



# ROGERS PARK BUILDER

www.rpbg.org SUMMER 2017

## The Drought is Over New Development Returns to Rogers Park

If the Great Recession was generally bad for Chicago, it was probably closer to a complete disaster for Rogers Park. Since the economic implosion a decade ago, there has been virtually no development of market-rate apartment properties north of Devon Avenue to the city limits. There were a few notable exceptions, including 1334 W. Morse Avenue, built by Tawani Enterprises in 2013, Montserrat at Loyola Station, built by Loyola University in 2014, and a few other, small, infill properties scattered around the neighborhood. But, these exceptions aside, developers were mostly absent from Rogers Park for the better part of the past decade.

Now the long dry-spell appears to be at an end. Four new developments have been announced in recent months, and more are in the planning stages. This resurgence in interest indicates that Rogers Park is taking its place among the city and suburban communities where people want to live, and will pay a little extra for the newest and nicest housing. No longer will Rogers Parkers have to look north to Evanston or south to Lakeview to see cranes on the horizon. Soon enough, we will have our own crop of cranes popping up right here.



1313 W. Morse Ave.

Tawani is furthest along in its plans for a new construction apartment building at 1313 W. Morse. The new tower will rise on the site of a now-demolished strip center. It will be eight stories in height with 75 parking spaces on the first three floors with 45 apartments above. A ceremonial ground-breaking took place on March 3. Construction is set to begin later this summer.

Right behind the Tawani development on Morse, Three Corners Development is getting closer to a ground-breaking on its mixed-use apartment and retail building on Sheridan. The property will be known as the Concord at Sheridan and will contain 111 mixed-income apartments with 60% of the units reserved for CHA and 40% of the units rented at market rates. The property would also contain a 23,000-square-foot “flex-format” Target and 6,400 square feet of additional retail space on the ground floor.



6418 North Sheridan Road

## Immigration, Refugee Resettlement and Rogers Park – Part One



Dadaab Refugee Camp

This is the story of Cumar and Axlam (not their real names), two recent arrivals to Chicago and to Rogers Park. Unlike just about everyone reading this article, Cumar and Axlam were not able to simply book a flight or rent a U-Haul and move. In fact, when they began their odyssey, the odds of them successfully getting to the United States were almost laughably remote.

Cumar and Axlam are refugees – two people out of more than 65 million worldwide, according to estimates by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Since the United Nations began keeping these statistics, the number of refugees across the globe has never been higher.

Under the Obama administration, the United States permitted 110,000 refugees to resettle in the country in 2016. The Trump administration has proposed reducing this number to 50,000. The Trump administration has repeatedly attempted to temporarily ban all immigration and refugee resettlement to the United States and limit the countries from which refugees may be admitted.

Even at 110,000 refugees per year, the United States was taking in less than one-fifth of one percent of the world’s refugees on an annual basis. These were the odds that Cumar and Axlam faced as they began their efforts to resettle in this country and start new lives.

But I’m getting ahead of myself. Let’s begin at the beginning.

Cumar was born in 1991 in Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya. His parents had recently fled to Dadaab from Somalia, a country where civil unrest and political turmoil had made life for its citizens difficult, if not impossible. Axlam was born in Somalia, but remembers nothing about it. She was brought to Dadaab by her parents at the age of one. Her parents fled Somalia in the early 1990s for the same reasons that Cumar’s parents had. Life in Somalia had become too difficult. Faced with no good choices, they chose to leave the country and flee to Kenya.

In one of life’s many ironies, Cumar’s birth certificate states that he is a Somali. Yet Cumar has never once set foot in Somalia. His Kenyan birth certificate is stamped with “refugee,” and the laws of Kenya granted him no rights of citizenship in the country of his birth.

Dadaab is one of five refugee camps that are more or less contiguous in eastern Kenya. The camps are less than

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# UPS AND DOWNS

By Steve Cain • Summer 2017

## Illinois has a budget!

Just a few years ago, the passage of a budget would have been a routine event, something widely ignored by the public, and barely commented upon by the press. But, in Illinois these days, nothing is routine. Like much of the rest of the country, Illinois is at war with itself, deeply divided over ideology and riven by partisan discord.



