



# TOWER TALK @ PARK TOWER CONDOMINIUM

February-April 2013

## FROM THE DESK OF THE PROPERTY MANAGER



### RISER REPLACEMENT UPDATE

Since the fall of 2011, we have completed seven tiers. With that experience we have been able to refine our planning and approach and improve our budget and scheduling.

Fortunately, our timing and schedules have been fairly on target. However, the volume and cost of materials has exceeded expectations. Once we opened the walls we found all sorts of problems that had to be addressed. For example, on most tiers we replaced 80% or more of the drywall. Also, the plumber has had to make an array of improvements to other things we found behind the wall. This is of course in everyone's best interest. Finally, the Board did elect the choice to insulate the new lines to help absorb noise and to save energy.

With the coming fiscal year's budget, we have recommend a change in the pace of riser replacements. For 2013 we plan to complete two tiers starting with the '14/'15 kitchens, floors 55 to 29. This will be completed in March and April. Then in the fall, the '01 kitchens/'04 bathrooms will be completed from floors 3 to 29. Beginning in 2014, we are planning for three tiers per year over the next eight years. One each Spring, Summer and Fall. This pace works better with the PTCA budget and allows space for other projects in the pipeline that will need our attention as well.

We will continue to address the risers in the order the condition survey called for, post notices and send letters to effected units. As we get to your tiers over the coming months and years, be sure to pay close attention to the dates and activities being planned, so you know what to expect and how you will need to prepare.

By, Tim Patricio  
Property Manager

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#### CONTACTS:

**Office**  
773-769-3250

**Fax**  
773-769-0047

**Doorman**  
773-769-3083

**Garage**  
773-271-8859

**Market**  
773-275-9130

**Cleaners  
Recv. Room**  
773-784-3353

**Health Club**  
773-769-1513

**RCN  
Service/Billing**  
312-955-2500  
**New Services**  
866-308-5556

### 2012 HOLIDAY FUND & FOOD DONATIONS

Thank you for your generous cash gifts to the Park Tower Condominium Holiday Fund. A total of \$16,125.00 was collected, 12% higher than in 2011. Funds were distributed between employees at their holiday party.

Your food donations were also greatly appreciated by the Greater Chicago Food Depository Pantry and the recipients.

## COMMUNITY COURT ADVOCATES

Chicago offers some of the best reasons for living in a big city. We are privileged to enjoy great theater, the best of museums, fine dining, convenient transportation, beautiful parks, diverse and interesting people, and more. Of course, there is crime. According to recent statistics, Chicago's murder rate has increased by 18% while its overall crime rate has decrease since 2011. Even though crime is prevalent, the Edgewater Community has less crime than many other areas of the city. There are various reasons for this, one of which is residents of our community who have been instrumental in speaking out against crime and sending strong messages to the courts.

Ed Kuske is a court advocate for the Uptown, Edgewater, and Roger Park communities, along with a small group of 20-30 community residents. Ed has lived in the Uptown Community for twenty-two years. He became active in the community by attending the Beat Meetings sponsored by the Police Department when he retired from a food and manufacturing company as its head of operation. Eventually, he became the Beat Facilitator. During these meetings court cases and the role of court advocates were discussed. In time, Ed took on this role and committed to attending the court cases of individuals who were arrested for crimes in our communities. Ed and his small group of supporters have attended 1500 to 1600 court appearances, averaging between 15-30 cases per month. The majority of the cases are heard at the 26<sup>th</sup> Street and California court house while others are heard at the Skokie location.

Court cases in the United States are a long and arduous ordeal. Cases are often rescheduled for a multitude of reasons, from attorney date conflicts or need for additional discovery time. This is necessary to ensure that each defendant has every opportunity to a fair court trial. Eventually, after months, sometimes years, the case comes before the judge or jury for a verdict. As a result of court advocates' tenaciousness, 90% of criminals receive a harsher sentence. The Court (judges) recognizes the presence of court advocates and understands that the community represented is standing up for justice. There is a much higher conviction rate, 100%, when victims attend their court cases. The problem is, many victims of street crimes are afraid to attend and testify. This is why court advocates are so important, they stand up for victims. Ed believes, "Helping victims is the greatest satisfaction. Attending cases give you an overall understanding of the justice system. It helps the police, makes a difference when judge sees court advocates, sends a message to criminals to stay out of communities represented by advocates, and cases get more attention from courts resulting in tougher sentences when plea deals occur."



