

# The Elmhurst Economic Edge...

## City, property owner collaborate on Schiller walkway improvements

On January 19, the Elmhurst City Council approved a development agreement with Willis Johnson, owner of the 109 West Schiller/136 North York building (on the north side of the Schiller Court walkway).

The project involves renovation of the building facade, together with improvements to the Schiller Court walkway that are compatible with the Elmhurst City Centre streetscape plan. The improved building facade and walkway will provide an attractive link from York Street to Addison Avenue.

The project was made possible through the City's Facade Improvement Assistance Program, which provides assistance to property owners for improvements to existing buildings and fosters revitalization of the Central Business District.

Once the improvements are complete, Johnson, who also owns the York Theater and other properties in the downtown, plans to put the 6,000 sq. ft. building into active retail-commercial use with a new entertainment-oriented business.

"Our goal is to attract dining and entertainment clientele and enhance the nighttime activity in City Centre," Johnson said.

Johnson has worked with local architect Jeff Budgell, LEED-AP, to design a European-style pedestrian walkway for the Schiller Court side of the building, with an additional entrance to the building from the walkway. The new design employs a variety of colors and textures to present the appearance of multiple buildings along the existing brick wall. Other amenities include stoops, windows, flower boxes, streetlighting and benches.

"The cooperation I've had from the City and the architect has been a great asset for this project," Johnson said. "The City recognizes the importance of strengthening the link between York Street and Addison Avenue as a catalyst for future economic development, increased retail/real estate taxes and improved pedestrian traffic," added Budgell.

Another important goal of the City's Facade Program is to bring older buildings up to current fire and life safety codes. To that end, Johnson has installed a sprinkler and fire alarm system in the build-



ing. In addition, an elevator will be added and improvements made to the stairwells.

The Schiller Walkway project is expected to be complete in the fall of 2009.

More information about the City of Elmhurst Facade Program can be found on the City website at [www.elmhurst.org](http://www.elmhurst.org).

### City Council approves major redevelopment for parking, retail

On February 2, the Elmhurst City Council approved the acquisition and redevelopment of three commercial properties in downtown Elmhurst, with a goal of adding two new parking decks and additional retail space. The properties are located on the east side of Addison Avenue, adjacent to the Schiller Walkway and the current Hurley Engineering building on the northwest corner of Larch and First Streets.

This project will furnish additional downtown parking and enhance business activity on Addison Street, identified by the Elmhurst City Council as important community initiatives.

Working with DevCom Realty Investments and NAI Hiffman, the City will assist in acquiring the properties and developing the new retail space and parking decks. The developer will reimburse the City through monthly payments with interest, with terms that are very favorable to the City. Ultimately, the City will own and maintain the parking facilities, while the developer will control the retail space.

In the past, the City of Elmhurst had made multiple attempts to acquire these properties, and the purchase was finally made possible through the City's public/private partnership with DevCom Realty Investments and NAI Hiffman.

Work is expected to begin on the 500-space parking

deck on First Street later this year. Construction of an Addison Street parking deck and ground level retail space will begin once existing tenants have been relocated to other Elmhurst locations.

The new project will provide additional revenues to the City not only through enhanced business activity, but also from bond financing and interest paid by the developer.

*This column, provided by the City of Elmhurst's Department of Planning, Zoning and Economic Development, is one in a series of articles designed to apprise citizens and business owners alike of how the City is working to strengthen and improve the tax base and financial well-being of the community through economic development.*



Credits: Architects' Studio, LLC/Jeff Budgell, LEED-AP, Architect and Voss, Lauritsen, Tillrock Architectural Illustration, INC./Ed Tillrock

### City approves upgrades to Schiller Walkway

On January 19, City Council approved a development agreement with Willis Johnson to upgrade the Schiller Court walkway depicted in this architectural rendering. The project involves renovation of the building facade, together with improvements which are compatible with the Elmhurst City Centre streetscape plan.

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