



Jefferson Park Neighborhood Association (JPNA) Newsletter for Winter 2022

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What's New at the Old Firehouse?

By Robert Bank

The old firehouse at the corner of Lipps and Ainslie was once the new firehouse at Lipps and Ainslie. Well, actually, the street names weren't Lipps and Ainslie back in 1906 but, rather, Our St. and Grimm St. or, perhaps, it was Our St. and Short St., depending on which old maps you look at.

In 1889 the City of Chicago annexed the township of Jefferson as well as the townships of Lake, Lakeview and Hyde Park. In Jefferson Township was the Village of Jefferson, which already had a rudimentary firehouse built at this location in 1874. But, the growing city needed a new and better firehouse for the 20th century. The new firehouse would be aesthetically and functionally much better than the old firehouse and, in 1906, that new firehouse was built.

Through the decades, this firehouse witnessed many changes taking place: such as the elevating of the railroad tracks, the opening of a grand movie palace Gateway Theatre, its closing and its rebirth as the Copernicus Center, the building of a massive expressway right through the neighborhood, the extension of the CTA "L" to Jefferson Park and the building of its bus terminal.

In 1981, a new firehouse was built but, this time, not on the same lot. That new firehouse stands at the corner of Milwaukee and Wilson Avenue, across from Wilson Park.

The empty firehouse at Lipps and Ainslie became a Department of Streets and Sanitation building for a while, and it also was quickly set up as the temporary 45th Ward Alderman's office when Alderman Levar's regular office in Veterans Square flooded. Then, the building was closed completely and neglected almost to the point of ruin.

The building ended up in the City's Land Sale Program and bids for the property were made. Mr. Pomaville feels that his Ambrosia Development Co. won the bid because Ambrosia had done the most research and planning and that Ambrosia was the only bidder that had a long track record of completing building projects.

Pomaville paid the City \$208,000, which the City put in an escrow account for environmental remediation of lead paint and other hazards, so that the building would be safe for construction workers to enter.

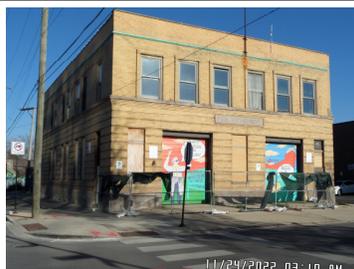
Pomaville expects to spend approximately \$2,000,000 to complete the reuse project. This will include an added third floor, set back so as not to interfere with the firehouse's original profile. The developer collaborated with Preservation Chicago, a non-profit historic preservation group, as well as the North West Chicago Historical Society on integrating the new design with the old. All in all, there will be eight, two-bedroom apartments as well as the restaurant brewery space on the first floor.

The remediation was completed but permit processing has been slow, due in part, to the fact that no records or original drawings of the 1906 firehouse property were found; everything must be reviewed, even the existing driveways are in question. What seems to be an alley behind the firehouse is actually a designated street, Avondale Avenue, so that brings in greater scrutiny than an alley would. And, certainly, the Covid pandemic didn't help. Surprises came up too, such as an underground fuel tank that had to be removed.

All these delays put the future commercial tenant, Lake Effect Brewing, in a bind as they needed to find new space before the lease expired on their current location. Lake Effect had to back out of the firehouse deal, leaving Pomaville without a tenant for the first-floor commercial space.
(Continued on Page 2)



Past View of Firehouse



Current View of Firehouse



Future Rendition of Firehouse



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Check Washing Scams

Using a process known as check washing, mail snatchers erase the ink on a check with chemicals found in common household cleaning products and then "reuse" the checks by rewriting them to themselves. Then when you check your bank statement, you see that your check went through and the amount matches. By then, weeks or months may have passed. You might have lost thousands of dollars. And just imagine if a criminal rewrites the check for an even higher amount than you wrote it for!

- Gel pens with black ink provide the best protection against check washing, since the gel-ink resists chemical stripping and contains pigments which permeate the fibers of the check itself.
- Print a return address on an envelope. Signatures can be traced, duplicated or forged.
- Do not put outgoing bills in your residential mailbox. If you are unable to leave your house, give the letter directly to a USPS mail carrier. Just remember though that mail carriers are working overtime due to manpower shortages and your mail may still be inadvertently misplaced. It's highly encouraged to use the next listed tip regularly.
- If you chose to pay by check, drop off the check directly inside your local post office.
- Check bank statements immediately after receiving them. If you fail to report check fraud within 30 days of receiving your monthly statement, the bank may not have to reimburse your loss.
- Ordering new checkbooks? Pick them up directly at your local bank branch or post office.
- Shred or burn cancelled checks. If you must keep the cancelled check secure those in a bank lock box or wall safe.
- Ditch your checks. Many banks have ways to pay on-line.

Empowering Communities for Public Safety Ordinance

*The City of Chicago passed the Empowering Communities for Public Safety (ECPS) ordinance in July 2021, creating 2 bodies: **Community Commission and District Councils**. The purpose is to have police oversight, accountability, and public safety in Chicago.*

The Community Commission was formed in August 2022 with seven interim members. Elected District Council Members take office in May 2023 and will nominate 14 candidates for the Community Commission, and the Mayor and City Council will select 7. They will have a 4-year term. Community Commission powers include playing a central role in hiring and firing the Police Superintendent, Police Board Members, COPA Chief Administrator, and many other responsibilities.

The District Councils will be created in Chicago's 22 police districts. Three people from each police district will be elected in regular municipal elections for a 4-year term. Candidates must live in the district in which they are running. The first election will be held on February 28, 2023. The District Council will have several key roles which include some of the following: nominating 14 candidates for the Community Commission; building strong connections between the police and the community, working to develop and expand restorative justice, providing community input to the Community Commission, and many others.

At the time of this writing, 3 candidates will be elected and 7 candidates have turned in signatures to the Board of Elections to run for 16th District Council. Three of the candidates who reside in the 45th Ward are JPNA President Colleen Murphy, Trisha Kannon and John Marcatante. The two candidates who reside in the 38th Ward are Daniel Butterworth and David Feller. The final two candidates who reside in the 41st Ward are Daniel Martin, and Colleen Dillon.

We encourage everyone to vote in the upcoming election on February 28, 2023.

For more information about the District Council, visit <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/ccpsa.html>

Firehouse (From Page 1)

Still, Tim Pomaville remains upbeat and enthusiastic. He explained to me some of the lengths that they are going through in restoring architectural details to as close as possible to the original. In one instance, he told of how they are trying to zoom in on old photographs to see the ornamental details of the triangular pediment that was originally on the front of the building, but was torn off in the 1950's or 60's. The first floor's interior walls' glazed bricks are in good shape, and Pomaville plans on keeping them as well as any other surviving details for the restaurant brewery area. "I really want people to be aware that they are sitting inside a real firehouse", said Pomaville. Work is expected to begin in Spring 2023.

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