In December of 2012, Ed and 57 court advocates covered 26 cases. A total of 222.5 years of prison time was distributed to criminals who appeared before the courts. Two of the most recent cases that resulted in prison time are:

- Derrick Peterson (on charges of aggravated battery with gun, drugs, and attempted murder) plead guilty for 9 years in prison. His sentence will run consecutive with his prior sentence of 8 years on the drug cases for a total of 17 years in prison.
- Ricardo Degante was offered a plea bargain of 8 years for aggravated battery and the murder of a 12 year old gang member. His case was determined on January 9, 2013.

We extend a special thanks to all court advocates who volunteer their time on behalf of our communities. The number of advocates that appear in court says volumes to the judges and to the criminals. More advocates are needed. It would make a huge difference if you have the time to attend one or several court hearings. Anyone who is interested in supporting the court advocate group should contact Ed at:

[eakuske1@comcast.net](mailto:eakuske1@comcast.net)

By, Betty Terry-Lundy

Join the national initiative and become a volunteer in the community. Volunteering has many benefits.

- ◆ It allows you to give back to others.
- ◆ It expands your social circle.
- ◆ It is good for your mind and body (combats depression and helps you stay physically fit).
- ◆ It builds self-confidence.
- ◆ It provides job experience.
- ◆ It builds personal and job skills.

# GREEN WEEK

## PARK TOWER 2013 SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

### **MONDAY APRIL 22nd RECYCLE ELECTRONICS**

Collection of household electronics, batteries, light bulbs, and other similar materials in the mall loading area adjacent to the Security Office.

### **TUESDAY APRIL 23rd SAFE DISPOSAL OF HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS**

Collection of household products, chemicals, painting supplies, old building materials, carpeting and other similar materials in the mall loading area adjacent to the Security Office.

### **WEDNESDAY APRIL 24th GREEN CLEANING CLASS by FACILITY SUPPLY SYSTEMS**

Wednesday night at 7-8 PM in the Party Room, Management is sponsoring a class with our primary janitorial supply vendor. Come and get some professional tips on green cleaning and maintenance for your household, and we will be giving out complimentary micro-fiber rags, excellent for cleaning just about any surface without paper waste.

### **THURSDAY APRIL 25th CHARITABLE DONATIONS & BIKE REGISTRATIONS**

Collection of used furniture and personal items (clothes, shoes, etc.) for charitable donations in the mall area loading dock at the back of the building. Please indicate what on the space provided below. If you are going to have furniture to donate, we will schedule it to be inspected for Bed Bugs in advance. Clothes should be put in plastic bags. We will make arrangements for your donations to benefit 'Care for Real' and 'The Brown Elephant'. Also, **Annual Bike Registration Begins** - we have a handful of vacant spots available in the bike room, contact the Management Office for details.

### **FRIDAY APRIL 26th BIKE OR MASS TRANIST TO WORK DAY & BIKE TUNE UPS**

Join us in a Park Tower day of reducing our fossil fuel dependence! Either bike, train, or bus to work! Also, **Bike Tune-Ups 4PM to 8PM at the Loading Dock** with 'On The Fly Bike Repair'. We will post and e-mail a price list once it is available. You can contact him directly to set up a specific appointment, or just show up on the dock in the back - Joe with On The Fly Bicycle Repair, 847-436-2453. (ontheflychicago.com) Not on our e-mail list? Send an e-mail to the address below.

### **SATURDAY APRIL 27th RUMMAGE SALE, BIKE TUNE UPS and PAPER SHREDDING**

Annual Resident Rummage Sale in the Mall area, 9 AM - 3 PM. Your 'trash' could be someone else's 'treasure'! We only ask that you indicate below that you would like to participate and we will register you and contact you with details. **Bike Tune-Ups 9AM to ??PM at the Loading Dock** with 'On The Fly Bike Repair'. Please bring your bikes by the loading area before 12:30PM so you can get an accurate return time from Joe. Also, the mobile shredder will be here on the dock, 10AM to 12PM.

I have the following items to donate to charity:

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I would like to participate in the Rummage Sale: YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

If yes - Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit # \_\_\_\_\_ Phone# \_\_\_\_\_

With either or both, return this form to the Management Office or the Drop Box in the lobby, by Monday April 22nd, at the latest. Contact us with any questions by phone, 773-769-3250 or by e-mail at 'parktowercondo@draperandkramer.com'.

