

VISIONS

THE NEWSLETTER OF
IMODS
Independent Merchants of Downtown Skokie

"The Vision of the Village"

VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 3 • SUMMER 2007

message from the president of imods

By Randy Miles

With the dog days of summer here, we recognize one of our greatest accomplishments as Americans, our celebration of Independence. That same independent spirit that motivated our forefathers motivates us to create a unique identity for our downtown.

Our group, IMODS – the Independent Merchants of Downtown Skokie, draws on the spirit of our forefathers who had a vision of a free society where it's people would govern themselves and participate in free trade and commerce in their quest for "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness".

The recent announcement recognizing Avalon Bay Communities as the developer of choice by our Village fathers has made a bold statement that only time will preside over. Avalon Bay offers many benefits that other, more conventional, developers do not. They are a Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) publicly traded with a bank account 5 billion dollars strong, and investments totaling more than 11 billion dollars. With that kind of capitalization, the need for public monies is greatly diminished . . . very attractive to our elected officials on the surface. The idea of luxury rental units is not new, however it is a new twist to our emerging downtown market. We do believe it will bring a different breed of resident to our market, the "empty

nesters" and young professionals with more disposable income. These components are definitely desirable to the business community, but will the "big picture" be in evidence when all is said and done?

The ability of Avalon Bay to work with existing merchants and property owners will be the true test. Anyone with deep enough pockets can come in, level a block or portion thereof, and build something that eventually will pan out -- for them. The question is, can they do it and fit in to those pesky INDEPENDENT MERCHANT'S vision of downtown? Remember, this movement started with a grassroots group of merchants and property owners who wanted to redevelop OUR downtown in a methodical and cohesive manner with a comprehensive overall plan toward the future . . . a somewhat novel but not insurmountable task. We believe that IMODS not only has the expertise, but is owed the right to participate in this all important public process of shaping our new downtown. With the public process of design and planning through the appearance and planning commissions about to begin, "We the People" have an obligation to our community to be informed and involved with that process. Have a happy and safe Summer, and remember how our great country was formed!

Downtown Business updates

Forest City: Work continues on the Forest City landscaping project. The quad is beginning to take shape and should be a nice addition to the downtown open space. The Board approved the bond issue that will provide up to \$10 million in reimbursements to Forest City for TIF eligible expenses. Forest City has already spent about \$100 million on the research park including the purchase of the property. There are now 8 tenants occupying about 30% of the four existing buildings (over 200,000 sq. ft.) and about 750 employees on site. Forest City is in negotiations with several more prospective tenants.

Dr. McWhinnie, DDS/Smiles of Skokie: Dave McWhinnie, DDS, has relocated his office from Dempster St. to 5001 Oakton St. His state of the art "Smiles of Skokie" practice is now in the Metropolitan condo building and has plenty of free parking on the premises. He is welcoming new patients and would love to have you drop in for a cup of coffee and a brief tour. Phone 847-675-3002.

UPS Store opens on Oakton: The new UPS Store in Downtown Skokie is open at 4957 Oakton St. and offers UPS shipping and packaging services from a convenient neighborhood location. They are a one-stop source for shipping, mailbox services, moving supplies, professional packaging, printing, copying, fax/notary services, and much more. Phone 847-329-7400.

Swift Childcare Opening Second Location: Edna Varda of Swift Childcare at 8064 Lincoln Ave. announces that work is underway on their second location at 8260 N. Elmwood near the Skokie Post Office. Phone 847-675-6040.

Edward Jones Financial Advisor: Glen Roter announces their office move to 7937 N. Lincoln Ave. Edward Jones specializes in providing financial services to individual investors in the communities in which they live and work. They are pleased to remain in downtown Skokie. Phone 847-674-8565.

In this issue:

Featured Merchant:

- Marge's Flowers, pg. 2
- Avalon Bay Project Impact, pg. 2
- IMODS as Energizer, pg. 3
- Arts Education and Skokie, pg. 3
- Arts Calendar, pg. 3
- Zoning News, pg. 4
- Backlot Bash, pg. 4 + see insert

Every successful downtown revitalization effort is based on a strong public-private partnership. It appears to me that with the emerging projects in the downtown district that the IMODS - Village of Skokie partnership is bearing fruit.