Unlike the rest of the country, it is the Democrats and not the Republicans who have the upper hand. The passage of a state budget, after two long years without one, is proof of this fact. Governor Rauner, who is a Republican, basically got none of his “turnaround agenda” wish-list enacted. This wish-list includes such items as term limits, tort reform, permanent property tax freezes, pension reform and right-to-work legislation just to name a few. Worse for him, he lost significant support among his fellow Republicans in both the General Assembly and the Senate, worn down after two years of very real hardships brought on by the state’s inability (or unwillingness) to pay its bills.

Rauner saw fifteen Republican members of the General Assembly vote against him in the initial budget vote. Even after vetoing the budget once it landed on his desk, Rauner could not prevent ten Republican members of the General Assembly from voting to override.

A good handful of these defectors came from downstate districts with branches of the state university system. All of these schools, with the exceptions of the two flagships – University of Illinois and UIC – were in deep financial distress after two years of inadequate state support. Had the budget crisis continued into a third year, there was a real fear that some of these institutions would have had their accreditation taken away or even had to shut down.

Other well-publicized impacts of the budget impasse were the impending shut-down of major roadway construction projects; the collapse of Social Service Agencies across the state; and even the cessation of Powerball and Mega Millions ticket sales.

Perhaps the biggest indignity facing the state of Illinois was the impending downgrading of its credit from the three major ratings agencies to junk status. Had this come to pass, it would have been a first for any state, ever in the history of the United States. That, and all the other financial collateral damage, finally proved to be more than at least some of the Republican members of the Legislature could endure.

So, Governor Rauner’s turnaround agenda will have to wait. Instead, the state is now better positioned to pay its bills, but at a heavy cost. The state income tax rate has increased from 3.75% to 4.95%; corporations will see tax rates increase from 5.25% to 7.0%; and none of this will make a dent in the accumulated \$130-plus billion pension liability the state has incurred.

So, celebrate the end of this particular partisan skirmish if you so choose. Depending on your political outlook, you can decide to feel better or worse about the end of the Great Budget Impasse. But, regardless of your political beliefs, don’t be fooled. The state has not solved its financial problems, and has certainly not entered into a new era of bipartisan cooperation. The Blue vs. Red wars will continue. At the very least, you can expect a heated battle for the Governor’s office next year.

It seems obvious that there will be more drama before there is any meaningful resolution to the state’s financial problems (if indeed there ever is). Passage of the budget was the end of the battle, not the war. The road ahead may be as difficult as the road we have just traveled. It certainly appears that it will be some time before things get materially better in Springfield.

## Verella’s Round-Up

### Landlord Demand Notices: 30-Day Notice Pitfalls



*Verella Osborne, President  
Legal Document Management, Inc.*

Chicago landlords deal with the three most familiar legal demand notices on a daily basis:

- minimum 5-Day Notice for unpaid rent
- minimum 10-Day Notice for Breach of a written lease contract
- minimum 30-Day (or 60-Day) Notice of Termination for an oral, month-to-month tenancy

Yes, I repeated “minimum” for a reason. Each notice has mandated language or procedures and each has different technical pitfalls which cause many attorneys and landlords to lose eviction cases in court. In this article, we’ll discuss the technicalities of “30-Day Notices,” which are legally Notices of Termination of Tenancy.

#### **The main reasons eviction suits based on 30-day notices are usually lost in court are:**

1. The termination date is wrong. Remember, it’s a minimum 30 days’ notice, but it is not any 30-day period; nor is it automatically terminated at the END OF EACH MONTH. YOU MAY ONLY TERMINATE A MONTH-TO-MONTH TENANCY ON THE last day of the “rental period” i.e., the last day of the next month if the rent is due on the 1st; the 14th of the month if the rent is due on the 15th, etc. If there is no landlord-tenant relationship (e.g. a relative or employee living in your apartment with no rent liability), the termination may ONLY be the last day of the next month—and please check how many days are in a month. You’ll lose the case terminating on August 30th, instead of August 31st, on February 28th, instead of the 29th. No, you can’t serve a notice terminating tenancy “30 days after the notice is served;” state law requires a specific termination date for both 30-day and 10-day notices.
2. You dated or served the notice on the date the rent is due—that’s been illegal for several years. Therefore, 30-day notices must be dated and served before the rent due date. E.g., for all Illinois tenants for whom rents are due on the 1st day of the month, you may date a 30-day notice June 25th for a termination date of July 31st – but the last day it may be served is June 30th. It may never be served on July 1st—even though July has 31 days and technically that’s “30 days.” Numerous cases are lost in eviction court daily for this reason alone.
3. You allowed the lease to expire and the tenant is now a “month-to-month” tenant and you serve him a 30-day termination notice—right? Wrong! The CRLTO requires the landlord to serve a written notice to the tenant a minimum 30 days prior to the lease expiration date, either offering a lease renewal or advising the tenant you’re not renewing the lease. If you can’t prove you served either of those notices prior to the lease termination, and want to terminate tenancy after the lease expires—you cannot serve a 30-day notice; you must serve a minimum 60-day termination notice. We receive a number of these cases monthly and the landlords/attorneys must start over again and serve 60 day notices (or 5-days if the tenant didn’t pay rent).
4. Landlord served a 30-day notice terminating a tenant in a valid lease contract, because he’s included a provision in the lease that he can do so and the tenant agreed to it. Sorry, you lose. The Appellate Court ruled several years ago that a right to terminate a lease early must be bilateral—given to both parties to the contract, not only one. Therefore, if you want the right to terminate with a 30-day, the tenant must have the same right. Remember, that you can’t include provisions in your lease that contradict law (written or case law).

