



ROGERS PARK BUILDER

SUMMER 2003

www.rpbg.org

Sudanese Boys Tale Spurs RPBG's Marty Max to Build New Learning Center

Sometimes a supercharged tale of horror and woe can have unforeseen results. Such was the case at a recent Rogers Park Builders Group board meeting at which two "lost boys of the Sudan" told the sad tale of the torture and killings which faced thousands of Sudanese "lost boys" in fleeing their poverty-stricken nation. Many of them came to the United States and a few wound up in Chicago under the sheltering wings of the St. Paul of the Woods Episcopal Church.

RPBG vice president Marty Max was so moved by the tales, that with the help of his firm MLC Properties, he vowed to build a sorely needed learning center at the church to serve as the site of a school at which several of the Sudanese young men could be taught computer and language skills – skills which could help them to land jobs.



Several of the "Lost Sudanese Boys" adopted by St. Paul's by the Woods Episcopal Church are seen with Father John Heschle in the new learning center built specifically by Marty Max/MLC Properties to teach the boys computer and language skills. Left to right are Father Heschle, Peter, John, and Stephen.

Working several nights a week and Saturdays for better than two weeks, Marty and his crew of workmen quickly turned a basement with walls in which the paint was chipped and which had suffered water damage, to a center which they could be proud of. They installed new outlets to accommodate several computers, and lighting to make the room light enough for a classroom, and carpeting to add to its warmth.

Altogether, Marty and his firm put an estimated \$7,000 into the project in manpower and equipment, but "it was worth every penny," said Marty.

Real Estate Tax Alert Or Check Your Property Tax Reassessment

It's that time again. Reassessment notices for Rogers Park were sent out around the first of June. The Cook County Assessor is reassessing all City of Chicago properties in our area during 2003. This reassessment will impact all real estate taxes paid in 2004 and in most cases will set the property assessment for three years. And almost inevitably in the process of reassessing hundreds of thousands of properties, errors will be made. These errors can be corrected through an appeals process available to all property owners. Successful appeals can generate significant tax savings.

The appeals process is initiated by filing a complaint with the Assessor's Office within 45 days after the mailing of the reassessment notices. The deadline for the initial complaint for Rogers Park is July 24. If you lose your appeal, complaints may also be filed at the Cook County Board of Review. If that complaint is unsuccessful, you can still file a final complaint with the Illinois Property Tax Appeal Board.

Single family homeowners should review the reassessment notices for errors. For example, the area marked "Your Property Characteristics" should include accurate information about the property such as building square footage, exterior construction, number of bathrooms, garage size, etc. Also, assessments of similar homes in the neighborhood are a good measure of whether the assessment is a fair valuation. The Assessor's website: www.cookcountyassessor.com, is a good way to make this comparison.

Condo owners will find it beneficial to be included in a collective appeal filed in behalf of the Association. One such collective appeal is likely to result in equitable assessments throughout the building and offers a greater chance of tax relief for all unit owners. This is preferred by assessing officials as it is less burdensome to consider one appeal instead of hundreds of independent units within a condo.

For owners of apartment buildings, commercial and industrial properties, it is recommended that an attorney familiar with the assessment process be contacted to evaluate the proposed valuation. Many real estate tax lawyers will review the assessment at no charge unless an appeal is filed and tax savings are obtained. Homeowners and owners of buildings with six units or less may choose to file the complaint on their own.

(continued on page 2)

New TIF for Loyola Area is a Distinct Possibility

Loyola University and property owners in south Rogers Park, with the assistance of DevCorp North, have initiated the process for establishing a TIF (Tax Increment Financing) district for their area. The area involved would encompass Sheridan Road from Devon Avenue on the south to Albion on the north and Devon/Sheridan Road from Clark Street to the Lake.

According to Wayne Magdziarz, Loyola's vice president for capital planning, the TIF is aimed at stimulating economic revitalization in an area that is designated as obsolete, overcrowded or dilapidated. Taxes generated by new developments within the TIF district that are higher than the estimated (EAV) Equalized Assessed Value are used as financial support for further development.

For example, the TIF established for the Howard and Clark area several years ago is credited with paving the way for the newly-built Gateway Retail and Transportation Center.