*Terry Jenkins
Managing Director
Business Districts, Inc.*

IMODS new web site up and running!

We are pleased to announce the launch of www.downtownskokie.com for everything IMODS! Our thanks to IMODS member and web designer Scott Holtz of 5207inc.com for his gift of time and talent and bringing us to the web!

Marge's Flowers, Featured Merchant

Kathy Skobel, Arts & Letters Ltd., IMODS member

On April 5, 1950, when Marge and Jake Kalmes were newlyweds, they took a huge step to open Marge's Flowers. Marge and Jake were both born in Skokie and both were from families in the wholesale nursery business, once a thriving industry amid the farmland here. Jake Kalmes passed away nearly two years ago, and now Marge is retired, but she talks lovingly



Ron, Gloria and Marge Kalmes

about her business, now run by her son, Ron Kalmes and his wife, Gloria.

"We first opened at 8006 Lincoln, moved to the 5100 block of Oakton, then to 5040 Warren and for the last 33 years, the business has been right here at 8038 Lincoln Avenue. I grew up in the wholesale greenhouse business, working in our flower fields (now the site of the Skokie Public Library) since I was eight years old, until four

years ago when I retired," she says. "I've always worked with flowers, and I loved every minute of it."

Ron has been in the family business for 33 years and Gloria for 20 years. They manage the business and customer relations with four full-time staff including three designers and a driver. However, during the big holiday seasons, 12 people work with them, Gloria notes.

Marge enjoys reminiscing about downtown Skokie. She recalls how the town grew in a big way in the 1950s. "You could buy anything in town in the 50s. The fashion district on Oakton was busy with top of the line clothing retailers... Gloria adds: "but Old Orchard came, and you know what happened next. Stores disappeared. But now we're seeing the beginning of big change. Gradually we're seeing some new businesses, and we're pleased to hear about the Village's plans for revitalization."

According to Gloria, Marge's Flowers is best known for its floral designs for weddings, parties, sympathy, and bar and bat mitzvahs. But, Marge adds, "our favorite work has always been satisfying our customers." Their specialties include: fresh flowers, custom arrangements, and special orders, created by their service-minded, courteous, high-quality staff.

In discussing the new residential construction being planned, Ron notes: "We hope our new neighbors, and those just driving by, will stop in once or twice, pick up a bunch of fresh flowers, and they may find themselves making a habit of adding a bouquet of color, fragrance and art to brighten up their home or office. We look forward to serving our old and new Skokie friends and neighbors, and the surrounding area, for a long time to come."

You'll find Marge's Flowers at 8038 Lincoln Avenue.

Phone 847-673-0218 or visit www.margesflowershop.com.

New Skokie Swift Station Update

Engineering and survey work continue on the Downtown CTA station in spite of the lack of budget progress at the State level. The Site plans for the two lots at Searle Parkway and Skokie Boulevard show a long circular drive for bus drop-off and kiss & ride on the south parcel, and overflow short term parking and taxi drop-off and parking on the north side, with dedications on Skokie Blvd. for north and southbound turn lanes to Searle Parkway. Additional turn lanes for other streets, a bus pull off for southbound buses, and landscaped medians would be added to Skokie Boulevard as part of the overall improvement project. A public hearing on the CTA station design and overall site plan took place on Thursday, July 26 at Village Hall.

Village Meets with IMODS and Affected Merchants

Bill Novello, Novello & Associates, PC, Property Owner, IMODS member

A special meeting was held at Village Hall on Tuesday, June 19, 2007 to discuss and learn more about the Village's plans for the development of the block bounded by Oakton/Lincoln/Brown/Floral. Al Rigoni, Village Manager; Pete Peyer, Director of Community Development; and Tom Thompson, Economic Development Coordinator presented an informative overview of current developments and answered numerous questions. Representatives from Avalon Bay did not attend the meeting. Village representatives outlined the following key points:

