



Pulaski Elston Special Service Area (SSA) Study

Virtual Community Meetings | Monday, May 10 and Thursday, May 13

Business and Public Members

May 10th Meeting Attendees

Benjamin Corpuz, North River Commission
/ Albany Park & Irving Park SSA #60

Chris Belz, Property Owner/Resident

Patricia Eldridge, Wintrust Bank Mayfair

J. Garcia

Robert Geronimo, Jefferson Park Animal
Hospital

Liz Mills, PEBA Board

Jim O'Reilly – North Mayfair Improvement
Association and North River Commission

Marisabel Pozo, North River Commission

Bob Xenos, Sonex Properties

**Advisory Committee Members*

May 13th Meeting Attendees

Tracy Cimba, Bespoke Redesign

Marisabel Pozo, North River Commission

Patricia Eldridge, Wintrust Bank Mayfair

Adam Roberts – Alderman Samantha
Nugent, 39th Ward

Susan Swan, Active Electrical Supply Co.

Jim O'Reilly – North Mayfair Improvement
Association and North River Commission

Ron Duplack

Pulaski Elston Business Association (PEBA)

Amie Zander, Executive Director

City of Chicago and Consultant Team

Scott Goldstein, Teska Associates, Inc.

Mark Roschen, DPD, City of Chicago

Francie Sallinger, Teska Associates, Inc

Souad (Sue) Timatyos, DPD, City of Chicago

Two virtual community meetings were held on Monday, May 10th and Thursday, May 13th for the public to learn about the establishment of a Pulaski/Elston Special Service Area. The full presentation used for both of these meetings [can be viewed here](#).

Welcome and Introductions

Amie Zander, Executive Director of the Pulaski Elston Business Association (PEBA), kicked off the meeting with some context on how the SSA study came to fruition. PEBA started conversations over a year ago with the neighborhood about wanting more for the area in the way of beautification, marketing, placemaking, and other services that could put the Pulaski/Elston business district on the map more. PEBA often hears from people who want the area to look more like Lincoln Square, Logan Square, etc. All of those places and others that have very vibrant business districts all have SSAs.



It was determined that the best way to proceed was to look into the creation of a special service area (SSA) for this area. PEBA took the first steps to complete a feasibility study which was accepted by the City of Chicago. Since then, a Steering Committee has been looking at different services and programs that people would like to see provided. The community meetings are meant to explain what an SSA is and learn what the community would like to see.

Adam Roberts from Alderman Nugent's office was in attendance at the May 13th meeting. He said that while the area has wonderful businesses already, the Alderman is hopeful for a little extra revitalization and “umph” in the Lawrence Elston corridors which an SSA can help with. They are excited to see where this can go and grateful to hear from folks about what they want to see.

What is a Special Service Area?

An SSA is a designated area in which property owners choose to provide additional services for the benefit of businesses, residents, and visitors. A tax is applied to properties within the SSA. The funds collected go directly back into the district based on local priorities.

Overview of Special Service Areas & 2022 SSA Establishment Process

Mark Roschen from the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD) presented information about the City's SSA program and processes. All together, the City's 53 active SSAs generate nearly \$30 million to support business districts. SSAs are locally initiated and the City contracts with service provider agencies to administer day-to-day SSA activities. PEBA would be the service provider for a new Pulaski/Elston SSA. As Amie described, PEBA contacted DPD last fall to express interest in creating an SSA.

Service Priorities

Scott Goldstein of Teska Associates reviewed different programs and services that SSAs can provide. The City has essentially five program areas (in addition to SSA management and personnel).

Service Priorities

Customer Attraction	Public Way Aesthetics	Clean and Green	Business Development	Safety
Local Events Promotions 	Streetscape Landscaping Maintenance Banners 	Litter Removal Clean-Up Snow Removal 	Business Support Grants + Rebates Marketing 	Cameras Security 

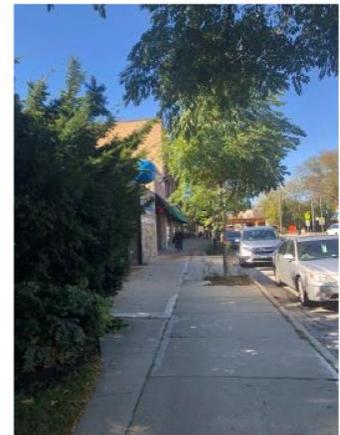
Examples of services that fall under these categories include....



