral.org). Many times immediate neighbors are asked to agree to certain exceptions in exchange for some work being done to their property. **Let us help you negotiate and understand the implications** to you and your neighbors if you grant these exceptions. Even after a project has been started, if you have questions or concerns about the project, let us know. **We are there to help.**

A few last comments. **It is our right to live in a clean neighborhood.** Graffiti and posted signs infringe on that right. If you see graffiti, call 311 to notify the city. They are great about sending someone out to remove it. If it is on your property, many hardware stores sell "Graffiti Off". It does a very good job of removing almost any graffiti. Regarding signs on posts and fences: take them down. You have that right. A city ordinance makes it illegal to post signs on city property. Don't let our neighborhood become the Sunday want ads.

As the year comes to a close, Lincoln Central will again host our annual membership meeting on December 8th, where we will elect our officers and Board members for next year. Check our web page for the location. Please join us. It's a great way to meet neighbors.

Richard Rausch
President



Spotlight

Oz Park Update

By David Varnerin

Oz Park is one of the most popular parks in Lincoln Central and a favorite recreation destination for area residents. Created in 1967 by the Chicago Park District, this 13-acre park was named in honor of **L. Frank Baum**, the **author of the Wizard of Oz**, who for a time lived a short distance from the park. The park has recreational facilities including basketball and tennis courts, a jogging path and the Melamerson Athletic Field. Other amenities include numerous picnic tables, a large children's playground area and the Emerald City Gardens.

The park is attractive to many groups: on **Sunday mornings, a group of moms play soccer**. Once monthly, **single parents** meet at the park (www.singleparents.meetup.com). The Chicago Park District offers a variety of programs that use or start from Oz Park, including a **senior walk**, twice weekly in the evening (www.chicagoparkdistrict.com).



Over the years, the park has benefited from the active involvement of area residents. In 1988, the Oz Park playground was constructed along the north edge of the park, at Webster Ave., funded by donations from area residents and businesses. A large plaque outside the play area lists the donors. The Oz Park Advisory Council spearheaded the creation of the beautiful Emerald City Gardens, near the northeast corner of the park, at Webster Ave. and Larrabee St. The gardens, which are maintained by Oz Park Advisory Council members, provide a quiet area within Oz Park for relaxation and contemplation.

The largest single contributor to Oz Park was **Dorothy Melamerson**, whose 1994 bequest made possible the reconstruction of the large athletic field just north of Lincoln Park High School. Dorothy, a long time area resident, was a gym teacher in the Chicago Public Schools and was interested in the physical well being of children. Through consistent savings, a modest lifestyle and wise investing, Dorothy left \$900,000 to upgrade park facilities and begin youth sports programs in 43rd Ward parks. \$600,000 went into the 1996 and 1997 renovation of the Oz Park athletic field, which was named the Melamerson Athletic Field in her honor.

The park has also benefited by placement of **statues of characters from the Wizard of Oz**, made possible through the generosity of area residents, community organizations and businesses. In 1995, the Lincoln Park Chamber of Commerce placed the **Tin Man** statue, created by noted Old Town artist John Kearney, at the corner of Webster Ave. and Larrabee St. In 2001, the Oz Park Advisory Council organized a fundraising drive for the **Cowardly Lion** statue at the corner of Larrabee St. and Dickens Ave. The Council's most recent fundraising program resulted in the **Scarecrow** statue in the Emerald City Gardens, unveiled earlier this year. The Council is seeking funds for a fourth statue, of **Dorothy**, and for maintenance of existing statues. They're selling **personalized engraved bricks for a Yellow Brick Road**; deadline is Dec. 31 and installation is set for the spring. Call (773) 243-2593 or look for forms in the park, near the Scarecrow statue.

Individuals interested in getting involved in efforts to benefit Oz Park can telephone Kathy Jordan at (312) 664-0439 or Lincoln Central Association (Voice Mail: (312) 409-2783) or email Lincoln Central at Rick_Rausch@msn.com.

Lincoln Central
board member
David Varnerin
wrote this Oz
Park history
for the LCA
website, [www.
lincolncentral.org](http://www.lincolncentral.org)



Chalkboard, Inc., a preschool in Lincoln Central, is housed in a sunny storefront at the base of a four-story brick Victorian apartment building on Menomonee Street. Thirty

years ago, the space held a barber shop, and remnants of its former use are still to be found: there's a thick marble baseboard, and electric outlets are set in a row about waist high, and just below cutouts that once held mirrors. When the sun hits the big glass windows at a certain angle, you can see the words Barber Shop, says **Sherry Kopka**, Chalkboard's owner and director since 1978.