1. The current development proposal is limited to the Village parking lots on the block plus the photo store located at 5120 Oakton Street.
2. The Village has selected Avalon Bay, a real estate investment trust, as the preferred developer of the initial parcel for a variety of reasons, including the following:
 - A. It has proposed a unique residential rental development including parking, 186 rental units, and 26,000 sq. ft. of new retail/commercial space.
 - B. It is perceived that the residential rental development will coincide with a need for this type of housing as Forest City builds out the Illinois Science and Technology Park.
 - C. It has the financial strength and history of not needing community (TIF) money to undertake and complete the project. If Avalon Bay commits to the project, it will not be subject to the usual "pre-sale" commitments required by a condominium developer and will not be looking for the same type of initial profits to make the project work.
 - D. It intends to operate the property as a rental community upon completion (currently owning and operating 48,000 units) to insure that the development will be successful. As such, it has a longer term view toward the profitability of the development which does not depend on the resale of the units.
 - E. Upon authorization from the Village Board of Trustees, staff will enter into negotiations with Avalon Bay and hopes to reach a preliminary development agreement within 60-90 days. If agreement is reached, Avalon Bay will be able to start the development very quickly. If agreement can't be reached, the Village will be in a position to adjust its plans in a reasonably short time frame.
 - F. Avalon Bay's business plan does not contemplate the inclusion of subsidized rental arrangements and its proposed rents seem to be well within reach of the Skokie rental market.

Major issues remain unaddressed, in large part due to the fact that things are in a very early stage, including the following:

1. The Village has a 100K gallon water retention tank under the parking lots that needs to be replaced or relocated.
2. There is no plan for maintaining existing parking during the necessary periods of construction.
3. The development will be disruptive to existing businesses as a result of the cranes, truck traffic, noise, and re-routing of traffic, etc. that will be necessary during construction.

The Village hopes that other property owners will be willing to participate in the development with Avalon Bay to expand the scope of the development and assures us that Avalon Bay will be in contact with all property owners upon completion of a preliminary agreement.

IMODS and Good Coffee – Both Great Energizers

By Monte Rifkin, IMODS Secretary

While IMODS celebrates two years since a small handful of downtown area business owners, residents, and other concerned citizens met to talk about “what to do about downtown Skokie”, the Village is now planning to develop the “cornerstone” of the downtown Skokie area. Because of the processes that are required for these types of developments to go forward, your participation in IMODS is more critical now, than ever before.

Since we began, we’ve presented our “vision” to the powers that be, and we’ve been acknowledged (and partially funded) by the Village of Skokie to serve in an “advice and consent” role in many direction-oriented functions to serve the growth of downtown. Some of these have included; an extension of the existing TIF financing to offer refacing of the buildings that current owners want to improve, with easier criteria for what the funds can be used for; the new, free Wi-fi zones that have been constructed at areas around downtown, (we hope to expand this to include ALL of downtown some day); the holiday lights program, which we expect to see expanding on an annual basis to incorporate more and more of the downtown district; a comprehensive arts and entertainment committee which is developing themed areas throughout the growth process – you know them as the Street Level Art Gallery, and their art presentations appear in many vacant storefront windows throughout downtown Skokie. We’re coordinating the Backlot Bash, a huge outdoor, weekend festival for the last weekend in August, in conjunction with the Skokie Park District and the Village of Skokie, among others. You get the idea . . .

The point is, we’re busy. Real busy. So while our small handful of original Skokians has grown to over 60 dues-paying members, and continues, we now need your help. Please help us to continue to perform our good work for our, and your, town. With annual dues of only \$100, and the value that we provide for it, there’s no reason NOT to get involved. But just as important is your input. We need to know what you think. Share your ideas for downtown Skokie, voice your opinions, and serve on a committee. We really need your help. Get energized!

Contact any of our board members for more information. It’s our goal to serve your needs with regard to the future of downtown Skokie, but if you don’t speak up, we won’t hear you. Join us. You’ll be glad that you did. It’s your downtown, too. Have a great summer!

Downtown Skokie Arts Calendar

Music and Performance at the Skokie Theatre, 7924 Lincoln Avenue

The Bob Acri Octet, September 5 at 1:30pm
The Bob Acri Octet, September 26 at 1:30pm
The Bob Acri Octet, October 10 at 1:30pm
The Bob Acri Octet, October 24 at 1:30pm
 Visit www.skokietheatre.com for information.

Salon d’Arte in the Sculpture Park

The second Salon d’Arte event will be an outdoor affair. You’ll want to join us at the Skokie Sculpture Park for a picnic and guided sculpture walk. Watch for fliers and posters announcing the late summer/early fall date and details.