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# Jay Johnson: A New Director with Deep Roots in RPBG



In 1993, a group of committed individuals that included real estate developers, property owners and financial institutions founded the Rogers Park Builders Group (RPBG). One of those individuals was Jay Johnson, an original founding member of the organization.

The driving force behind the RPBG was to provide a forum to highlight the attributes of our beautiful neighborhood with its excellent housing stock, easy commute to downtown Chicago, and proximity to transportation and the Lakefront. The first initiatives of RPBG included the production of a brochure highlighting these neighborhood attributes and a public relations campaign to improve its image. Then as now, Jay has been a strong proponent of the Rogers Park community. Jay continues to believe the neighborhood is a wonderful place in which to live and work.

It has been nearly 24 years since that first RPBG brochure was published. Much has changed in the intervening years. But, as a founding member of RPBG and long-time investor in the neighborhood, Jay also recognizes that progress has not always been linear.

In 1991, Jay purchased a building in the 1300 block of Estes Avenue with a group of investors. That investment represented Jay's first venture into Rogers Park. Following that purchase, Jay invested in properties on Morse Avenue, Howard Street, north of Howard and other areas of the neighborhood. Some of those properties had been vacant for years, creating problems for the neighborhood. Jay is someone who likes a challenge, and who has always had a passion for turning dilapidated buildings into neighborhood assets. Since he began investing in the neighborhood in 1991, Jay has strived to improve not just individual buildings but whole communities.

Jay firmly believes that the attributes that drew him to Rogers Park in the first place are still present and becoming more apparent to a wider audience. You can see this on Howard Street and Morse Avenue where commercial ventures are thriving. Success breeds success as more people are drawn into the community to live, work and play. Jay believes that today's Rogers Park is hitting its stride and that its future has never looked brighter.

In recent years, Jay has focused his efforts on bringing back entertainment and dining to the 1600 block of Howard Street. Students of Rogers Park history will know that, beginning in 1918, the Howard Theatre Building became a focal point for theatre and dining in the neighborhood. After many challenging years, the building has become a neighborhood focal point again. Jay was extremely pleased when Simone Freeman opened Sol Café in the Howard Theatre Building in 2012, providing the neighborhood with a great place for coffee and comradery.

In 2015, The Factory Theater opened its doors in the Howard Theatre, providing patrons with wonderful, original productions. Jay was particularly gratified with the opening of The Factory – the theater company was founded in Rogers Park, but had been absent for more than two decades before coming back to the Howard Theater building two years ago. Sol Café and The Factory Theatre are now focal points for the rebirth of Howard Street and Jay continues to work diligently to bring in other, complimentary retail and entertainment uses. Jay hopes to make an announcement soon about a new restaurant venture for the building.

Jay is so optimistic about the future of Rogers Park that he, along with Watermark Properties, is about to undertake the construction of a 38 unit, five-story, mixed use building on the 1500 block of Howard Street. Jay believes that undertaking a new construction project entirely with private funding is indicative of the positive direction for Rogers Park.

While Jay has always played an important role in the organization, he decided recently to step back into the role of Director. For a number of years, Jay and his wife Cindy were focused on raising their two young daughters. Now that they are young adults, Jay feels that he has more time to commit to our organization. It was an easy decision, considering how much Jay has invested in the community and the people who have made RPBG such a great group over so many years. Jay was proud to help start the organization 24 years ago and he is proud

to resume his role as a Director. When Jay is not busy at work in the community or hob-knobbing with fellow RPBG members, he enjoys spending his time golfing. Jay will tell you golf is his passion; Jay's wife Cindy will tell you it is his addiction!