Said Magdziarz at a recent Builders Group Board meeting, the TIF could stimulate development in the important South Corridor of Rogers Park and promote economic development and needed services to the Loyola University community and its neighbors. Specifically, he said, it could:

- Enhance retail attractiveness
- Help to build a new graduate housing hall for Loyola students
- Add to the safety of west Sheridan Road
- Enhance safety near the Loyola El stop and Sheridan Road
- Assist in attracting a possible hotel development

Magdziarz added that in order to work with the community, a sub-committee of Loyola's newly-formed Lakeshore Advisory Council will work with the university, area residents and businesses to plan for the redevelopment of the area.

Howard Street Live Program Features Local Artists and Howard Street Merchants

"Howard Street Live" is the name of a new program kicked off in May by Howard Street merchants and artists in Rogers Park. The new program, sponsored by DevCorp North and the Howard SSA, is being introduced in several phases. First, several Rogers Park artists are displaying large digital photos of their artwork in the windows of vacant storefronts on Howard Street. These include Karen Kain, Amy Westgard, Steve Grant, Selena Awolyeye and Jason Crawford.

Another phase of the project calls for the installation of new banners to hang from street poles west of the CTA viaduct. It is expected that the banners will be installed this summer.

("Real Estate Tax Alert" continued from cover)

Owners can visit another site, www.cookcountytreasurer.com, to view assessed valuation and other information regarding comparable properties in the area to decide whether the building is uniformly assessed compared to their neighbors. Lack of uniformity is the most common reason cited in most appeals.

Don't miss the chance to lower your property taxes for the next three years. A small window of opportunity is available if you act promptly once you receive our reassessment notices. One attorney who concentrates his practice in real estate taxation is Edwin M. Wittenstein, a partner in the Chicago law firm of Worsak & Vihon, P.C. He serves as a sponsor for the Builders Group.

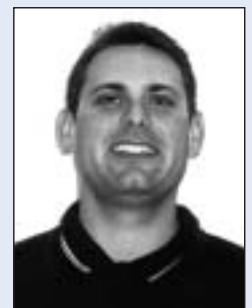
Andy Goodman: No Flash in the Pan

Since joining the Rogers Park Builders Group about two years ago, Andy Goodman has proven to be one of the more active and committed members of the group and for that reason he is our neighbor of the month.

Andy is married and the father of a two-year-old son, Toby. In his business life, Andy is a partner with Ari Golsen, and Victor Michel of the Wolcott Group, which has property scattered throughout the North Side. About two years ago Andy and his company, took over seven of the notorious Kakvand properties throughout Rogers Park. The buildings, for the most part rundown and unoccupied, had been part of a multi-million dollar scheme in which Kakvand and his associates had bilked millions of dollars out of banks scattered throughout the country in a complex real estate scam.

Andy and his associates were able to acquire the properties and after thoroughly cleaning up and rehabbing each unit, were quickly able to dispose of just about all of the buildings. Currently, they still own one of the properties located at 7633-39 N. Greenview and have moved their offices there. They have rehabbed this former problem building and have successfully converted it to market rate rentals with excellent tenants. Andy says that this has had a very stabilizing effect on a formerly troublesome block.

A graduate of Indiana University, where he majored in history and political science, Andy has been associated as a partner with Wolcott for about seven years now. Prior to that he was with JDI Realty and Heitman Capital Management. Last year in recognition of their efforts in cleaning up the Greenview building, Wolcott received a special award from the Rogers Park Community Council.



Currently, Andy is chairing the RPBG Outreach Committee, which he described as serving as a bridge to other community groups active in Rogers Park. From his viewpoint, Andy feels that the Builders Group's primary value lies in opening a dialogue between building owners in Rogers Park and creating a commitment among them to the community.

He sees as a primary focus of the group, cleaning up problem areas of Rogers Park, and working with community groups in so doing. Take a look at him now. You'll be hearing a lot more of Andy Goodman in the future.

TERRA CASA 1607-1609 W. Estes & 7076-7078 N. Ashland

Creative Design's newest Rogers Park venture features 12 fully rehabbed condos offering Creative Design's signature finishes: imported Italian cabinet components, granite, stainless steel appliances and cedar trim. This building has a set-off loft style floor plans in a tudor-style, vintage building. Look for their grand opening in August 2003. One-three bedroom, one/two bath units, 750-1,200 square feet, priced from \$179,000 to \$263,000. Call Sharon Kozak or Gayle Alexander at (847) 316-8057 for details. Coldwell Banker residential brokerage.

