

Vintage Rogers Park Property Adds Value to Neighborhood



Inverbrass Funds, a real estate investment and development company, has acquired the 105-unit East Rogers Park apartment building located at 7301 N. Sheridan. Managing directors, Douglas Fisher and Matthew Welke of Northbrook-based real estate brokerage firm, Essex Realty Group, brokered the transaction, representing the seller, Robert Yassan of Chicago-based Rany Management, and the buyer, Ayman Khalil of Inverbrass Funds. The property commanded a sale price of \$7.3 million.

Built in 1923 by famed architect and designer, Benjamin Marshall, 7301 N. Sheridan is a symbol of modern French style Beaux-arts architecture and is one of the most prominent residential buildings in Rogers Park. Marshall, co-founder of Marshall & Fox, is best known for Chicago landmarks such as the Blackstone Hotel and the Drake Hotel. Over the years the property was inadequately maintained and its poor condition negatively impacted the neighborhood. When the building was purchased out of receivership by Rany Management, the new owner cooperated with the city to repair and remove all dangerous elements of the property, (e.g., crumbling facade). Welke commented, "With the recent purchase by Inverbrass Funds, the property is now poised to return to a more prominent position in the community by adding significant value to the neighborhood." According to Khalil, Inverbrass has completed the majority of its renovation and plans to maintain the building as a rental property. Since January occupancy at the nine-story structure has increased by 40 apartments, resulting in an increase from 30 percent to 65 percent total occupancy. There is also approximately 6,000 square feet of ground floor commercial space Khalil plans to lease to local and regional credit tenants that will help continue the revitalization of Rogers Park.

- Mayor Richard M. Daley has introduced an ordinance into the Chicago City Council that would pave the way for the creation of a pilot program offering lower interest loans to small businesses. Small Business Development Fund (SBDF) loans would be made available for business improvements and expansion to qualified smaller neighborhood companies and emerging firms that traditionally have difficulty accessing needed capital and competitive interest rates from conventional lenders. The pilot program would be a collaborative effort of the Department of Planning and Development, City Treasurer's Office, Chicago Community Ventures, and private banks. It would be funded from proceeds from the recent sale of the Chicago Skyway. A total of \$5 million would be available through the program over the next five years. To qualify, businesses would be required to be located in Chicago, have been in business for no more than five years, have gross revenues between \$250,000 and \$2 million, employ no more than 20 full-time staff, and successfully complete an application process. The pilot program would be administered by Chicago Community Ventures, a non-profit group that promotes economic development through business development in Chicago's low and moderate-income Empowerment Zone areas.

- The RE/MAX Northern Illinois network reports that its sales activity for the first half of 2006 indicates an important shift has occurred in the regional residential real estate. With the number of home sales down and inventories of homes for sale on the rise, the playing field for residential real estate has become much more level after strongly favoring the seller for the prior five or six years, according to Jim Merrion, regional director of RE/MAX Northern Illinois. RE/MAX closed more than \$7.8 billion in real estate sales through the first six months of the year, just 5.25 percent less than last year when it achieved an all-time record for sales. "Where we are really seeing a slowing of market activity is in the sale of single-family homes, which declined 15.1 percent in the Chicago area in June according to the Illinois Association of Realtors," said Merrion. "Condos sales held up better, but they also were down." The result, contends, Merrion, is an extremely favorable environment for home buyers.

This and That . . . Eugene W. Stunard of Appraisal Research Counselors and John R. Newman of LaSalle Bank are the 2006 inductees into the Chicago Association of REALTORS® Hall of Fame . . . Loretta Alonzo, GRI, broker-owner of Century 21 Alonzo & Associates in LaGrange Park, and John P. Vranas, CPM, partner in Vranas & Chioros Realty Group in Chicago, were named recipients of the Illinois Association of REALTORS® 2006 Distinguished Service Award.

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