Jay remains extremely positive and upbeat about the future of Rogers Park. We have always been lucky to have Jay's active participation in the group. We are even luckier now that he has rejoined the organization as a Director.

## Verella's Round-Up ...cont'd

5. You didn't name every legal adult occupant over 18. Please don't name just the "lessee" on the lease, when you know there's been an adult girlfriend/mother/ sister living in the unit for the last six months and you've accepted rent with full knowledge she's living there. You may even have accepted rent from her, or have a history of e-mail or text messages regarding repairs...for some reason, landlords tend to forget these "residents" when they prepare 30-day notices. The girlfriend is not an "unknown occupant" when you've known for months she's there. If you don't know her full legal name, take a few moments to find out (name on mail, demand to see I.D., etc.) and include her name on the notice. By trying to save \$60 to the Sheriff, you end up with an unenforceable court order, or liability for a wrongful eviction. This condition applies to ALL landlord notices, of course.

One final observation. In the "old days," we were able to evict a tenant on a 30-day termination notice and sue the tenant for both possession and rent owed for the last unpaid 30 days; our Cook County courts no longer allow a money claim on 30-day notices. Therefore, if a tenant doesn't pay rent after receiving a 30-day notice, serve them a 5-day as soon as possible—but NOT on the rent due date!

NOTE: Legal Docs has a Recycling Disclosure Flyer that is in compliance with both the tenants' lease disclosure requirement and, if laminated, may be used as the "permanent" recycling notice to be posted in buildings' common and maintenance areas. Fee: \$75.00. E-mail [legaldocs@sbcglobal.net](mailto:legaldocs@sbcglobal.net)

## Policing in Rogers Park – the Good News and the Bad

Always start with the good news. The Rogers Park Police District has the second-lowest number of reported crimes in the city, according to a [DNAInfo article published on June 24](#).

But the bad news? It also has fewer police on District Assignment. The Chicago Inspector General published a graph on their website (<http://chicagoinspectorgeneral.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Sworn-CPD-Personnel-by-District-Assignment-and-Detail.pdf>) showing the number of police officers assigned to each Police District. This ranges from a low of 243 officers in the 14th District (Shakespeare, serving the Logan Square area) to 462 officers in the 11th District (Harrison, in the Lawndale/Garfield Park area).

The Inspector General chart puts the total number of sworn CPD Personnel at 12,051. Of this number, 7,251 police officers are assigned



to the city's 22 districts. The 24th District (Rogers Park) had just 272 assigned officers, or 3.8% of the 7,251 assigned officers. This is more than 40% lower than the number of officers who are assigned to the 11th District on Harrison Street.

In fairness, the distribution of crime in Chicago varies widely from District to District.

It is well known that the areas of the city with the highest rates of crime are on the South and West Sides of the city. Therefore, it is reasonable that those Districts should receive additional police

personnel since those are the areas where crime is the biggest problem.

Still, Rogers Parkers may feel that they are getting the short end of the stick when it comes to police officers on duty in their community. While you're feeling cheated about that, remember that, if you live in Rogers Park, you also have fewer reasons to need to call the police in the first place.



Police responding to a call of a man threatening neighbors in Rogers Park last summer.

## More Good News for CPS in Rogers Park

Gale Elementary School is about to see its Learning Garden become an even more attractive and productive school and community resource. According to a May 10 article in DNAInfo, the Learning Garden was recently awarded \$200,000 that will be used to pay for a stage, picnic tables, walking labyrinth, planters, pathways and a "You Are Beautiful" fence.

The \$200,000 comes from two sources. The first and largest share is \$120,000 from the 49th Ward Participatory Budgeting

process. These are competitively-awarded funds that must be approved by voters in the Ward. An additional \$75,000 came in the form of a grant from Kitchen Community Chicago. This is the Chicago office of The Kitchen Community, a Boulder, Colorado-based company. By the end of 2016, Kitchen Community Chicago had built 125 Learning Gardens in conjunction with CPS and offers support, education and training for the maintenance of these gardens. The company has ambitious goals for the city,



hoping to expand their Learning Gardens to 200 by April 2019 and impacting the lives of 100,000 students every day. If successful, this effort will be the largest School Garden initiative in the country, serving 30% of all CPS schools.