FARGO COURTYARD CONDOMINIUMS 1530-36 W. Fargo

A majestic, turn-of-the-century courtyard building marketed by Mak Browne Associates, melds vintage elegance with modern amenities. A meticulous rehab of 26 one and two-bedroom units, this project is almost sold out. Only one unit remains. Originally priced from \$118,000 to \$173,000 for two bedroom/one bath, prices have increased twice. The remaining two-bedroom unit lists at \$187,000.

As the Fargo project nears completion, Mak Browne looks forward to its latest Rogers Park offerings:

THE LAKEWOOD CONDOMINIUMS 6827-29 N. Lakewood

A stately 1920's building with nine stunning simplex and duplex homes. Prices start at \$179,000 for a one bedroom/one bath, \$289,000 for three bedroom/three bath.

THE ALBION CHICAGO CONDOMINIUMS 1330-32 W. Albion

Seven luxury two-bedroom/two bath simplex and duplex homes in red brick center-entrance 1920s building. With five sold before model, two 2-bedroom/2-bath units are available at \$274,900 to \$284,000

THE SEELEY OF EAST RIDGE CONDOMINIUMS 7400 N. Seeley

Twenty-three units with a variety of layouts in a yellow brick 1920s building. Prices start at \$119,900 for two-bedroom/one-bath garden unit to \$219,900 for a two-bedroom/two-bath.

For information on any of these prestige units, call Michelle Browne at (773)604-7111, ext. 227.

KIT DEVELOPMENT 7321-23 N. Honore

This award-winning developer opened their second six-flat at 7321-23 N. Honore last month. Their first building on that block at 7311-13 N. Honore has already sold four units. The two-bedroom, two-bath property features marble master baths with steamer shower, jacuzzi second baths, 42-inch maple cabinets, stainless appliances and granite, laundry with large deck and parking. Priced to sell at \$250,000 although one unit in the 7313 building is still available at \$240,000. The three-bedroom, three-bath duplexes are selling for \$315,000.

Terrapin Properties, a joint venture with F & P Development, has begun marketing three buildings in Rogers Park. Terrapin was the developer of the 61-unit courtyard building at Sheridan and Greenleaf. The new buildings are at Farwell/Greenview, Jonquil/Greenview and Wolcott/Lunt with a total of 76 new affordable condominiums. Units have new cabinets, granite, stainless, laundry & hardwood floors. The one and two-bedroom units are priced at between \$140,000-199,000.

Besides these properties, RE/MAX NorthCoast Realty is marketing another affordable 32-unit development at Estes & Sheridan. Units have separate heat/air, new cabinets, granite, stainless and hardwood floors. One and two-bedroom units are priced between \$159,000-199,000. For information on any of the above properties, contact Connie Abels at RE/MAX NorthCoast at (773)353-9180.

Aronson to Go with Scaled-Down Pinewood Inn Conversion

A proposal of Rich Aronson's Camelot Realty to convert the Pinewood Inn at 2306-10 Touhy Avenue to an 18-unit condo development with two affordable housing set-asides, has been turned down by 49th ward Alderman Joe Moore in the face of stiff community opposition.

Under terms of the proposal, Aronson planned to erect a four-story building with 18 units, modified from the original concept of 21 units because of community opposition. (Existing zoning would allow for possibly 14 units). It would be no more than 50 feet high, with retail space on the ground floor. The residential portion behind the retail space as well as the upper floors would have five foot side yards. Also called for under the proposal was an elevator and more than 24 parking spaces, or nearly 1.5 spaces per unit. To effect the proposal would have required a zoning change from the current B2-2 to B2-3.

As this edition went to press, Ald. Moore decided to turn the proposal down. Much of the opposition may have been due to the fact that several other four-floor buildings are within a radius of a few blocks of the proposed development, as well as community opposition to a zoning variance allowing increased density in exchange for affordable units.

