



December 1, 2013

Dear Property, Business Owner and/or Resident:

Special Service Area (SSA) #29 was created in 2004 to provide needed commercial services not otherwise provided by the City of Chicago or other sources. Since its creation, the SSA has funded unique amenities and improvements on Chicago Avenue (from California Avenue to Halsted Street), Damen Avenue (from Chicago Avenue to Grand Avenue), Milwaukee Avenue (from Racine Street to Erie Street), and Ogden Avenue (from Fry to the Kennedy Expressway). SSA #29 is managed by the West Town Chicago Chamber of Commerce, which is also sponsoring the proposed reconstitution and expansion of this SSA.

The City of Chicago's website, [www.cityofchicago.org](http://www.cityofchicago.org), states that an SSA is "a taxing district that is an economic development tool. Created by state statute and city ordinance, SSAs are an additional real estate property tax levy that funds additional services beyond municipal services in a defined district." SSA property tax funding is generated and overseen by a local Commission of property and business owners. "SSA Commissions are volunteers from the community that provide local oversight on SSA services, budget and the SSA Agency. Commissioners are selected locally with Aldermanic approval, are appointed by the Mayor, and confirmed by City Council. The Service Provider Agency provides daily management of the SSA and helps assess program performance." In other words, an SSA is the taxing body in which property owners choose to be assessed, and directly choose how that tax money is spent in their district.

Creation and maintenance of an SSA is a two-fold decision. First, property owners and organizations work with the local aldermen and the Department of Housing and Economic Development (D-HED) to evaluate whether an SSA is the right tool for their district. After the sponsoring community agency (in this case, the West Town Chamber of Commerce) submits an application to HED that is reviewed by various departments, the City Council votes on an "SSA Establishment Ordinance."

**For nearly nine successful years, SSA #29 funds have resulted in:**

- Keeping sidewalks clear, clean and safe with sidewalk snow removal, seasonal pressure washing, trash receptacles and a sidewalk cleaning maintenance crew.
- Branding the district with street pole banners and holiday decorations.
- Beautifying building facades by rebating owners up to \$15,000 for their project.
- Graffiti removal services, including rebates to repair acid-etched storefront windows.
- Marketing businesses within the district through both traditional and social media, an online website and an iPhone/Android phone app called Discover West Town.
- Activating the district with special events and festivals, like West Fest and West Town Art Walk.

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SSA #29 would need to be reconstituted to continue funding these services. Based on input thus far from stakeholders, adjacent areas to the SSA are in need of similar services, so the local SSA Advisory Committee is considering expanding the SSA boundaries to extend services to Ashland Avenue (from Division to Grand) and Milwaukee Avenue (from Division to Racine). The 8-member Advisory Committee composed of local property, business owners and residents has been working on developing boundaries, programs and services, a budget, and corresponding tax rates and tax rate caps. We invite you to discuss these recommendations at two upcoming meetings. Feedback will be taken at both Community Meetings and adjustments can be made to the SSA scope based on input from these meetings.

**Monday, January 13, 2014**

**6:00 pm – 8:00 pm**

**Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art**

**2320 W. Chicago Avenue**

**Tuesday, January 21, 2014**

**11:00 am – 1:00 pm**

**Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art**

**2320 W. Chicago Avenue**

We hope to see you at one or both of these meetings. If you are unable to attend, please feel free to contact Katharine Wakem, West Town SSA Program Manager, at [info@westtownchamber.org](mailto:info@westtownchamber.org) or stop by the Chamber office at 1819 W. Chicago Ave. All meeting materials will be available at [www.westtownssa.org](http://www.westtownssa.org). Hard copies of this information will be available at the meetings and/or the Chamber office, 1819 W. Chicago Ave.

Sincerely,

*Stelios Valavanis*

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Chair, West Town SSA Advisory Committee

*Katharine Wakem*

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West Town SSA Program Manager