Visual Arts at Northbranch Gallery, 8149 Lincoln Avenue

Open Wed. - Sat., 11am - 5pm, or by appointment
 July 9 - Aug. 18 **Jim Zimple - Sculpture/Photos**
 Aug. 24 - Aug. 26 **Backlot Bash 2007**
 Sept. 7 - Oct. 27 **Eleanor Himmelfarb - Paintings on Canvas and Paper**
 Nov. 2 - Dec. 15 **Chris Kerr and Dee Dee Scacci - Collaborative Installation**

Email for appointment or information:
northbranchgallery@comcast.net

Arts Education: A Boon to Our Community

Sonya Baysinger – Chairperson, IMODS Arts & Entertainment Committee

In a time when the Arts in Public Schools are facing drastic budget cuts, we live in a community where there is no skimping on quality. On April 17, 2007, at the National School Boards Association annual conference in San Francisco, Niles Township High Schools District 219 was named the top program for arts education in the United States. This award is given by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts to schools that display an outstanding support program for arts education. These words are impressive in and among themselves however, the benefits to our community are deep-rooted and far-reaching. Art, children and education are cornerstones of our future.

A traditional function of the arts is to epitomize individual interpretation and expression. When students produce and learn about art, they begin to understand themselves and the world around them. They gain personal satisfaction through individual accomplishment. The capacity for visual discrimination and judgment is required for the growing complexity of our contemporary culture.

Art builds and enriches our shared community environment. Experience with the arts should lead us to the desire and the ability to make improvements in our surroundings. Art education programs such as our very own District 219 and District 69 consistently produce citizens who are ready to assume their share of responsibility for the improvement of the aesthetic dimension of community life. An artist requires a significant amount of freedom of thought. Although many aspects of life allow for creative behavior, arts education is especially essential because of the fundamental emphasis placed on uniqueness, diversity and individuality.

Hopefully you will join IMODS and the Skokie Park District as we celebrate the accomplishments of our young artists at this year’s festival entitled The Backlot Bash. The dates are August 24-26, 2007. Visit the Art Tent. It will be the venue for the District 219 Art Show. Also, the storefronts on Oakton Avenue leading up to the festival will be a long gallery of artworks done by the students of District 69. These kids, their teachers and our local arts education programs appreciate your continued support.

New Construction Condo/Townhome Sales for the Greater Downtown Skokie Area

As compiled by Steve Marciani, Planning Supervisor, Village of Skokie, eff. 6/30/07.

Development		# Built	# Sold
Madison Place	Condos	172	165
Oakton Park		24	23
Metropolitan of Skokie		61	49
8200 Lincoln	Condos	42	26
8200 Lincoln	Townhouses	5	1
Madison Square*	(Skokie & Madison)	30	16
Astoria at Main*		18	7
8038 Floral*	Townhouses	4	0
* under construction			
Totals		356	287

Not including the three early projects in the heart of Downtown where all 147 residential units have been completely sold for several years.

Artist Honored at Northbranch Gallery

Sonya Baysinger – Chairperson, IMODS Arts & Entertainment Committee

The paintings of local artist Eleanor Himmelfarb have always been an inspiration to me. I am honored to announce that she has accepted my invitation to exhibit her work at Northbranch Gallery. The show dates are September 8 through October 27, 2007. Please join me on Saturday, September 8 from 5-8pm for the opening reception to honor the life and works of this prolific artist. Ms. Himmelfarb will be present and meeting her would be enlightening for everyone in our community.

IMODS is partially subsidized by a grant from the Downtown TIF Fund/Village of Skokie Board of Trustees.

IMODS Board of Directors:

Randy Miles, President, Village Inn Pizzeria
Monte Rifkin, Secretary, Remred, Inc.
Dick Witry, Treasurer, Attorney
John Haben, Outreach Chair, Haben Funeral Home & Crematory
Peter Nicholas, Developer Relations Chair, Nicholas Clark Architects Ltd.
Sonya Baysinger, Arts & Entertainment Chair, Northbranch Art Gallery
Jordan Hirsh, Membership Chair, Cigar King
Paul McGivern, Skokie Ace Hardware
William G. Schmidt, Skokie Park District

Visit www.downtownskokie.com for a complete list of IMODS members and contact information.

