

Getting creative with redevelopment, an update

There could be hope on the horizon for revitalizing several languishing properties in Homewood and Flossmoor, including the very visible hulk of the former Brunswick Zone on 183rd Street. Homewood and Flossmoor were among dozens of municipalities recently seeking to acquire tax delinquent properties through the county's No Cash Bid program. The Cook County Board of Commissioners approved four requests from Homewood and one from Flossmoor at its meeting Thursday, Jan. 13.

VIEWPOINT



Eric Crump
Columnist

The No Cash Bid program is designed to help municipalities acquire property so it can be redeveloped and returned to productive use.

Homewood's requests:

- 3006 W. 183rd St., a nine-unit strip mall currently occupied by four

tenants, including Great American Bagel restaurant. The village notes in its request that the property is chronically underutilized and that it "intends to accommodate existing tenants wherever possible while rehabilitating and redeveloping the property."

- 3055 183rd St., which includes Big Lots and the former Brunswick Zone bowling alley. The largest portion of the building has been vacant since the bowling alley left in 2015. The village notes: "Big Lots has announced its intention to relocate The building has significant code violations. The village intends to demolish the existing building and redevelop the property."

- 1221 W. 175th St., which the village describes as an unoccupied three-story office building that has been vacant for 12 years.

- 17701 Bretz Drive, vacant land the village hopes to offer for redevelopment.

Flossmoor's requests:

- Twenty-two vacant or unoccupied improved parcels, including property at 18708 Dixie Highway; 1615 Vollmer Road; 832 Sterling Ave.; 18762 and 18764 Springfield Ave.; 18833, 18835, 18837, 18839, 18841, 18843 and 18845 Crawford Ave.; 3211, 3213 and 3215 Flossmoor Road; 3648 198th St.; 19725 Governors Highway; and 1640 and 1648 Western Ave.

The process is long, but if the properties eventually are acquired, the villages will have a better chance to make good things happen.



Chronicle file photo

Signs urging motorists to reduce speed on 183rd Street sprouted along the route in the summer of 2020 after a fatal crash at the intersection with Center Avenue. Good Speed Cycle is starting a campaign to introduce new signs urging changes to the street itself to help reduce dangerous driving behavior.

Virtual life

Flossmoor Public Library announced recently it will partner with NeuLingo to offer live, online Chinese culture classes for children ages 7-12. The program will include a virtual tour of Chinese cities and an opportunity to learn about Chinese festivals and a bit of the language.

Registration for all 10 sessions began Jan. 15. Email DiCastroj@flossmoorlibrary.org (subject: Learn) to register. Classes are held on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. on March: 16, 23, 30; April 6, 13, 20, 27; May 4, 11, 18.

H-F Ice Arena progress online

Kudos to the Homewood-Flossmoor Park District for creating a place on the website to allow skaters to watch the progress on the renovation of the H-F Ice Arena.

The sudden loss of the facility in November was a blow to local skaters, especially those in youth hockey programs. Waiting for the reopening will perhaps be eased by the ability to see progress unfold.

'Fix this street'

Something has to be done about 183rd Street. Crazy driving has earned the ire of many H-F residents in recent years, intensifying after a fatal crash in 2020 at the intersection of 183rd Street and Center Avenue. The problem is general, but attention is often focused on 183rd Street as the center of traffic evil in the community.

Signs urging motorists to reduce speed on 183rd Street sprouted along the route in the summer of 2020 after a fatal crash at the intersection with Center Avenue. Good Speed Cycle is starting a campaign to introduce new signs along the street urging changes to better control traffic.

Homewood officials are working on finding solutions. A traffic study commissioned by the village was completed last year, and it includes some intriguing possibilities for putting 183rd Street traffic on a diet. Carole Sharwarako is working on a deep dive into the study and its various suggestions.

But solutions with a big impact often come with a big price tag and take a while to implement. In the meantime, Good Speed Cycle has a new project to help keep the community's focus on the problem.

The cycle shop (located, as it happens, on 183rd Street) is selling T-shirts with a slogan inspired by Woody Guthrie's famous guitar sticker ("This machine kills fascists") The GSC shirts will sport the slogan "This machine kills traffic" (with an image of a bicycle). The shirts are being sold for \$25 to \$28 but \$8 of each sale will go to supplying businesses and residents along 183rd with "Fix this street" yard signs.

The campaign shifts the focus from drivers as the primary source of the problem to the street itself.

I've been exchanging email with GSC's Steve Buchtel, who was involved in the development of Homewood's bike plan earlier in this century. I'll be writing more soon about the issues as he sees them and on the village's next steps in the process of addressing 183rd Street.

In short, he believes the design of 183rd Street, wide and straight, is the source of the problem. The street itself invites speed.

Also, Buchtel invites local cyclists and pedestrians to leave a voicemail on GSC's Worst/Best Hotline, 708-794-6588.

"Leave a message about what, in your opinion, is the worst thing about riding bikes in Homewood-Flossmoor, and what's the best. We might use your message in the What's Your Speed (podcast)."

While we wait for the next development from the village, there are T-shirts and the hotline, both opportunities to have a say in the effort to improve the community for travel by foot, pedal or vehicle.

Farmers market returns

The Homewood Indoor Farmers Market was canceled in January because of the COVID-19 surge, but the situation shows signs of improvement, so village officials announced on Jan. 21 that the February event is on.

The market will be open from 8 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Feb. 26, in the Irwin Center, 18120 Highland Ave.

HOMEWOOD-FLOSSMOOR CHRONICLE

About us:

The Homewood-Flossmoor Chronicle was launched in July 2014 by Homewood resident Eric Crump, former editor of the Marshall (Mo.) Democrat-News, who was soon joined by former Times reporter Marilyn Thomas of Homewood and longtime Star editor and columnist Tom Houlihan of Flossmoor, who retired from the Chronicle at the end of 2020.

While our staffing has changed, our mission has not. The editors, with help from a number of community members, are volunteering their time and talents to bring the latest news to residents of Homewood and Flossmoor daily in an online newspaper and monthly in print.

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