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## REMEMBER: RECYCLE

Are you properly recycling your plastic, glass, metals, and paper? Here's a reminder of what can and cannot be set aside for recycling.

### DO RECYCLE:

Newspapers  
Magazines  
Cardboard (heavy like for packing/ shipping boxes)  
Chipboard (thin cardboard like for cereal boxes)  
Phone books  
Copier/printer paper  
Handouts (stapled is ok)  
Steel cans  
Aluminum cans  
Aluminum foil (used is fine, just rinse it off first)  
EMPTY aerosol cans  
EMPTY 6-pack plastic rings (no cans still in them)  
Glass bottles & jars: clear, green or brown ONLY  
Plastic bottles: empty soda, milk, water, juice, detergent style bottles. Only with numbers 1 or 2 within the recycle stamp on the container.

### DO NOT RECYCLE:

Plastic bags  
Bottle caps or jar lids. (Plastic caps or lids are often made of a different composite type than the bottle or jar itself.)  
Panels of glass  
Light bulbs  
Mirrors  
Drinking glasses  
Any plastic bottles with numbers 3 or higher within the recycle stamp on the container.  
No full or partially-full aerosol cans. These could potentially explode.  
No bottles containing motor oil or a similar substance.

By, Vince DiFruscio

**Please do not leave any trash or recycle items on the floor in the garbage chute area. We thank you for your cooperation.**

## RENTING AT PARK TOWER

A couple of months ago, your Tower Talk reporters found themselves discussing rental condos. There are a significant number of them here at Park Tower, and opinion among residents seems to be mixed as to whether that's a good or bad thing. So we decided to do this story on rentals, one that would lay out some key facts and include the results of an opinion survey.

At Park Tower Condominium Association, renters currently occupy 31% of the units. That percentage has been growing slowly, up from perhaps 25% a decade ago. Tim Patricio, Property Manager, believes our rental occupancy is about the same as other condominium buildings in the neighborhood. Those further north probably have a higher percentage of rentals due to Loyola student demand (and parents who will pay!). Condos closer to the Loop, being more expensive to own, are likely to have a higher percentage of owner-occupied units.

A few condominium associations, by virtue of their governing documents, disallow rental units altogether. (PTCA is governed by its Declarations, which do allow rental units.)

Percentage of rental occupancy can be an issue when a prospective buyer shops mortgage rates. Most banks depend on the FHA (Federal Housing Authority) to guarantee the mortgages they offer. Currently, receiving an FHA-backed mortgage requires that fewer than 50% of the units in a condo building be rentals. So prospective buyers in buildings where more than half the units are rentals may find it harder if not impossible to get an affordable mortgage. At 31% rentals, Park Tower seems to be a safe bet for now.

Building insurance is another consideration. Park Tower's insurance company has informed the Board that it would become "concerned" if rental percentage were to reach

40%, and that rates will go up significantly should it get to 45%. At 31% rentals, we're all right for now, but those 40% and 45% marks vis a vis building insurance are ones to keep in mind. (This is not to be confused with condo insurance, which PTCA requires all owners to carry on their units and contents, regardless of whether those units are owner or tenant-occupied.)

In our conversation about rentals, Tim made some observations about rental vs owner-occupied units.

- Because they turn over more frequently, rental units typically require more of our building resources than do owner-occupied units: office time perusing new lease agreements; elevator usage and paid supervision at move in/move out; and staff effort in answering questions new tenants typically have about the building and living here.
- New residents, including renters, pay a one-time, all-inclusive fee of \$520 that covers registration, move in/move out, and pre- and post-pest inspections. Tim thinks that, by and large, this fee – in rental units more frequent given turnover – pretty well covers their additional draw on building resources.
- When there is undue added time or cost involved with a rental, it is usually in units where the landlord does not himself live in our building. This is not uniformly the case, of course, and we have many diligent landlords living elsewhere. In any event, we are obliged by the Illinois Condominium Property Act to treat all owners in a fair and respectful manner .. and the Association tries to do so.

*Continued on page 6*

## RENTING AT PARK TOWER (continued)

- Tenants should talk with their landlords about non-critical maintenance work in their units and landlords, in turn, should initiate the desired work orders. Approval by owners is required for all but emergency repairs.