- **Landscaping + Beautification**
- Planters
- Hanging baskets
- Watering contracts
- Mulching / Mowing



- **Decor + Gateway Signage**
- Light Pole Banners
- Holiday Lighting
- Decor + Garlands
- Seasonal Landscaping



- **Maintenance + Safety**
- Sidewalk Snowplowing
- Sidewalk Cleaning
- Weeding / Spraying
- Cameras / Security



- **Events**

- Monthly Business Breakfasts
- Small business fundraisers

- **Local Business Support**

- Assistance with business permits, grants and resources
- Addresses and fills vacancies
- Liaison with City of Chicago

- **Marketing**

- Actively promote businesses, events, and local promotions via website, social media, and local partners
- Distribute posters and flyers

Patricia Eldridge of Wintrust Bank Mayfair also shared a business perspective: “Mayfair is seen as kind of a through neighborhood even though there is a lot to offer here... The bank wants to support what the community wants and needs and the SSA can help with that. A benefit of the SSA is that shared services get put off of individual businesses and the costs get shared collectively – this way things like sidewalk snow removal are taken care of and are more efficient and consistent.”

Case Studies

Scott shared examples of services provided by two existing SSAs, Howard Street in Rogers Park and Lincoln Square. Howard Street has been able to use SSA funds to do a lot of marketing work with a custom website that features local business stories and highlights the business owners. They also host an annual Sidewalk Chalk Art Event that was hugely successful even in the pandemic. Lincoln Square also does a great job in stretching its budget across the SSA to fund a wide range of public place and customer attraction projects and social media campaigns.

Needs Assessment Survey

The [Needs Assessment Survey](#) is important to the SSA establishment process, as it will help PEBA Staff and the Commission develop a budget by understanding the types of services that the area needs, enjoys, or would like to see improved in the area.

Scott Goldstein reviewed preliminary findings:



Which services are your top priorities? What other services not mentioned would you like to see?

- “Facade improvements, street scaping and side walk maintenance especially in areas where buildings are vacant during the winter.”
- “We want to improve our façade for the building and need funding help”
- “Safety, attractive small businesses. Easier pedestrian access to cross Irving and major streets, beautify the corner of Pulaski and Irving. Better plantings, cleaning, art under the Irving el stop. Tree plantings along major roads.”
- “Any events, marketing and local business support are very important.”
- “Attract more businesses such as restaurants, flower shops, would love to see a Trader Joes in the old CVS store!”

If you haven't taken the survey yet please do so! Results will be shared with the Committee and the City to help develop a budget and determine future services. The [survey](http://www.pulaskielstonstudy.org/) is available on the SSA Study website: www.pulaskielstonstudy.org/

SSA Budgeting

Each year, the SSA Commission will set a budget. Scott Goldstein explained that the budget is based on a levy. The Commission recommends a levy, and the City works with the County to figure out a tax rate that creates a budget based on that levy.

Important points on the budget and useful terms are listed below:

- Tax rates are determined by the annual budget and can fluctuate from year to year depending on the programs and services to be offered.
- Budgets cannot exceed the tax cap that is set when an SSA is established or renewed.
- For budgets that increase by more than 5% each year, the City requires a community meeting
- When the tax cap is set at establishment or renewal time, it cannot increase until the SSA is renewed again (which is a period of 15 years)
- The tax cap is an “umbrella” – it should be high enough to plan for future flexibility, but annual budgets (and therefore tax rates) can be lower.
- Tax Rate Cap - maximum tax rate that cannot vary over term of SSA
- Annual Tax Rate - determined based on budget; may vary each year, but cannot exceed cap)
- EAV - Equalized Assessed Value set by County Assessor
- Levy - amount of SSA taxes collected = tax rate x EAV
- Carry Over - unspent funds from previous year

The Advisory Committee has recommended a maximum tax rate cap of 1.5% that will be in place for the first 15 years of the SSA, but the actual tax rate would take effect under a phased approach and may not ever reach 1.5%. Because the tax is proportional based on the value of the property, this creates an equitable funding source for the SSA.



Signature Support Form

The City requires upfront signatures of at least 10% of PIN holders in the SSA. If you think this is an important tool and want to see these services for the Pulaski/Elston area, *please sign the signature support form here:* <https://pulaskielstonstudy.org/>

The form must be signed by the taxpayer of record. If you are a business renting your space, please talk to your property owner and ask them to show support for the SSA. If enough signatures are not collected the SSA and its services will no longer exist.