Principal Augustine Emuwa has made the Learning Garden an important component of his multi-faceted efforts to improve education at the school. Principal Emuwa is, himself, a graduate of the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences on the city's far Southwest Side in the Mount Greenwood neighborhood. He credits the Mt. Greenwood school for fostering an appreciation of the natural world and inspiring him to continue his studies and, ultimately, becoming Principal of Gale. The Learning Garden is an important component of his desire to share his love of the natural world with the children of Gale School and Rogers Park. After this most recent grant, the Learning Garden is sure to become an even more beautiful and useful resource for the school and the community.

# Park Number 526 May be Renamed Bernard L. Stone Park

Bernie Stone, the long-time alderman of the 50th Ward, was a good friend to the Rogers Park Builders Group, and to property owners in general. He was one of the few Aldermen to consider the positions of property owners on issues having to do with landlord-tenant relations. Alderman Stone was defeated by Debra Silverstein in his 2011 re-election bid, and died in 2014 at the age of 87.

In recognition of his many years of service to the 50th Ward and the city of Chicago, plans are currently afoot to rename a small park in his honor. The park is currently known by number only and occupies a small, 1.8-acre site between the North Shore Channel, Kedzie, Lincoln and Rosemont Avenues. The choice of Park 526 for Alderman Stone is especially significant since he maintained his aldermanic office in the nearby Lincoln Village Shopping Center for many years.

To become official, the Chicago Park District board will have to approve the name change. The board has already initiated



the process, preliminarily approving the name-change on Wednesday, June 14. The public has a 45-day period to consid-

er the measure, after which the proposal will get a full vote by the board for final approval.

## Contra-Flow Lane on Glenwood is Open

The contra-flow bike lane along Glenwood Avenue is now up and running in Edgewater, making the bike commute from Rogers Park to the Loop a lot safer and more enjoyable. Before the contra-flow lane opened, bikers heading south on Glenwood from Rogers Park could only get to Ridge Avenue. Once at Ridge, a big Do Not Enter

sign on the other side of the street stopped bikers cold. From Ridge, bikers were faced with the no-win options of a left turn down Ridge Avenue, a dangerous and traffic-choked arterial, or continuing south against on-coming traffic on Glenwood, a less congested street but one that was only legal for north-bound traffic.



But now, the Do Not Enter sign on Glenwood has changed. Cars are still banned from driving south on Glenwood south of Ridge Avenue, but bikers are now welcomed to do so! As of this May, bikers are now able to ride south safely on their own contra-flow bike lane until Glenwood once again becomes a two-way street south of Foster. The new "Glenwood Greenway" gives bike commuters one more good option for getting from the far North Side to other parts of town while avoiding the more heavily trafficked arterials. The new contra-flow bikeway is yet another addition to the expanding network of bike routes that are gradually transforming Chicago into a more bike-friendly city.

## Exciting Renovation Planned for Firehouse on Greenleaf

If all goes according to plan, Jim Andrews and Dean Vance, a longtime Rogers Park couple, will purchase the old Firehouse at 1721 W. Greenleaf and turn it into a live-work space. According to DNAInfo, the building will have such state-of-the-art green features as rooftop solar panels and geothermal heating and cooling. The building could also have two greenhouses. The couple plans to live on the second floor with their dog, Tango. The first floor would be used for their advertising agency and a therapy practice.

The couple want to preserve the architectural integrity of the building while still adding features the neighborhood will appreciate such as a garden where the concrete parking lot now stands. Even after creating the garden, the property will still accommodate parking for up to ten cars. The transformation of the building could be completed as soon as late 2018.



## Brewpub Opens on Morse Avenue

Beer lovers now have a new place to gather in Rogers Park and yet another reason to go to Morse Avenue. The former Act One space in the Mayne Stage building has now reopened as Empirical Brewery. As reported in last quarter's Newsletter, this is the second location for Empirical after its original Ravenswood location. Bill Hurley is the proprietor and is excited to be up and running in his new Rogers Park venue. The brewery will feature original beers but also offers a full selection of menu items to go with the brews. Next up for Empirical is an expansion into an adjacent storefront where a five-barrel production system will produce locally made beer.

