

### RTA and ULI Chicago Partner to Advise Local Communities on How to Attract Transit-Oriented Development



Tony Manno of the Regional Transportation
Authority (RTA) has a passion for land development.
As a Project Manager in the RTA's Local Planning
and Programs Division, he coordinates the agency's
development advisory efforts to communities
throughout the six-county Chicagoland region and
provides technical assistance to municipalities on
how to move their transit-oriented development
(TOD) plans forward.

RTA and ULI Chicago are united in this effort to encourage transit-oriented development. As the

oversight agency for Pace, Metra and CTA, the RTA is committed to promoting responsible transit-oriented development throughout Chicagoland. Since the late 1990's, the RTA has funded more than 100 community planning efforts with a focus on improving multi-modal access to transit, attracting mixed-use development to transit station areas and increasing ridership. During the past three years under Manno's leadership, the RTA has partnered with ULI Chicago to attract mixed-use transit-oriented development. ULI has a long history of providing creative, practical solutions and best practices in land use and development to address some of the most challenging issues facing communities. Partnering with the RTA was a perfect way to broaden the reach of ULI Chicago's Technical Assistance Services Program.

The challenge many Chicago-area communities face is a lack of resources and expertise in development planning to bring their projects to shovel-ready status. The RTA, in partnership with ULI Chicago, helps communities refine their existing plans to a point of attracting developers to implement the plan. One of the main tools in accomplishing this is the half-day Developer Panel that takes place in the community. According to Manno, "The Developer Panels offer assistance to communities to provide advice and guidance on how to implement their transit-oriented development plans at no cost to the community. The panels offer candid, expert assistance on what the communities can do in order to attract development and get projects moving forward."

As the RTA's partner in this effort, ULI Chicago provides the RTA with land use and developer expertise, enhancing the credibility of the TOD recommendations as a neutral, highly respected organization. Matt Nix, REVA Development Partners and ULI member, explains, "As unbiased panelists, we can use our industry knowledge and experience to offer honest feedback to municipal leaders and staff regarding important issues facing their communities." Fifteen Developer Panels have been completed to date with another five on the horizon. The program was named a ULI Chicago Vision Award finalist earlier this year in recognition of its creative approach and impact.

Panelists consist of ULI members from the development community, and each panel is custom-tailored to address the specific issue at hand. Key community members, such as planning department members and the Mayor or City Manager, typically attend these panel meetings and receive immediate feedback. Nix continues, "I have participated in panels in Franklin Park, Bensenville, Maywood and Park Forest and have found the experience to be rewarding. As a developer, the RTA panels feel like a meaningful way to give back to the communities where we work."

Village President Deborah Bullwinkel of Villa Park convened a RTA/ULI Chicago Developer Panel in 2013. "We were looking forward to having a different set of eyes — from "outsiders," if you will – [to] look at our TOD area and provide us with some different ideas and perspectives. We have been immersed in the TOD project for several years and sometimes when you're so involved with a project of this magnitude for so long, it's hard to see things beyond the project itself." Ms. Bullwinkel also added, "It's a very positive thing for municipalities when an opportunity such as the RTA/ULI Chicago Developer Panel comes around because it allows those familiar with the project and those who are not but bring a wealth of experience to the table to share ideas, improvements and expertise with one another." The Developer Panel for Villa Park resulted in a variety of recommendations including façade improvements in the TOD zone, signage and streetscape improvements elsewhere, and a consideration of expanded incentives and TIF district parameters throughout Villa Park. After weathering the economic challenges over the past several years, Villa Park is now making progress with their plans. Village President Bullwinkel provided an update since the RTA/ULI Chicago Developer Panel convened, stating that "there has been positive progress made since the RTA/ULI Chicago Developer Panel was held in November 2013. A few months ago, the Village of Villa Park embarked upon a TIF feasibility study of the area surrounding our TOD on the north side of Villa Park in an effort to assist our TOD developer in securing funds necessary to launch the redevelopment project."

The RTA brings valuable resources in terms of staff time and expertise in this area, as well as developer panelists to advise the municipality about how to obtain public and/or private funding in order to advance projects through the early stages of development. As Manno explains, "The mission of Developer Panels is to convey optimism about the potential development opportunities at hand and also provide realistic recommendations and advice. The panelists always find something constructive to recommend."

Review the Villa Park Developer Panel Summary Report and other Summary Panel reports
Read full Interview of Villa Park Village President Deborah Bullwinkel
Read additional information on the RTA Developer Panels
Learn more about ULI Chicago's Technical Assistance Services Program

# Walgreens Net-Zero facility in Evanston Huge Step in Sustainability



Walgreens was recognized at **ULI**Chicago's June 2014 Vision Awards for its new Net-Zero retail location in Evanston which opened in November 2013. The Vision Awards recognizes organizations and individuals for their achievements in creative development practices, inventive partnerships, sharing of resources, and imaginative problem solving. Walgreens received the award in the Project – Sustainability category. With the creation of its "Net-Zero" store, Walgreens has taken a

huge step in sustainability and sustainability education. The store showcases the company's latest green initiatives while acting as a learning center for those interested in sustainability and environmentally friendly design as well as a testing ground for future development design for Walgreens.