The set asides which Aronson refers to as "voluntary work force housing" are pegged to sell for \$150,000 each under Mayor Daley's CPAN (Chicago Partnership for Affordable Housing). The program provides home ownership opportunities to working families in market rate developments who would otherwise be unable to afford such homes. Eligible purchasers include families with incomes up to 100 percent of the area median income of \$75,400 for a family of four who are either first-time homebuyers or who have not owned a home within the past three years. Other units in the condo development would sell for between \$250,000 to \$320,000 each.

Aronson, a Rogers Park resident for the past nine years, has through his firm, Camelot, been involved in several other multi-unit properties in Rogers Park at 1633 W. Estes and 6976-78 N. Ridge as well as other developments in the Lakeview and Edgewater districts.

Aronson emphasized that despite the rejection of his proposal, Camelot will still put up at least a four-story, 13 or 14-unit building on the Pinewood property, with the first floor reserved for retail. While the conversion will most likely involve condo units, Rich noted that the building may be offered as rental units depending on the economy.

Aronson's proposal would have been the first attempt by a local developer to voluntarily set aside affordable housing units (in exchange for increased density).

Farmers Markets Looks for Record Number of Shoppers This Year

This year's Farmers Markets are planned to far surpass last year's and then some. With a budget expected to far surpass that of last year's, personnel of DevCorp North, the sponsoring agency, have contacted new farmers to recruit new growers and to contact local farm bureaus and farm extensions. To add to the visual appearance, horizontal banners, parking signage and thirty-two tents with uniform signage have been ordered. And local artists have created giant stand-alone artwork vegetables, cows, and horses to add new zest to the event.

The goal of the organizers is to increase the number of growers, including hopefully those who grow mushrooms, herbs, organic produce, vegetables, farm-raised fish and meat, eggs, honey, and cheese. Add to this the number of restaurants, cafés and food purveyors, from both the Devon Avenue corridor and East Rogers Park, who are expected to exhibit at the markets and you've got a showcase which should attract record high numbers of shoppers.

The markets are being held every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. through October 18.

New SSA for Clark, Morse and Glenwood in the Works

A new SSA (Special Service Area) for businesses in the Clark, Morse and Glenwood area? Under a proposal recently submitted by DevCorp North for consideration, revenue derived from merchant contributions in the area could be utilized to fund a variety of projects such as street fairs, joint advertising campaigns, street and sidewalk cleaning and/or snow removal, landscaping, security and public safety enhancement and a variety of other activities.

The proposed SSA will run from Wallen and Clark on the South up to Birchwood and Clark Street on the North and from Clark Street to near Sheridan Road on Morse. Under terms of the SSA, merchants in the SSA area pay a small tax levy, the proceeds of which revert back to the community in the form of various projects undertaken-including landscaping or snow removal.

As Kimberly Bares, DevCorp North's Executive Director put it: "Although there is a small cost to the business-they will be repaid several times by attracting and retaining many new customers."

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I See It . . .

by Mike Glasser
President, Rogers Park Builders Group
About Porches and Permits



Like everyone, I am saddened by the June 29th porch incident in Lincoln Park. Like everyone, my heart goes out foremost to the families who suffered their deep personal loss. Many of us in the Builders Group have children. As parents, we extend our deepest condolences to the victims' parents and families. We can feel your pain because we relate to you. It could so easily have been our own children standing on that rear porch, enjoying a summer beverage at a party with their peers.

As developers and as real estate investors, we can also relate to the gentleman who owns the property. Three days after the incident, we read news accounts vilifying the owner, yet people I know in the development community assure me that he has a tremendous reputation for owning properties and exemplifying the principle of "pride of ownership." Certainly, litigation will follow (actually, it already has), with a key issue being what kind of porch permit, if any, the owner pulled.

I have spoken with a few developers as well as with people whose job it is to follow building codes. The only thing clear to many of us is that there is a lot that is unclear about what guidelines contractors ought to follow when it comes to constructing porches – specifically, how support beams are to be designed.

While there is no assurance that this porch would have withstood the test of so many people standing on it even if it were constructed in strict conformance with the code, truth is that tragedies can be averted if proper permitting processes are to be designed.

Frankly, the permit issuance system breeds cynicism among property owners, developers, and contractors who are supposed to use it. Until now, many of us did not view the existing system as one whose primary goal is to promote safety for building occupants and minimize liability for building owners. We skeptically view the system as one that creates delay and adds to the cost of completing the project.