The addition of Empirical Brewery fills an important vacancy along the Morse Avenue commercial district, and puts daily activity back into the Mayne Stage building. This space had formerly been occupied by Tawani Enterprises' Act One restaurant and pub. The Mayne Stage building had been a focal point of activity on Morse Avenue until the closing of the restaurant and the conversion of the interior space into a private events-only venue. With Empirical now operating out of the old Act One space, Morse Avenue regains some of the luster it had lost. We wish Mr. Hurley every success. No doubt, many RPBG members will be only too happy to send a little business his way.

50 miles from the Kenya-Somalia border. According to Wikipedia, these camps are home to almost a quarter of a million people and constitute the second largest refugee complex in the world.

Cumar says that life in Dadaab was not easy. The residents of this camp live in a strange limbo. They have none of the rights of citizenship inside of Kenya, but are unable to return to Somalia without fearing severe political repression or worse. As long as they live within Kenya, they are subject to its laws which limit their movements outside of the camps and prohibit travel to Nairobi and other major cities. Above all, they are not allowed to work. Cumar says that an informal economy has developed within the camps, but that its residents struggle to survive. Survival would probably not be possible at all were it not for the organized relief that flows in under the auspices of the UNHRC and other non-profit refugee relief organizations around the world.

The food provided by the UNHRC is the lifeline for residents of the camps. Cumar says that lines often form early in the morning when food is delivered. If the food runs out before you get to the front of the line, then you are simply out of luck. Now that Cumar is no longer in Dadaab, he worries about his mother and two sisters getting enough to eat.

Cumar and Axlam were both able to take advantage of the free education available at the schools in the camps. They were both able to complete their educations through the high school level, graduating in 2012. But there is no college or post-graduate education available at Dadaab or at any of the other camps, and continuing their education elsewhere in Kenya was not an option available to them, or to anyone else living at Dadaab as a refugee.

In 2010, against all odds and in the face of the daily deprivations that defined their lives in the camp, Cumar and Axlam began the arduous process of applying for resettlement to the United States. According to Jims Porter of Refugee One, only a lucky few are ever able to do this. Typically, you must be recommended for resettlement. Preference is given to the most vulnerable or those with family connections.

This process began with interviews with UNHRC personnel. Not just one interview, but several, and over a two-year period. Their stories had to match up from interview to interview, and there were often periods of many months between them.

After two years, they were told that they were eligible to continue the process with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Studies (USCIS), the subsidiary of the Department of Homeland Security that is charged with processing immigrant visa petitions and refugee applications (not to be confused with CIS, a vehemently anti-immigration lobbying group headquartered in Washington DC). The first interview with the USCIS took place in 2012. Again, there were multiple interviews held over a period of months. The stories had to be consistent and had to match up with earlier interviews with UNHRC.

By the end of 2012, the interview process was complete. But the waiting was far from over. For several years, Cumar and Axlam heard nothing until, one day, they did! On November 18, 2016, Cumar and Axlam were informed that they had been accepted by USCIS for refugee resettlement in the United States!

This was truly a dream come true. But they also knew that, until they were on that plane, they could not relax. First, there was one more interview. Like past interviews, it had to be consistent with the information Cumar and Axlam had previously given.

They had the interview, and all went well. They were told to be ready to leave the camp on short notice where they would be taken to Nairobi for a medical examination and a mandatory orientation to their new lives in the United States. One step closer to America!

At any point in this process, they could still be denied the right to emigrate. A poor medical exam, or any contradictory information given in the last round of interviews was all that was needed to send them back to Dadaab.

As Cumar and Axlam were waiting patiently for permission to travel to Nairobi, big changes were sweeping across the United States. Donald Trump had just been elected President. He ran on a platform that can reasonably be described as unfriendly toward immigrants with particular animus toward Muslims.

On January 27, the new President signed an Executive Order banning entry into the United States for at least 90 days for anyone from seven majority Muslim countries, including Somalia. Among its other provisions, this first order also put a halt to all refugee resettlement for a four-month period, and an indefinite halt to refugee resettlement from Syria.

On January 29th, the Executive Order was temporarily blocked by a federal judge who found its provisions to be potentially unconstitutional and in violation of Due Process rights. On February 3, a federal judge in Seattle ordered a halt to enforcement of the travel ban. This ruling was appealed by the Trump administration, but upheld by a three-judge panel in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco on February 9. The three judges sided with previous rulings that found a high likelihood that the travel ban would be found unconstitutional. The Trump administration decided not to appeal the Circuit Court ruling to the Supreme Court, effectively rendering the travel ban moot (at least for the time-being). This was the opening in the door that Cumar and Axlam had been praying for.