An opinion survey was designed, then approved by the Park Tower Newsletter Committee and Park Tower Management. It was distributed as an attachment to management's emailed News & Updates. Several sets of statements were presented. Respondents were asked to indicate how much they agree with the set that best describes their situation here at Park Tower.

Tenants (5 responding)

- I am comfortable in my rental unit.
- My landlord seems satisfied to be renting out in this building.
- The management office has been able to address my questions and concerns.
- I am a tenant now but might someday consider owning here.

*All are quite comfortable; most are satisfied with their landlords (one "difficult," being out-of-state), are pleased with management and divided "yes" or "maybe" on whether they might one day want to own here.*

Landlords (7 responding, 5 of them also represented in the resident category below)

- I am satisfied to be renting out in this building.
- My tenants seem to have few if any complaints about the building and/or the management office.

*All but one is satisfied to be renting out here, and most hear few if any complaints about management.*

Residents-owners (9 responding, plus the 5 who also responded as landlords)

- My interactions with tenants and landlords have been fine, no different than with owner-occupied units.
- I am satisfied with the current percentage of rentals vs owner-occupied units in this building.

*About two-thirds find interactions with tenants and landlords good, but several pointedly do not. In the "resident and also landlord" category, all but one believe the current percentage of rentals is fine, but most of the others (those who simply live here) are somewhat very dissatisfied with that percentage. Presumably, those respondents would prefer a higher percentage of owner-occupied units.*

It's hard to draw conclusions with responses coming from just 2% of our condo units. More meaningful, perhaps, are samplings of comments written in response to the last question, asked of everyone who took the survey: What was it that first attracted you to Park Tower, and is it still true?

".. when I first walked in and saw the view, plus the health club pool.  
 .. security at the front desk and the covered garage.  
 .. new arrivals do not seem acquainted with rules, such as [not] making unit improvements after hours.

.. the neat, quiet and kind environment which attracted us to Park Tower 14 years ago is gradually disappearing.

.. no pets allowed and, yes, it's still true.

.. budgeted and long-term planning, professionalism of property manager.

.. unique architecture, and in years since the financial planning, upkeep, and continued improvements.

.. well-built, well-managed building with many amenities, located in a nice/improving neighborhood.

.. have contacted doorman on several occasions regarding noise from renters adjacent and above.

.. location on lakefront, transportation, friends in building.

.. million dollar views at an affordable price.

.. Health Club.

.. better to have units rented and occupied than empty and on the market."

As promised in the survey, all responses have been shared with management. If you missed the opportunity, but would still like to register your opinions, pick up a survey form at the office.

By, Bob Shamo

### Welcome

The Newsletter Committee welcomes Nancy Smith Ledvina to our committee.

## BUDGET INCREASES FOR 2013/14

Many weeks of work by Park Tower Management, Board, and Budget Committee members resulted in a modest 3.5% increase in assessments for the 12-month period beginning March, 2013. Assessments, though, are not Park Tower's only source of income; the following changes in fees will also go into effect as of March 1<sup>st</sup>:

**Cable TV (per contract):**  
\$21.34/month

**Equipment Rental:**  
Reduction dolly, \$20 for a 4-hour rental.  
Flatbed hand truck, \$20 for a 4-hour rental.  
Both may be rented together for \$30.

**Health Club Memberships:**  
Park Tower Residents:

6 months	1 year
Single: \$155	\$240
Double:\$235	\$375
Family: \$330	\$510

5445 and 5455 N. Sheridan Residents:

6 months	1 year
Single: \$180	\$275
Double:\$270	\$430
Family: \$380	\$585

**Parking:**  
Valet parking increased to \$115/month

Cash-paying visitor parking:

Up to 1 hour	\$ 9.50
1 - 3 hours	\$11.50
3 - 6 hours	\$15.00
6 - 8 hours	\$18.00
8 - 24 hours	\$28.00

By, Vince DiFruscio

## PROPERTY TAX

The First Installment property tax is due the first business day in March – Friday, March 1, 2013. The tax due is 55% of your prior year's total tax. The tax bill can be paid by mail, in person at the Cook County Treasurers Office, or at Chase Bank branches. There is no fee to pay at Chase, and you will get a dated receipt. Make sure to bring the original tax bill coupon, and write your Property Index Number on the check.