Back then, there was still a butcher shop across the alley and the Old Town Market around the corner. The Buddhist Temple was newly constructed, but the townhouses at St. Michael's Court had not been built yet. Chalkboard students, she recalls, played in its empty lot.

Chalkboard is a one-room schoolhouse for children age two-and-a-half to five. No more than 20 children are in each of its half-day sessions. It's a play-based preschool – no computers or television or other gadgets – where children learn how to deal with other same-age children. **"Kids this age need to play,"** says Ms. Kopka. "All the research goes back to that."

The storefront's deep window-ledges hold wooden train tracks and a simple dollhouse that's repainted every few years by a former parent. In the back of the space is a climbing structure. Outside along the parkway is a sandbox. And Chalkboard's wide metal stoop provides more kid-friendly space, for a story read outside, or the annual school photo.



Sherry Kopka,
Chalkboard's owner
and director

At 22, Ms. Kopka came to Chicago from southern Illinois. It was 1975, and she taught first at a Montessori school and then at a Chicago public school. She had no plans to teach at – or own – a preschool. But she took a job at Chalkboard, and within a year, bought it. Colleague **Jane Kristak** has worked at the school since 1978, too. Their children attended Chalkboard and then neighborhood grade schools, making it a whole lot easier to be a working mom, recalls Ms. Kopka, 52.

Neighborhood parents and children have fond memories of Chalkboard, and stop in regularly to update Sherry and Jane on grade school triumphs, high school events or college plans. Some reminisce over a certain Mother's Day tea, when the children, who'd been instructed to wash the cut vegetables, served their mothers carrot sticks tasting strongly of soap.

In the summer, Ms. Kopka hires her former preschoolers – now teenagers and college students – to work at Chalkboard's summer camp. That single daily summer session, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., allows teachers and their little student-campers to walk to Oz Park for a picnic lunch. Closer to the school, Bauler Playground and Ogden Park provide outdoor play opportunities for Chalkboard students.

With the city bursting with families, Chalkboard had to institute an admissions waiting list five years ago. Admission has always been "first come, first served," although siblings have always had priority. It's hard for families to find spaces because there aren't that many quality preschools, observes Ms. Kopka. There's day care, she notes, but only a handful of half-day preschool programs. Students come from all over the city.

"Every day is new," says Ms. Kopka, explaining her ongoing desire to teach preschoolers, even after 27 years. "They're like little sponges, and I have a ball."

The Chalkboard Inc.
450 W. Menomonee St. (312) 266-2573
www.chalkboardpreschool.com

Lincoln Central Assoc. hosted a neighborhood meeting Tuesday, Oct. 18, so residents could learn more about a **proposed**

zoning change, from R4.5 to R5, within a section of Lincoln Central (roughly, Dickens St. to the north, Lincoln Ave. to the east, North Ave. to the south and Larrabee St. to the west). The city proposes the change in the hopes of putting to rest a lengthy lawsuit brought by a property owner.

About 80 residents attended the evening meeting, held at Lincoln Park High School. Ald. Vi Daley called for and ran the meeting, as she was set to propose the change to the city's zoning committee Oct. 27. Also in attendance was Tom Smith, the city's zoning administrator, as were several city lawyers who've been handling the lawsuit.

Mr. Smith explained that, under the city's new zoning codes (2004), **a change from R4.5 to R5 would be minimal: building heights, setbacks and parking spaces per unit would remain the same.** The chief difference? Owners could fill more of a lot (2.00 FAR, or about 6,250 square feet, plus a basement, on a standard 25 foot by 125 foot lot, vs. the current 1.70 FAR, or about 5,312 square feet, plus a basement, on a standard lot.) Too, under R5, backyards could be raised six feet.

Mr. Smith defined **"green space"** as the open area between a dwelling and a garage, even if it were raised and completely bricked. Garage roof decks are also considered green space.

Under the new zoning code, **front-yard pits have been eliminated**, and "green space" must be indicated on plans for the first time in Chicago history, Mr. Smith noted.

Residents voiced many concerns. Mostly, residents noted that with exceptions granted by the alderman's office, houses in the neighborhood were already completely filling lots under the current R4.5 zoning. Neighbors are losing sunlight, air, trees and other greenery because of densely built homes. With no

permeable space in many backyards, there's nowhere for rain water to soak into the ground. Too, residents noted that Mayor Richard M. Daley wants to make Chicago the greenest city in the country: upzoning that allows denser buildings and eliminates space for grass, groundcover and trees runs counter to that "greening" trend.