The timing of these events in the United States had a direct and dramatic impact on Cumar and Axlam. On February 7, Cumar and Axlam got a call from USCIS that they were to get their few possessions and get ready for their trip to Nairobi. On the very next day, they got another call saying they should unpack and wait as the legal dispute on the other side of the Atlantic raged. But the delay proved to be a very short one. On February



At Sullivan High School, where high-achievers are common, a new student has earned a second chance—both for the Rogers Park school and its smiling ranks of immigrant students.

[Related: Chicago Magazine article and video - Sullivan High School](#)

9th, shortly after the Circuit Court ruling came in and the Trump administration decided not to appeal to the Supreme Court, Cumar and Axlam received another call. This time, the message was to get ready to leave for Nairobi immediately. The final push to leave Kenya was about to begin.

Now it was a race with time to get to the United States before something changed again in Washington. Cumar and Axlam boarded a bus for Nairobi, a city they had not previously been allowed to visit. As they watched Dadaab recede into the distance, they thought about leaving the only place they had ever known, including their families who were not among the refugees approved to resettle in the United States with them, and the many friends who would probably never be allowed to leave the camps for new lives abroad.

As they looked back, they also looked forward. What would life be like in the United States, a country they could hardly imagine, and were still not entirely sure they would ever be allowed to enter? It was a moment of great excitement, but one mixed with considerable fear, loss and uncertainty about what the future held. Would their families be alright? Would they be able to make new lives for themselves in a place so completely foreign to them? Would their families someday be able to join them in America? Most frightening of all, would their bus ride to Nairobi turn out to be another dead-end? Would the now-reopened door to America suddenly slam shut again before they could get out?

The race was on. They were so close – but they also knew America was still a half a world away, and that their ability to get there was something over which they had little control.

Cumar and Axlam's story will be continued in the next Newsletter.



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## 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.

*If you would like to receive membership information, please visit our website at [www.rpbg.org](http://www.rpbg.org), or contact Tony Benedetto at 847-736-6485.*

## New Development in Rogers Park

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1710 W. Lunt Ave



1730 W. Greenleaf Ave.

that any new development faces. Just east of Clark Street, RPBG Member Dave Gassman of DLG Properties has proposed an

adaptive reuse/new construction of two existing buildings located in close proximity at 1710 W. Lunt and 1730 W. Greenleaf.

Both buildings were originally constructed in 1910. The Lunt property has been empty for about a year after being sold by Lutheran Social Services, Inc. The property formerly served as a group home for recovering addicts. The Greenleaf building is currently owned by the Ethiopian Community Center of Chicago who will be selling it to DLG and relocating to the suburbs.

Mr. Gassman proposes to restore both building facades. A three-story addition to the rear of the Lunt building will allow it to be expanded and renovated to accommodate 20 apartment units. The Greenleaf property will be converted from its current use to 30 apartment units, giving the combined property 50 total units.

RPBG Director Mike Glasser wrote a letter of support for this proposed development that was signed on behalf of the entire Board of Directors and sent to Alderman Joe Moore. In his letter, Mike acknowledged Mr. Gassman's strong ties to the neighborhood as well as his development and management expertise and experience. This development will require both a zoning variance and approval for reduced parking under the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Ordinance. It is currently working its way through the entitlement process.

Finally, RPBG Director Jay Johnson is proposing to build the Howard-Rogers Lofts, a five-story, 38-unit, new construction apartment building at 1531 W. Howard Street. As the owner of the Howard Theater building since 1998, Jay has a long-standing commitment to the improvement of Howard Street. Jay will combine forces with Watermark Equity to build the 1531 property. In addition to the 38 condo-quality apartments, the property will have 2,900 square feet of ground floor retail space and indoor automobile and bike parking as well as storage space. Floors two through five will be residential. This development is as-of-right and will not require any zoning changes. Jay is still in the early stages of planning for this new property, but he is optimistic that it will come together (see related story on Jay Johnson).

Tawani is expected to start construction on their Morse Avenue building shortly. The Concord at Sheridan building is also advancing and cleared an important hurdle recently with Plan Commission approval of the building plans. The other two developments are working their way through the necessary legal and financing hurdles that any new development faces. RPBG wishes all four developers success, and celebrates the return

of development activity to the neighborhood. It is the strongest indication yet that the damage wrought by the Great Recession is now firmly behind us.



1531 W. Howard Ave.