Now is also the time to review your eligible tax exemptions. Senior citizens are mailed a booklet containing the applications for *Senior Citizens Homestead Exemption (SCHE)* and the *Senior Citizens Assessment Freeze Homestead Exemption (SCAFHE)*. Under Illinois law, they must re-apply for these exemption to receive an annual reduction in their property taxes. Eligible seniors who have never applied for the senior exemptions in the past may visit the Assessor's website at [www.cookcountyassessor.com](http://www.cookcountyassessor.com) and download an application or contact the Assessor's office and request a form be mailed to them.

Residents may also be eligible for the *General Homestead Exemption*

(GHE). This annual exemption is available for residential property that is occupied as the principal dwelling place of the owner. The *Long-time Occupant Homestead Exemption (LOHE)* – is for residential property that is occupied as a primary residence for a continuous period by a qualified taxpayer with a total household income of \$100,000 or less. The property must be occupied for 10 continuous years.

There are several other exemptions to check if you may qualify:

Alternative General Homestead Exemption (AGHE)

Disabled Persons' Homestead Exemption (DPHE)

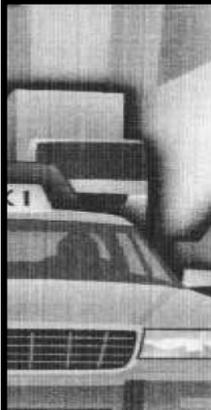
Disabled Veterans' Homestead Exemption (DVHE)

Disabled Veterans' Standard Homestead Exemption (DVSHE)

Returning Veterans' Homestead Exemption (RVHE)

Senior Citizens Assessment Freeze Homestead Exemption (SCAFHE)

By, Robert Pierce



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## BLUEWATER NEIGHBOR

*Reprint to include full article.*

Park Tower is getting a new neighbor- Bluewater will be constructed across the street at 5440 N. Sheridan Road. The parking lots on the southwest corner of Sheridan and Catalpa will be replaced by a 19 story, 190-unit apartment building.

Residents may remember the condo development that was approved for that site in 2009, but never built when the market imploded. The same developers have re-worked the plan as a condo-quality apartment building that may convert to condo in the future when the market improves. It will be a striking building with a blue reflective glass exterior, with inset balconies so it will present a slab with indentations. There will be 6 studios, 140 one bedrooms and 44 two bedroom units. A glass tower will sit atop a four level base containing 320 parking spaces. One hundred and Twenty-five of those indoor spaces will belong to 5445 N. Sheridan; the previous owner of the lot being developed. The four-story base will be topped with green outdoor space. Amenities will include a lap pool, exercise room and dog run.

The building will be set back 18 feet from the sidewalk, and a 29-foot set-back for the entry doors and car-port. The developer expects to break ground between March and May, 2013 and complete construction in 9 months. The General Contractor is Lend Lease, who recently completed the Admiral on the Lake. Architects are Toni Montes of F541 Architectura of Barcelona, Spain and Pappageorge Haymes of Chicago.

With all the recent turmoil in the residential real estate market, it is encouraging that this project is moving forward in our neighborhood. It is a big vote of confidence in the future of Edgewater and the Sheridan Road community. Construction is always disruptive, but the results should have a positive impact on the streetscape, replacing a vacant lot with high-end development.

By, Robert Pierce



## ANDERSONVILLE'S GOT A BRAND NEW (BROWN) BAG!

With so many new restaurants popping up in Edgewater/Andersonville, the area has now become a popular dining destination – and not just for City dwellers. Johnny Brown Bag is a recent - and welcome addition to North Clark Street.

The restaurant's name was inspired by a fourth grade photo of a wistful Johnny (then living in Italy) with his brown lunch bag sitting on his desk. The third Chicago dining venture for owners Johnny and Jen, the restaurant is a true family affair, with daughter Ali often found working behind the counter. The space is small, casual, and intimate – with an open kitchen, high-top tables, and counter seating, but behind the fast-food facade is a full-blown, authentic Italian eatery.