Next Steps

- Signatures of 10% of PIN holders and application due June 11
- Public Hearing at City Hall in Fall
- Approval by City Council in December

Adjourn

Amie closed the meeting and thanked for everyone for coming and sharing their input. For any further questions, please email her at: amie@pebachamber.org

Discussion / Question & Answer – Meeting #1 (May 10, 2021)

- J. Garcia: "What's a self-imposed tax?"
 - Mark Roschen: An SSA is self-imposed because the community decides and shows support for the creation or renewal of an SSA, rather than the City coming in and imposing a tax without local groups initiating.
- J. Garcia: "Who applied for the SSA?"
 - Scott: PEBA applied last fall that triggered the process for the establishment process to begin.
- J. Garcia: "What is the expectation of or good measure of economic activity from the SSA estimated for 2022? Or over the life of the SSA?"
 - Scott: Part of the application is a market study for the area which shows a baseline for the area and then the SSA Commission can use that moving forward to establish metrics to measure progress over time.
- J. Garcia: "Will there be an analysis of how this will impact our tax bill?"
 - Scott: The presentation included examples of what the costs would be to properties. We're happy to talk to anyone to help you determine the costs to individual property owners."
- Jim O'Reilly: "Will it increase private security or police coverage for businesses in the SSA?"
 - Scott: The SSA could spend money on private security or surveillance cameras if it was decided to pursue those services.
- Christopher Belz: "How many PINs are in this proposed SSA? Are both residential and commercial properties participants if this was approved?"
 - Scott: There are 622 total PINS—those are individual properties/parcels. PINs relate to different property owners (e.g. each condominium is a separate PIN, while an apartment building is typically one PIN).

- All types of properties would be included in the SSA but the vast majority in this area are commercial. Only 15% of the value of the SSA would be single family.
- Christopher Belz: "Is it possible to get a list of PIN owners/addresses?"
 - Scott: That will be submitted as part of the SSA establishment application.
- J. Garcia: "We bought in this community because it's not Lincoln Square or the now gentrified Logan Square. How do we ensure that this effort doesn't lead to the displacement of longtime residents?"
 - Scott: Local businesses get to decide how the monies are spent through the Commission. The Commission can prioritize helping keep existing businesses in the community and prevent displacement.
 - Amie: Part of what we want to do with the SSA is keep the businesses that we do have here. These type of tools can help us maintain what we already have. We have a lot of older buildings, former manufacturing businesses that have been repurposed. We don't have ways to support them right now. Also a lot of this is in response to the phone calls we get at the PEBA office -- biggest complaint I get everyday is how dirty the sidewalks are.
- Jim O'Reilly: "How will additional community meetings be held – especially civic association in the area?"
 - Amie: We have members of quite a few organizations in the community on the Committee and I am happy to get in touch with any group that wants to have additional discussion or meetings.
 - Jim O'Reilly: North Mayfair Improvement Association and Mayfair Civic would be interested in additional discussions.
- Patricia Eldridge: We want to be here to support the community. We want to share in responsibilities for shared services like clean-up efforts that would be more expensive for individual businesses. Important to answer the needs survey so we know what everyone feels is important. We want to make this area some place that people want to stop – walkable and not somewhere you just drive through. Also, the Committee wants to be sensitive to people's needs and not start out with the maximum tax rate--we would ease into it and start with a lower rate.
- J. Garcia: Could definitely use trees on Elston.
- J. Garcia: I would like to talk to my neighbors – is there a way to get a list of homeowners near me?
 - Amie: You can get in touch with me with your address and we can look into getting a list of neighbors.

Discussion / Question & Answer – Meeting #2 (May 13, 2021)

- Jim O'Reilly: When will see the effect of the SSA? When will businesses see benefit?
 - Scott: fairly soon for things like cleaner sidewalks, planting flowers, etc. Revenue doesn't come in until next September so results would start showing up in fall.
 - Amie: Plan would be to start services next spring/summer. We keep hearing about flowerbeds on Lawrence Ave – our goal would be to have that completed next summer and then all services would be started next fall when we receive the SSA funding.
- Jim: Can the market survey data be shared with the community?
 - Scott: First thing is the needs assessment survey and that will be included in application to the city which will be publicly available and the market study will absolutely be made available with everyone as well since that's a benefit to the entire business community as part of this process.
- Scott: What services have you heard are desired for the SSA?
 - Amie: we have formed the Lawrence Ave Design Collective – we have a number of small businesses located on Lawrence who do interior and business design so we have been trying to work to cluster them – we're starting to see that. This SSA program can help us market our area to those businesses as a place to set up shop and a place to market to customers as the location to go for your design needs.
 - Amie: we also hear a lot about the holidays – so many different holidays in our community and we'd like to do more to celebrate this diversity
 - Amie: Part of this area is in a TIF which gets SBIF Funding through SomerCorps—we've had so many businesses apply for this because there is such a great need for it. SSA can offer renovation money to businesses without as many rules and hoops to jump through.
- Jim: What are the opportunities for public art? Sides of buildings, etc?
 - Amie: Murals are definitely an eligible expense that could be done through the SSA –we'd love to see more art like that in our community.
- Tracy Cimba: Will vacant building property owners be equally taxed?
 - Scott: all property owners are treated the same – vacant properties are assessed less (through the County) but they would be paying into the SSA the same as other properties.