

PRESS RELEASE

CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK, IL

1707 St. Johns Avenue; Highland Park, IL 60035



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RAVINIA MARKET STUDY TO BE PRESENTED APRIL 6

HIGHLAND PARK, IL - The public is invited to attend the Community & Land Use Economics (CLUE) Group's presentation of the Ravinia Business District Market Study at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 6, in the Millennium Room at the Ravinia School, 763 Dean Avenue. The Millennium Room may be accessed from Roger Williams Avenue, just east of Dean Avenue.

In 2005, the City Council established a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District in the Ravinia District to foster redevelopment, including public improvements such as streetscape and utility upgrades. A redevelopment plan created in conjunction with the establishment of this TIF seeks to provide for the orderly transition from obsolete land uses to more appropriate land use patterns, enhance the retail sales tax base of the area to support the City's economic development objectives, and aid in efforts to revitalize the District as a viable mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented retail environment attracting new private investment, while maintaining its historic character.

In 2008, the City, local property owners, merchants, and the Ravinia Neighbors Association, a non-profit organization devoted to preserving the unique character of the Ravinia neighborhood, joined informally and together committed to improving and regenerating the Ravinia Business District. Following discussions among members of this group during the latter part of 2008, it was agreed that the City would solicit proposals from consulting firms to provide a market analysis of the Ravinia Business TIF District to determine the best use of these funds.

In May 2009, the City Council authorized the execution of a professional services agreement with the CLUE Group for completion of a market analysis of the Ravinia Business TIF District and development of a strategic plan for retail and mixed-use development. Firm principals Josh Bloom and Kennedy Smith have nearly 40 years of experience in business district revitalization, and have served as senior staff for the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Center. Both also served as managers of local business district revitalization programs before joining the staff of the National Main Street Center.

Last spring the consultants commenced the study with an onsite orientation and interviews of key stakeholders. In June and July 2009, the consultants initiated a community visioning blog, and they assessed the District's market potential, which included a consumer intercept survey in the District, a communitywide consumer survey, and they conducted focus groups that were organized around market strategies. In August 2009, the CLUE Group evaluated the district's identity and potential market positioning, and developed recommendations for branding, a retail strategy, and tenanting. At that time, they also assessed land use and potential public improvements, the economic impact of those improvements, and formulated tax yield projections. In October 2009, the CLUE Group submitted a draft Market Study to the City for preliminary review by staff.

Following the public unveiling of the consultant's draft report, a "Playbook" meeting is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, April 7, 2010, at which time the consultants will facilitate a workshop to guide a Ravinia Business District Leadership Group through the process of implementing their recommendations. The Leadership Group, comprised of representatives from the City Council and City staff along with key Ravinia Business District stakeholders, is expected to review and finalize the report prior to its consideration and acceptance by the Highland Park City Council this coming spring.

Copies of the Market Study Report will be available at the meeting or may be obtained from the Office of Economic Development at City Hall. For more information, please contact the City's Economic Development Coordinator, Carolyn Hersch, at 847-926-1027 / chersch@cityhpil.com.

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