The menu offers a wide 'something for everyone' selection of imported pastas (including many 'make your own pasta' options) – with all sauces made in house, a variety of the usual (and not so usual) hot and cold Italian sandwiches/Panini, pizza, homemade lasagna, small plates, salads – and unexpectedly, a daily special of salmon and chicken (including roasted potatoes and vegetable), with different preparations daily. I usually order the salmon simply grilled, and the quality is on par with some of the City's better seafood restaurants (seafood is brought in fresh daily). At \$13.00 and \$12.00, respectively, it's hard to beat. I also have a lot of dietary restrictions (gluten-free, dairy-free, basically fun-free) - which they always do their best to accommodate. They're currently B.Y.O.B. – but will eventually offer a selection of wine and beer. Delivery is available.

In a crowded marketplace – with area restaurants and businesses sometimes opening and closing before they have a chance to put down roots, this is a small, neighborhood business that deserves to succeed.

If you clip this article and bring it with you to Johnny Brown Bag - now thru the end of April, you'll get a treat 'on the house.' Be sure to mention you're a Park Tower resident!

Johnny Brown Bag is located at 5406 N. Clark (773) 270-2522

*Continued on page 9*

## PARK TOWER MANAGEMENT OFFICE, VERSION 2.0

Park Tower's management office has been torn apart and reassembled into a more open and well-designed space. This was a true head-to-tail overhaul, from the false ceiling (which was removed) to the carpeting (replaced after almost 40 years). The new furniture is a mix of new and used pieces (try to tell which is which), and the total cost of the project was around \$30,000.

This project had been long delayed and was long overdue. Doors were falling off the cabinet hinges; desk drawers were falling apart; the original peach/pink colored carpet had long turned drab grey and the padding underneath had disintegrated.

There were many complications on this project. After tearing down the interior walls, it was discovered that all the electrical wiring feeding the office would have to be replaced to avoid the possibility of another fire in the mall. There were also many changes to cover city code updates since the office was first installed in the mall.

The majority of work was done in-house. Our building manager, Tim Patricio, and the office staff worked on the design and layout; the Board and the office worked together to choose furniture and colors; Matt Brown and Idriz Durmic did the bulk of the hands-on work (with a little help from Tim on drywall and insulation); Ariel Piña helped with the drywall and painting. We did receive outside help with the carpet installation and some work that needed to be done on the security fob control system.

During the weeks the office was under reconstruction, the office staff relocated into the party room on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. This was far from a "party" experience as records had to be temporarily placed in (and retrieved from) large temporary boxes, and tables had to do the work of desks. Tim said that on the other hand, "I was able to spend a lot of extra time out in the building, inspecting and addressing problems."

By, Vince DiFruscio



## ANDERSONVILLE'S GOT A BRAND NEW (BROWN) BAG! (Continued)

### OTHER NEW ARRIVALS:

**Taketei Sushi**  
1111 W. Berwyn  
(773) 769-9292

Blink and you might miss this little gem, located in a sliver of a space that used to house a shoe store. Owned and operated by sushi chef Buya (formally of Kamehachi) and his sister, Rico, this sparkling space is clean and contemporary – but still manages to feel warm and cozy. The sushi is wonderfully fresh – and the presentation meticulous. Even the miso soup is 'four star.' They're still working on their website and don't offer delivery yet – but take out is available. B.Y.O.B.

**Just Turkey**  
1132 w. Bryn Mawr

It's Thanksgiving year-round at this long-awaited, all turkey restaurant, offering everything from butter-crust turkey burgers to turkey spaghetti and turkey tacos. If you like turkey, it's probably worth the short trot! Currently B.Y.O.B. – but they plan to have a full bar (serving 'Wild Turkey,' no doubt)!

By, Nancy Smith Ledvina

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## ADD A BOOK TO OUR LIBRARY

Maybe you bought a book to read while you were traveling for the holidays and now it's just sitting there, read, on your shelf. Maybe you got a popular best-seller paperback to read while riding transit to/from work, and now you're done with it.



Maybe you have books for a child who has since outgrown them. Or maybe you, like me, are getting rid of some clutter by replacing paper books with e-books.

Regardless of the reason, if you have some books lying around, what can you do with them? Why not donate them to our informal library for the entertainment of other Park Tower residents?

This couldn't be easier to do. There's no paperwork to fill out, no middlemen to deal with. Just bring them down to the laundry room (maybe as you're coming down to pull a load out of the dryer) and stack them in one of the two bookcases on the wall to your left as you enter the room.

And if you want to read one of those books? Sure, pick one up. Take it back home. Read. Enjoy. Return it to the bookshelf. It's just that simple. No card needed. No late fees.