Other residents wanted information about the lawsuit, and why the city wanted to settle. The plaintiff, Albert C. Hanna, was at the meeting and spoke briefly. Among his points: population had fallen nearly 40,000 in Lincoln Park, and denser housing was need to ensure a stable workforce for the city. A resident pointed out that Mr. Hanna had owned a group of apartments at Dickens Ave. and Larrabee St., which he recently sold to developers, who then built large single-family homes on that land.

A lawyer for the city said the current R4.5 zoning is "defensible." The city is preparing to go to trial, but wants to avoid the expense. Mr. Hanna's property at 1742-1750 N. Mohawk St. had been zoned R5 in the past, so the the thinking is that if R5 were restored, Mr. Hanna would drop his lawsuit. But no such agreement had been made, and many residents questioned the city's desire to upzone without an agreement.

A show of hands was taken. Of the 80 people in attendance, two voted in favor of the upzoning to R5. Ald. Daley offered to postpone the proposal to the city's zoning committee.

Call Ald. Daley's office, (773) 327-9111, with support or concerns. Too, Mr. Smith urged residents to put in writing their position on the proposed change.

Ald. Vi Daley, 43rd Ward
735 W. Wrightwood Ave.
Chicago, IL 60614

Tom Smith, Zoning Administrator
City of Chicago Zoning Dept.
121 N. LaSalle St. Room 905
Chicago, IL 60602

At its meeting Oct. 27, the LCA board voted (7-2) to maintain R4.5 zoning in the parcel of Lincoln Central the city seeks to upzone.

Dickens Holiday Festival

The first annual Dickens Holiday Festival is set for **Friday, Dec. 16**, 5:30 to 10:30 pm., on Dickens St. at Lincoln Ave. and Cleveland Ave. Carolers, minstrels, magicians, good food, libations and more. Thanks to sponsors **Harris Realty Group** and **Four Farthings Tavern & Grill**. More thanks to **Ald. Vi Daley and staff**, and the **Mayor's Office of Special Events**. And special thanks to **Richard Harris**, LCA board member and longtime Lincoln Central resident, who is chairing this fun family neighborhood event. Volunteers and contributions still needed: Call (773) 935-4430.

To coincide with the Dickens Holiday Festival, Lincoln Central is asking residents and business owners to "light up" for the holidays. Our streets are always a pleasure to stroll, but during winter, lights and seasonal decorations make those outings even more enjoyable. "Best in the neighborhood" will receive a prize from a local retailer.

LCA's Zoning and Planning Committee

LCA's zoning and planning committee was formed in 2003 to ensure an open and fair process for developers and homeowners. We are committed to the conservation of historic buildings, as they contribute to the uniqueness and desirability of our neighborhoods. Builders are urged to preserve facades and/or entire buildings. We look favorably on projects that are comparable in quality, scale, and design with the historic homes and commercial buildings that make up our distinctive streetscapes. We strongly recommend space for mature trees and other greenery in the front and rear of homes. We oppose walled-in breezeways and other elements which adversely affect light, views and access. Beautification has long been a stated part of Lincoln Central's mission.

We are a volunteer group of residents, approved by the LCA board. Our decisions are presented to the board, which approves them or asks us to reconsider, get more information, hold a public meeting, etc. Recommendations to the Alderman come from the LCA board.

LCA's zoning and planning committee meets monthly, the third Tuesday of the month, at 6 p.m., at Lincoln Park High School. Go to www.lincolncentral.org for dates. Meetings are open to the public.

Spotlight
Quiz
[Answer]

[ANSWER TO LAST ISSUE'S QUIZ]

Where in LCA's world can you find this architectural detail?

(Answer: Four Farthings at Cleveland/Dickens and Lincoln)



Join us!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Membership Type

- Family (2 Members) \$25.00
- Individual (1 Member) \$20.00
- Organization (1 Member) \$25.00
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Contribution

(includes membership)

- Patron \$50.00
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Address _____

City, State, Zip+4 _____

Daytime Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

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Please indicate your interests.

- Membership
- Newsletter/Public Relations
- Planning/Zoning
- Beautification/City Services
- Parking
- Fund Raising
- Safety/Security
- Community Relations
- Finance
- Parks
- Social Programs
- Schools

Send this completed Application, with your check, made payable to **Lincoln Central Association** to:

Membership Chair
Lincoln Central Assn.
P.O. Box 14306
Chicago, IL
60614-0306

Voice Mail
(312) 409-2783

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Spotlight

SPOTLIGHT QUIZ

Where in LCA's world can you find this architectural detail?