VISIONS newsletter designed by IMODS member Kathy Skobel of Arts & Letters Ltd., a Downtown Skokie graphic design/marketing/advertising firm.

development news

By Bill Novello

IMODS has been informed that the Village of Skokie will be unveiling a comprehensive plan for downtown development before the Plan Commission at its August 2 meeting at 8:00 p.m. Titled the "2020 Plan for Sector A: Downtown" the plan proposes extensive changes and ideas that the Village intends to use as a guideline for the future. Elements of the plan include an expansion of the development area; identification of the transit oriented development (TOD) areas within and bordering downtown; zoning changes in support of the TODs; identification of "flexible" areas in which the Village envisions new or enhanced uses; and commentary about the types of uses that the Village will encourage (and discourage) within the various zones of the development area.

Village staff has emphasized that the plan is in draft form for the purpose of gaining public participation. Staff will be available Aug. 2 at 7:00 p.m., one hour prior to the Plan Commission meeting to answer questions. Copies of the plan are available at the Department of Community Development at Village Hall. The IMODS board feels the plan represents a major step forward and encourages all members to get involved.

Many of the ideas in the plan have been inspired by joint meetings held in 2005 & 2006 with the Independent Merchants of Downtown Skokie (IMODS) and the Mayor's Committee on Downtown Development (CODD).

IMODS is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the revitalization of downtown Skokie.

We are comprised of merchants, property owners, residents and interested citizens who recognize the need to be involved to help shape the future of downtown Skokie. We have been recognized by the Skokie Board of Trustees and funded through the downtown tax increment financing district to work with Planning, Zoning, Economic Development and the Manager's office on matters pertaining to downtown issues.

We welcome your questions and are actively seeking new members and volunteers. For more information, contact Randy Miles, IMODS president at rmiles@covad.net or call 847-410-8857. Visit IMODS on the web at www.downtownskokie.com

I M O D S

Independent Merchants of Downtown Skokie

"The Vision of the Village"

c/o 8050 Lincoln Avenue
Skokie, IL 60077

PRSR. STD.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #220
SKOKIE, IL

Why is a United States Marine Colonel from the east coast getting married on the main stage...

...of the **Backlot Bash** on Saturday, Aug. 25th at 4:00 PM in Skokie, Illinois? It all started in Baghdad in 2004 when Joe Cantafio, lead singer of the 101st Rock Division (performing at the Backlot Bash Saturday, Aug. 25th following the wedding) bumped into USMC Col. Dennis Arinello in the dining facility at Camp Victory. Cantafio and his group were in Iraq entertaining the troops. Arinello and Cantafio became fast friends and have kept in touch since their first meeting.



Carleen Gwinn & Dennis Arinello

from the Chicago area, everyone's concerns have now been satisfied.

Cantafio and his band will perform at the Backlot Bash immediately following the wedding, which will take place on the main stage, and everyone attending the festival is invited to witness a true Marine wedding! Carleen's wish to be married in her hometown will also come true. **Don't forget to bring some rice!**

Col. Arinello requested that Cantafio and his band perform at his wedding on the east coast on Aug. 25th, but when the Backlot Bash informed Cantafio that he was scheduled to perform in Skokie on that same day, Cantafio called Randy Miles from IMODS and explained the situation. Randy and the committee understood Cantafio's dilemma and after weeks of meetings and schedule changes, and the fact that the bride to be, Carleen Gwinn, USMC former Sergeant, is



Skokie's Backlot Bash will take place Friday, Aug. 24 through Sunday Aug. 26 on Oakton Street just west of Lincoln Avenue. This is a new three-day summer tradition featuring live music, a carnival, food and drink tents, a classic car show, an art fair, a business expo with Wi-Fi, We Do Care Troop Support Festival, and much more! It is presented by the Skokie Park District, IMODS and the Skokie Chamber of Commerce.

If you would like to be part of this event, there are a number of options ranging from a booth in the business expo on Saturday and Sunday to sponsorships which start at \$500. We expect to draw 35,000 people to this new and exciting community event.