In fact, some developers and property owners, or the contractors we hire, remain downright fearful of a process that prevents us from getting our job completed on schedule and on budget. Yet the porch tragedy shows the horrible consequences of taking that risk and not strictly adhering to the process.

Everyone needs to step up. Building owners, developers and our contractors need to remain more engaged in following proper permit practices, submitting good plans and remaining involved in trade organizations that will work with city officials to make the process more responsive to our needs. Face it, the city wants an efficient permit issuance system that promotes quality development, creates jobs and makes the city a more desirable place to live, work and play.

The city needs to continue with its efforts to make the system work. Many important changes have been made under the leadership of Commissioners Reyes and Roberson, yet challenges remain. For example, why can't owners of multi-family properties obtain permits at satellite offices as can owners of single families and two-flats, instead of having to make that onerous trek downtown?

Finally, the ultimate "end users" – building occupants and their guests – must recognize that they play a role in this process. We react to tragedies that have already occurred, i.e., we now carefully avoid overcrowded nightclubs and porch parties and consider weight limits before entering a crowded elevator.

Our greater challenge is how we, Joe and Josephine Public, can be proactive, anticipating new dangers. What can we – the users of buildings – do to avoid the next tragedy? With common sense and heightened alertness, we can avoid the next front page horror story.

Second Annual Glenwood Avenue Arts Festival: Accent on Fun

Arts. Music. Fun. That is the formula for almost certain success which will characterize the Second Annual Arts District Outrageous Studio Walk & Succulent Street Fair to be held Saturday, October 4th, in conjunction with Illinois Arts Month and Chicago Arts Week.

The festival is the brainchild of RPBG Director Alan Goldberg, who owns the Art Space Building on Morse and Glenwood. The Festival area runs from the Lifeline Theatre to the Heartland Café on the west side of Glenwood and on the east side of Glenwood from Lunt to Greenleaf. Last year, the event featured a host of activities including tours of more than a dozen artist studios on Glenwood and on Morse. But in addition to the studio tours there was live

music in several locations, as well as Duke's Chili Cook-off, a raffle with prizes donated by local merchants, fire dancing, interactive arts projects for children and adults and a chance to meet and mingle with many artists involved in the Glenwood Arts community.

In addition, the Heartland Café will feature sprints for athletes starting at 10 a.m. and Lifeline Theater will be coordinating the annual Kidfest. The event will also celebrate the opening of RPBG Director Greg Altman's new Morseland Restaurant on Morse, as well as RPBG Director Connie Abels' new quarters for RE/MAX North Coast Realty. Community artists and musicians interested in participating can contact Steve Oberdorfer at (773)465-6311.

RPBG Members Take Several Awards at CAR and RPCC Dinners

At a recent Chicago Association of Realtors dinner, members of the RPBG were presented with several awards. In addition, two Builders Group members were among those honored with Spirit of Rogers Park Awards by the Rogers Park Community Council at their annual dinner.

CAR award recipients include Rich Aronson, whose firm, Camelot Realty, received awards for a multi-unit conversion at 1633-35 W. Estes and for a single family construction at 1807 W. Morse. Other winners include Mike Wallk, past RPBG president and president of ABC Construction and Lakeside Real Estate, who received an honorable mention

for his development at 7045 S. Bennett and 7046 S. Euclid. Also honored was Michael Zaransky, of Prime Property Investors for a single family development. And last, but certainly not least was Mark Kruse, of Hispanic Housing Development Corp. for his firm's condo conversion project in conjunction with the City's New Homes for Chicago Project at 7732-42 N. Paulina

Among the winners of the RPCC's Spirit of Rogers Park awards were Carla Price (Community Building Award) and Tim Flentye (Spirit of Business Award). Both are founding members of the Builders Group. Our hats off to all for a job well done.

Rogers Park's Cultural Hub is Thriving

For several decades now the area bounded by Morse Avenue to the south, and Lunt to the north, on both sides of Glenwood has served more or less as the cultural hub of Rogers Park. To find out why this is so and how the area is doing, *The Builder* recently interviewed two of the movers and doers in this area, Alan Goldberg, vice president of Hallmark & Johnson, who owns the two-story building on the southwest corner of Morse and Glenwood, and Dorothy Milne, artistic director of one of Rogers Park's leading arts enterprises, the Lifeline Theater. The results of that interview follows:

The Builder: Dorothy and Al, could you give us a little of your background?