By, Vince DiFruscio

## PTCA RESIDENT ELECTRICITY OPTIONS

A recent article in Tower Talk (May-June 2012) described how you may now shop for lower rates on the electricity you use. To review, it used to be that ComEd was the only game in town, being both the supplier and the deliverer of your electricity. That changed about a year ago when the Illinois Commerce Commission began requiring that those two functions – supply and delivery – be priced separately. ComEd, with its huge investment in transmission equipment, will continue to pipe the electricity into your condo. But as to who provides the electricity that ComEd pipes – well, you now have lots of choices. A dozen or more companies have sprung up, seemingly overnight, ro-bocalling and flooding mailboxes with offers to sell you kilowatt hours at bargain basement prices.

Two recent developments. First, the City of Chicago has, in just the past few weeks, negotiated a very favorable, discounted price with one of those alternative suppliers, Integrys Energy Services. If you are now with ComEd and do absolutely nothing, then within a month or two your kilowatt hours will be provided by Integrys at a rate approximately two-thirds of ComEd's price. The size of that discount will change from time to time, depending on market conditions.

The other thing to know is that prior to the City's coming up with the plan just described, the PTCA Board asked its energy consulting service, Prospect Resources, Inc, to research available residential electricity alternatives. Prospect Resources laid out its conclusions at a mid-January meeting in the Party Room. Turns out that Champion Energy – the same company that sells electricity to the building – can do something similar for its residents. While Champion Energy rates are fractionally lower than those just negotiated by the City, there are other differences that may be more important to some customers, among them the following.

- With Champion, you would select a contract of 6, 12, or 24 month duration (shorter duration, lower rate), whereas Integrys (City's provider) offers a low, fixed rate through May 2014, with notification thereafter as rate changes.
- Cancel Champion's Plan early and you'll owe \$10 for each month remaining in your contract, whereas with Integrys (City's plan) you can cancel or change providers anytime without penalty. Renters and other short-term residents, take note.
- All Integrys electricity is generated by non-coal-fired plants, whereas Champion's "green" energy is priced one notch higher than its basic plan and specifically promises wind-generated electricity.
- Both companies deliver their electricity via ComEd lines – and ComEd is whom you call if there is a problem. Champion customers will get their monthly bill from Champion, whereas Integrys customers will continue to get theirs from ComEd.

If you have recently changed electricity providers, you're probably already saving money. But if you've stayed with ComEd – and do nothing right now – then you will be shifted over to Integrys automatically, thereby benefitting substantially from their new contract with the City. If you prefer the Champion plan, take note of the differences and enjoy comparably lower rates. Three websites for further detail:

<http://www.citizensutilityboard.org>,  
<http://www.integrysenergy.com/il-chicago>, and  
<http://www.prospectresources.com/parktower>.

By, Bob Shamo

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## A GUIDE FOR THE INFREQUENT CTA RIDER

Clean and bright are not words that come to mind when discussing the CTA, but that is exactly how the Red Line station at Berwyn appears after its recent renovation. Gone are the puddles beneath the turnstiles, peeling paint, dripping ceilings and crumbling stairs. New flooring, platforms and stairs make the station safer. Other recent changes in routes, fares and service have altered the CTA experience, so if you are not a regular commuter, they may take you by surprise.

### Routes and Hours

The #144 rush hour bus from Berwyn has been eliminated but we continue to be well served to points south and the loop by the #151, #136 and #147 from the Sheridan and Balmoral stop across the street, and if you venture a block south to Berwyn, you can board the #146 to the Museum Campus or #92 Foster bus which will take you to Jefferson Park Blue Line station for O'Hare. The #147 continues to be popular for a quick ride to Michigan Avenue or the Loop, from 4:45am weekdays, 5:15 am on Saturday, or 6:15 am on Sunday every 8 minutes or so until 9:45 pm. The last northbound #147 leaves Congress Parkway at 10:30 pm daily except Sunday, with service ending at 9:20 pm. The last #146 leaves the Museum Campus daily at 11:30 pm; the Red Line runs 24 hours for those late nights out.

