



Milwaukee Avenue Special service Area (SSA) | Community Meeting #1

Date: 4/18/2024 | Location: Online – Zoom ID: 830 7609 3299 | Call-In: (312)626-6799

Attendees

Advisory Committee

- Lynn Basa, *LSCC Board Member*

Logan Square Chamber of Commerce (LSCC)

- Nilda Esparza, *Executive Producer*

City of Chicago

- Mark Roschen, *Assistant Commissioner*
- Eileen Sweeney, *Project Coordinator*

Teska Associates, Inc.

- Erin Cigliano, *Principal*
- Scott Goldstein, *Principal*
- Benito Garcia, *Associate*

Public

- Laura (call-in)
- Cole Brice (call-in)
- Brian (call-in)
- Juliet de Jesus Alejandre, *Palenque LSNA*
- Louis Clayton
- Benjamin Corpuz
- Mark Kappelman
- C. Lucio, *35th Ward*
- Norma Rios Sierra, *Palenque LSNA*
- James Thompson
- Peter Vaselopoulos, *Vas Foremost Liquors*
- Laura Yepez

Community Meeting #1 Summary

“...because great neighborhood main streets don’t happen on their own.”
- Lynn Basa

Lynn Basa, Chair of the SSA Committee, opened the meeting by introducing herself as an artist, her work for the community as part of the Milwaukee Avenue Alliance, and why she supports an SSA. She noted the Milwaukee Ave Alliance formed to make improvements within a three-block radius (Milwaukee Ave, between Kimball and Central Park). In partnership with the Logan Square Chamber of Commerce (LSCC), she has investigated the idea of establishing a Special Service Area (SSA); to support long-standing businesses and promote the diverse cultures, history, and character of the corridor. Lynn supports the SSA because “great neighborhood main streets don’t happen on their own.”



Nilda Esparza, LSCC, continued by describing that Milwaukee Ave as a home to many people, a special place which an SSA can continue to “cultivate and help maintain what they have been working towards,” having a clean business corridor, filling in vacancies, and creating a safe environment for all. As part of the engagement process through social media, surveys, and one-on-one interactions, businesses and residents have shared the following perspectives:

“Our goal is to rent to independently owned businesses to help return the character.”

“Retaining the cultural identity and countering gentrification is important... my family has been here since the 1960’s.”

“Provide community space for events and activities.”

The chamber and local businesses are invested in Avondale and Logan Square where the SSA is proposed to be located between Belmont and Armitage along Milwaukee Avenue, donating their time to clean the public rights-of-way and making donations to install street pole banners, which are forthcoming. Both Nilda and Lynn emphasized that the SSA spreads costs equitably and allows everyone to come together to help one another.

“Clean. Green. Safe.” This is how Mark Roschen, Assistant Commissioner for the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development, described the SSA program. Meant to be a resource for any community that decides to pursue it, a SSA is an extension of additional services on top of regular city services. SSAs are flexible in terms of how funds are allocated. Mark went over what an SSA is, its role, the types of services it provides and how it functions. He also introduced Eileen Sweeney, project coordinator, who will work with the SSA once it is established.

A few highlights from Mark’s presentation include:

- There are 55 SSAs with 500 commissioners in total, providing recommendations to each as well as help determine the budget.
- Commissioners have initial terms of 10 years with term extensions of 15 years and authorize the annual & maximum levy.
- Main categories include customer attraction, public way aesthetics, sustainability & public places, economic/business development, public health & safety programs, SSA management, and personnel.
- SSAs allow custom services and provide a public benefit, creating identifiers that make each neighborhood unique such as customized trash receptacles, public art, and hosting special events.



- Customer attraction and public way aesthetics have become the largest budget items for Chicago SSAs in recent years, followed by landscaping, special events, and safety programs.
- A Service provider manages daily SSA activities, prepares reports to DPD/Commission, ensures contract requirements are fulfilled, and guides vendor contracts.
- The application, district plan and signatures (10% of all PIN [Property Index Number]) are due June 14th; remaining 10% of signatures are due August 1st.

Erin Cigliano, Teska Associates, followed Mark in explaining how an SSA can support Milwaukee Ave, how it would operate, and the significance of hearing from you (the public) to speak to the critical services needed. An SSA is a designated area where property owners choose to provide additional services for the benefit of residents, merchants, and visitors funded by a dedicated property tax. Funds are focused inside the SSA which are creatively and authentically handled.

Erin and Nilda both spoke about SSAs and how they can support legacy businesses, focus investment, and prevent displacement. Erin shared that case studies and work being done by SSAs and community organizations both near and national can provide direction and inspiration based on the unique needs of the Milwaukee Ave Study Area.

The Byzantine Latino Quarter, located along Pico Boulevard in Los Angeles, CA and where Nilda once worked, is a national example that reflects a dedicated focus on local history, diversity and celebrating the spirit of the area. Murals, street banners, mosaic planters, crosswalk enhancements, bus shelters and plazas express the local culture and community needs. Similar work was also led by Nilda when she worked for the Little Village SSA in Chicago.