For more details on the event and opportunities to showcase your business, contact: Janet Rosenberg, Corporate Sponsorship Coordinator, Skokie Park District at 847-929-7156 or jrosenberg@skokieparkdistrict.org Visit www.backlotbash.com to see a complete schedule of events and performers as well as the latest updates on festival parking locations.



SKOKIE'S BACKLOT BASH

www.BacklotBash.com

Friday, August 24

6pm Vertigo (U2 tribute)
7:45pm District 219
Art Show Kickoff
8:15pm American English,
(Beatles Tribute)

Saturday, August 25

11am West Indian Folk Dance Company
1pm Mark Cleveland Band
3:15pm Skokie Tributes:
Police and Fire Dept. recognition,
U.S. Army Sgt. Kraig Foyteck Memorial
4pm USMC Col. Dennis Arinello Marries
Carleen Gwinn, USMC former Sergeant
4:30pm 101st Rock Division
8pm The Ides of March
featuring Jim Peterik

Sunday, August 26

Noon The RipTones
2pm Dollar Store
4pm Ha Ha Tonka
5:45pm Car Show Awards
6:15pm Bottle Rockets

- ☆ Food & Drink Tents
- ☆ Classic Car Show - Sunday
- ☆ Art Show
- ☆ Business Expo - Sat. & Sun.
- ☆ Carnival Rides
- ☆ "We Do Care" Troop Support Festival, Sat. Only
- ☆ Kids Climbing Wall
- ☆ Silent Films at the Skokie Theatre



August 24-26

a New Summer Tradition

IN DOWNTOWN SKOKIE



Backlot Bash Parking Update

Festival parking is available at the following locations as of publication date. Please note the days and times. Check www.backlotbash.com for additional information and other approved locations!

- Chase Bank, 8001 Lincoln Ave.
Fri. 6-10pm, Sat. 3-10pm, Sun. Noon-8pm
- LaSalle Bank, 7952 Lincoln Ave.
Fri. 6-10pm, Sat. 3-10pm, Sun. Noon-8pm
- Niles West High School, Oakton & Edens Expressway
Fri. No Parking, Sat. 6-10pm only, Sun. Noon-8pm
- St. Peter's Catholic Church, Brown St. and Lincoln Ave., Lincoln side of church in the lot north of school
Fri. 6-10pm, Sat. 11am-10pm, Sun. Noon-8pm
- Lincoln Junior High School, 7839 Lincoln Ave.
Fri. 6-10pm, Sat. 11am-10pm, Sun. Noon-8pm
- Forest City parking lots on Searle Parkway, during Festival hours only
- Oakton Community College parking lots, Lincoln Ave. at Niles Ave., during Festival hours only

Tune in to Local cable access to learn more about the Backlot Bash and IMODS

We invite you to watch "Skokie People Speak", a public access TV program available on Channel 35 (Comcast) and Channel 19 (RCN). Randy Miles, IMODS President and Michelle Tuft, Director of Recreation, Skokie Park District, will be featured on the show which airs Tuesdays at 9:00pm. You'll learn more about the Backlot Bash and IMODS in this special show which begins July 31 and runs on Tuesdays through August 28.

Charlie Chaplin's silent films free at the Skokie Theatre during the Backlot Bash

The Skokie Theatre will be screening a series of Charlie Chaplin silent movies during the Backlot Bash. The name "Backlot" pays tribute to downtown Skokie's (then Niles Center's) heritage as a silent picture western back lot set between 1907 and 1915. Chicago's Essanay Studios, the MGM of its day, frequently used Skokie because its dirt roads, saloons and wood frame buildings resembled an old prairie town. Essanay used this area frequently for shooting movies featuring gunfights, bank robberies, and cowboy and Indian skirmishes. In 1915, the Niles Center Theater (now Skokie Theatre) opened and residents were finally able to see the very westerns that they had watched being filmed here. Essanay was the home of stars such as "Bronco Billy" Anderson, Ben Turpin, Wallace Beery, Gloria Swanson — and in 1914 and 1915 — Charlie Chaplin. Stop in and enjoy! Donations to the Skokie Theatre Music Foundation will be appreciated.

Skokie's Backlot Bash is presented by: Skokie Park District, IMODS, Village of Skokie and the Skokie Chamber of Commerce.