### Fares

Regular cash bus fare is \$2.25, but cash fares do not allow a transfer. Plan ahead and get a fare card from the Berwyn or any rail station vending machine. Load the fare card with more than you anticipate using, and save the remainder to start your next journey. With a fare card your first bus ride is just \$2.00 or rail ride is \$2.25. Board a bus or train within 2 hours and you will be deducted just \$0.25, and the third ride within the 2-hour window is free. One day passes available at Jewel and Dominick's for unlimited rides are no longer a bargain – the price has gone up from \$5.75 to \$10; so consider how many rides and transfers you will make in a day before you spend that much.

Continue on page 12

## A GUIDE FOR THE INFREQUENT CTA RIDER

(continued)

Senior reduced fares require a permit; see [www.transitchicago.com](http://www.transitchicago.com) for details. Visitors boarding at O'Hare will now spend \$5.00 to board, but regular commuters and those with multi-day passes will still pay \$2.25. Improvements to the Blue line eliminating slow zones now allow you to make the trip to O'Hare Airport in just over an hour. Nevertheless, it is much more economical than a taxi or airport parking, and can even save time in traffic on the Kennedy.

### Ventra

The CTA is changing its fare-collecting system once again – it will roll out Ventra throughout 2013. The big change is the magnetic cards will be replaced with tap-and-go cards like the Chicago Cards many use now. Boarding will be much faster. The fare boxes will also accept many of the bank cards riders already have. The CTA will issue their own debit/transit card that can be used for fares as well as everyday purchases. Pace suburban buses will be on the same system, as the regional transit agencies work to integrate and develop a single fare system.

By, Robert Pierce

## NEW PARKING OPTIONS AT PARK TOWER

A new parking plan has been set up for guests of residents. (Actually, this parking plan was in place many years ago and has been re-established.) It allows for out-of-town guests to stay for several consecutive days. A "day" is defined as a 24-hour period, meaning that if your guest first arrives at 9:00PM on March 1<sup>st</sup>, the 5-day pass is good until 9:00PM on March 6<sup>th</sup>. These rates include in/out privileges, so there is no problem taking the car to show off Chicago's sights. A 7-day pass is \$75; a 5-day pass is \$50.

These passes can be purchased in advance at the Management Office. You will need to provide:

- Guest's Name (if more than one, the name of the driver)
- Dates of the upcoming stay
- Make / Model / Color of the car being parked
- License Plate # (and state)

If the guest(s) are getting a rental car and the vehicle/plate information isn't yet available, arrangements can be made to work around that option. But these multi-day passes cannot be purchased in the garage, so please set everything up in advance with the office staff.

By, Vince DiFruscio

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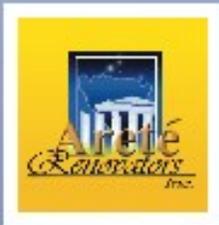
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## DATES TO REMEMBER 2013 BOARD MEETINGS

All owners are invited to Board meetings.  
7:30 p.m. in the Party Room

March 11, 2013

April 8, 2013

May 13, 2013

### Annual Meeting

June 10, 2013

### Board Candidate Applications Deadline

May 2013  
(watch for mailings)

### MANAGEMENT OFFICE HOURS

Monday, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays  
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Thursdays  
8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

### HOLIDAY SCHEDULE (Office Closed)

Memorial Day—May 27, 2013  
Independence Day—July 4, 2013  
Labor Day—September 2, 2013  
Thanksgiving—November 28, 2013  
Christmas—December 25, 2013

## MALL BUSINESS CONTACTS

Suite 101	PTCA Market 773-275-9130
Suite 103:	Aynot Enterprises, Inc. (Salon—Spa Contractors) 773-728-6486
Suite 103A:	Dralyuk Real Estate 773-275-8520
Suite 103A:	Healing Center of Chicago Tony Hollenback, LCSW (Integrative Care: Counseling for the mind, body and the spirit ) 773-255-9234
Suite 105:	Lettuce Entertain You (Gift Certificate Purchases) 773-924-4438
Suite 106:	Dr. Shirley Roy (Internal Med.) Dr. Robert Reeves (Adult Psy.) Dr. Robert Brinkman (Internal Med.) 773-878-5151
Suite 107:	Park Tower Management Office 773-769-3250
Suite 109:	M & J Care, LLC 773-878-1032
Suite 110:	Elizabeth Todorovic (Real Estate Attorney) 773-271-2110
Suite 111:	Blackstone ATM (ATM Company) 312-515-0112

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5. Follow the easy instructions and your assessment statements will begin arriving electronically.