Benito Garcia, Teska Associates, then talked about how SSAs can help accomplish goals set in community plans. He reviewed how the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) is moving forward with revamping Milwaukee Ave from Belmont Ave to Logan Square with projects including significant improvements at the Square, La Placita. He also referred to the Logan Square Blue Line Action Plan. These projects and plans have goals that speak to a more pedestrian oriented environment, support for local businesses and residents and inviting public spaces. An SSA is needed to maintain these projects like La Placita and take on responsibility such as landscape upkeep, additional trash pickup, and sidewalk snow removal. The Logan Square eTOD plan is another example of how the SSA can help facilitate streetscape improvements, engaging artists, & businesses, and finding new open space opportunities.



The boundary for the SSA is along Milwaukee Ave, from Armitage to Belmont Ave, Scott Goldstein, Teska Associates, noted as he underscored the goal was to improve the area with targeted services and prevent displacement of diverse cultures and businesses. Erin went over the different SSA categories and specific examples of services that are funded.

Scott then elaborated on what it costs. The annual rate (0.50%), would be set by the SSA Commission each year and the maximum rate (0.70%), is set for the next ten year through the establishment ordinance. Based on the annual rate, the Milwaukee Ave SSA will have an estimated budget of \$325,885. An example is if a commercial property has an equalized assessed value (EAV) of \$91,693 x 0.50% [annual rate], the property will pay \$458 per year. Budgets from other SSAs were presented for comparison with the Milwaukee Ave SSA.

The City of Chicago requires 20% signature support (130 total) of all taxpayers in the SSA - 10% of PINS or 65 signatures by June 14th and the remaining 10% by August 1st in order to demonstrate local support for the SSA. Benito then stated that this information can be found on lsmilwaukee.com with other resources and project updates. The website is bilingual, and he also encouraged participants to take the needs assessment survey, which helps identify what services are needed. A direct link to that can be found [here](#).

Q & A

After the presentation, participants were invited to ask questions.

- **Cole Brice** asked who is responsible for the SSA wording of the ordinance and is there a draft available? What is the recruitment process for commissioners, are there steps for community input?
- **Mark Roschen** responded by noting the following:
 - Specific phrasing of the ordinance is not yet determined as it's not prepared until the City receives the application and support signatures, followed by approval.
 - The SSA ordinance sets the max rate, lists commissioner names, legal description of boundary, and PINs which is standard on all SSAs. It does not spell out specifics to commissioner selection, it sets parameters and limits to what an SSA is.
 - City Law Department writes the ordinance. While the SSA commissioner terms are listed in the ordinance, the City wants commissions to be more autonomous to set their own by-laws.
 - Commissioners are nominated by the mayor and approved by City Council.
 - Support from the Aldermen where the SSA is located is required.
 - **Erin Cigliano** helped clarify that Cole may be referencing the bylaws.



- **Juliet de Jesus Alejandro** expressed she felt affirmed by the Byzantine Latino Quarter and that the presentation was informative. She added that writing of the ordinance and bylaws should center more on displacement prevention initiatives.
- **Norma Rios Sierra** noted this is a big corridor and limited meeting participants; what were the outreach efforts like?
- **Lynn Basa** responded noting that information sharing is ongoing and has been provided through one-on-one meetings, postcard mailings, and distribution of bilingual text (website, brochure, info-cards). Postcards were sent to every taxpayer in the proposed district. A second mailing will be sent in the Fall prior.
- **Peter Vaselopoulos** stated he is invested in the area and people of Logan Square and wants it to appreciate and thrive. He noted that people pay a lot in real estate and questioned why the City isn't responsible for these basic add-on services? What if the SSA goes longer than 10 years? What about those who oppose it?
- **Mark Roschen** responded noting:
 - The Commission recommends a service provider every year. The SSA would be up for renewal in ten years with another full approval process. SSA commissions evaluate budgets on an on-going basis and are flexible based on local needs.
 - The Ordinance sets the framework to have the tax authorization in place and up to the Commission to decide how much to request for a budget within the parameters of that taxing authority.
 - The Annual Ordinance would need to be supported by local alderperson and approved by city council.
 - Petitions can occur if people oppose it; 51% of property owners and 51% of registered voters within SSA boundary; stakeholders can go to their local Alderperson.
 - **Lynn Basa** added that taxpayers that pay into the SSA will be represented.

The meeting concluded with **Scott Goldstein** encouraging participants to:

- fill out the Needs Assessment via the website (LSmilwaukee.com);
- let the Chamber know if you are interested in providing a signature of support; and
- shared the date & location of Community Meeting #2, which will present the same information in person on:

Community Meeting #2
Monday, April 29th, 2024 at 6pm
Hairpin Arts Center | 2810 N Milwaukee Ave