Goldberg: I am a Vice President of Hallmark & Johnson where I have served since 1983 as a broker in the sale of commercial, and investment property as well as apartment buildings. Before that I was with several real estate firms, including David Kaufman Associates, Berger Realty Group, Dan Shannon Associates and Hogan and Farwell.

Milne: I've served as the artistic director of Lifeline Theater for the past four years, and before that was in the actor's ensemble at Lifeline for ten years. Currently I direct primarily but still act occasionally.

The Builder: Why has this area evolved into the cultural heart of Rogers Park, so to speak, over the past few decades?

Milne: It's hard to say, but it is a fact that many of Rogers Park's cultural landmarks are centered here. The Heartland Café for instance is 25 years old. My theater – Lifeline – is 30 years old. The No Exit Café is 30 years old. It seems like there has always been an artistic community in this area ever since I can remember. Artists have always congregated to areas where the rentals are cheap and where other artists live.

Goldberg: My building on Morse and Glenwood for instance was bought with the end in mind of converting it into artists studios. It was built in 1916 and the second floor has always been doctors and dentists offices with some apartments. I had to consider what was the best use for this building. I knew that if I could keep the rentals cheap, I could attract artists, since that is what they are looking for as well as light, which the building can offer in abundance. So we now have six work studios, and three live-work studios (where the artists live as well as work). There is also the Tyego Dance Studio, where students learn ballet, modern and flamenco dancing. In fact they did a studio presentation at Café Sauron in Rogers Park on several Thursday evenings.

Another Builders Group director, Jake Weiss, has converted several store fronts at 7001-15 N. Glenwood into studios. And there are several other cultural groups that should be mentioned, including the Curious Theater Branch, the Red Line, which features folk singing and rock 'n roll, and the Heartland Studio Theater, which sponsors music and poetry readings regularly.

Bear in mind that for decades my building on Morse had stores on the ground floor-barber shops, grocery stores, and butcher shops. And there were apartments on the second floor for years.

The Builder: So, how have the two of you been doing in your operations?

Milne: Well, we have been doing very well. We are having record ticket sales and our sales volume has been growing steadily for years. We use about 150 artists a year in our various productions and they come from all over Chicago.

We outgrew our original space and after scrambling around for years, we wound up by buying our own building.

OUR MISSION

The Rogers Park Builders Group's mission is to encourage and support responsible residential and commercial property investment, development, and ownership in the Rogers Park community. Looking far beyond bricks and mortar, the RPBG initiates and supports collaboration on city and community actions to create a destination community.

RPBG Executive Committee

- Mike Glasser, President
- Marty Max, Vice President
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- Jim Cortrossi, Chairman-Membership
- Dan Dooly, Chairman-Website Development
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c/o Mary Jane Sacks • 1708 W. Jarvis Avenue • Chicago, IL 60626
 Phone/Fax (773)743-7453 • e-mail: rpbg@rogerspark.com
 Website: www.rpbg.org

Please Send Information About Becoming a Member of the Rogers Park Builders Group

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone (Daytime) _____

Phone (Evening) _____

E-mail Address _____

I'm Interested In _____

Comments _____

Mail to: Mary Jane Sacks, Administrative Director
 Rogers Park Builders Group
 1708 W. Jarvis Avenue • Chicago, IL 60626
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 e-mail: rpbg@rogerspark.com
 Website: www.rpbg.org

EUBA, RPBG Networking Dinner Draws a Large Crowd



Fun, the opportunity to network, to enjoy good food, and to get an update on what the property assessment means as far as next year's real estate taxes are concerned all combined to attract more than 80 to the annual meeting of the Edgewater Uptown Builders Association (EUBA) and the Rogers Park Builders Group held at Reza's June 11th. Shown are the panelists who discussed the assessment process, (left to right) Dana Marbury, Community Relations Director, Cook County Assessor's Office; Gregory Moyer, Senior V.P./Managing Director, Marcus & Millichap; Mike Chioros, CCIM, Vranas & Chioros Realty Group, the moderator; Larry Suffredin, Cook County Commissioner; and Mike Quigley, Cook County Commissioner.