The concept is simple; produce more energy on-site than the store consumes. The store uses approximately 200,000 KwH annually (nearly 60% less than a typical location) and is projected to produce 220,000 KwH. Leaving a possible surplus of 20,000 KwH that can be returned into the electrical grid.

A visitor to the Net-Zero Walgreens will first notice two relatively unassuming vertical wind turbines, which may produce up to 5% of the building energy needs. The roof is also equipped with nearly 850 solar panels that produce the majority of the energy the store requires. Inside, the development and engineering teams have gone to great lengths to reduce their energy needs through:

- Innovative ventilation systems within the store's tiered three-piece roof that allow the store to be naturally heated and cooled.
- 3M glass treatment that redirects sunlight, towards the underside of the roof, reducing the need for artificial light keeping glare from entering the space.
- Strategically directed LED blade lighting that automatically adjusts based on time of day and natural light.

The store also features cutting edge heating, cooling and refrigeration technology that uses a combination of geothermal and natural CO2 refrigerant technology. All this can be monitored in real time by guests via the store's Net-Zero meter.

According to the project's engineers, a project like this may have been easier in a sunlight rich environment such as Florida or Arizona. The Deerfield, Illinois based Walgreens did not take the easy route when it chose to locate the nation's first Net-Zero project in Evanston, Illinois. The lack of



consistent sunlight, cold temperatures, snow and shifting and changing winds made this a very difficult location to prove the concept.

The City of Evanston embraced and supported the project. The permit review staff worked alongside the Walgreens team to ensure that the project could meet its ambitious goals and store opening timeline. Mark E. Muenzer, director of community development in Evanston, commends the retailer's efforts, "The Walgreens project is a role model for our other

businesses to improve their sustainability efforts and it validates Evanston as a progressive community that welcomes innovative and out of the box projects to our City."

According to Catherine Hurley, the sustainable programs coordinator at City of Evanston the educational component of the project was also of great importance to the city. "I think the education and outreach component of the store, including the frequent tours the team is giving, is something that could be applied to other projects."

Representatives of Walgreens at the Vision Awards included Walgreens sustainability manager, Jamie Meyers and Walgreens vice president of facilities development Thomas Connolly. Meyers and Connolly were excited to be recognized by ULI Chicago for the Net-Zero project and the company's continued sustainability efforts. Connolly commented that "Walgreens has been testing and implementing sustainable technology in our stores for some time now. Over the years we've also taken on many challenging projects with environmental contamination and turned the sites around. The Net Zero store is a great opportunity for us to showcase this effort and test new ideas. We're excited to have been recognized by ULI for this project." Meyers echoed Connolly's enthusiasm about the award and speculated that the store may exceed its goal in Evanston, claiming "We are on track to be net positive this year and possibly receive a credit from the utility company."

### COMMITTEE UPDATES ⋒

Our committee update section highlights some of the most recent committee activities. Contact **ULI Chicago** to get involved with a committee or initiative.

### **Programs**

**Upcoming Events** 

August 7, 2014

#### **Summer Networking Event**

540 W. Madison, 6th Floor Rooftop Garden 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

**Register Now** 

September 18, 2014

#### **Monthly Breakfast Meeting**

Union League Club of Chicago 7:45 am - 9:15 am

\*more information coming soon

September 30, 2014

#### **Suburban Program**

The Westin O'Hare 4:00 pm – 6:30 pm

\*more information coming soon

October 15, 2014

#### **Monthly Breakfast Meeting**

Union League Club of Chicago

7:45 am - 9:15 am

\*more information coming soon

November 6, 2014

#### **Monthly Breakfast Meeting**

Union League Club of Chicago 7:45 am – 9:15 am

\*more information coming soon

### Public Policy

#### **Recent Technical Assistance Panel Updates**

Cook County Land Bank TAP: The Cook County Land Bank Authority hit an important milestone in early July making its first acquisitions of vacant homes in both the City of Chicago and Suburbs. Read more recent news on the CCLBA

**Joliet Correctional Center Redevelopment TAP:** CMAP released a two-year follow-up report in July outlining progress on panel recommendations. **Read the report** 

## Young Leaders

#### YL Leadership Exchange Offers Networking and Real Estate Perspectives

ULI Chicago Young Leaders joined other Young Leaders from across the country at the 2014 YL Leadership Exchange in Miami earlier this year. Plans for the 2015 Exchange are underway but no location has been chosen yet. Read highlights and take-aways from the Exchange and learn why Chicago Young Leaders are making the YL Exchange an event they attend annually. **Read more** 

This twelfth issue of Urban Light has been edited and designed by the ULI Chicago Communications Committee, including: Mark Hahn (chair), Mike Anguiano, Eric Turrin, K.C. Wigle and Martin Hansberry with assistance from the ULI Chicago staff.