

Chicago Tribune

10 towns work together to improve Harlem Avenue corridor

September 09, 2013 | By Kevin M. Coyne, Special to the Tribune



In an attempt to stimulate economic growth, the Southwest Conference of Mayors will host a Development Summit at Toyota Park to discuss over 350-acres of land along the Harlem Avenue corridor. Shown here is a stretch along the 12300 block of Harlem Avenue in Palos Heights. (Kevin M. Coyne, Chicago Tribune)

Some 350 acres in the Harlem Avenue Corridor from Bedford Park to Tinley Park will be shopped to **developers** next week in a combined effort of 10 communities to jump start re-development in the area.

The Development Summit on Wednesday at Toyota Park is sponsored by the Southwest Conference of Mayors and invited more than 1,000 developers.

"We've never tried this before, but we are expecting a great turnout and to fill up with at least 60 developers," said Vicky Smith, Southwest Conference of Mayors executive director. ""We have a lot to offer, so we need to market our communities."

The Harlem Avenue corridor extends from 63rd Street in Bedford Park to Interstate Highway 80 in Tinley Park.

"We want each community to highlight the best of their community," said Gerald Bennett, SCM president and Palos Hills mayor.. "Each community is able to showcase properties of their choosing regardless of the location being on Harlem Avenue."

Prior to the summit, a Pace bus will take developers through the communities with properties along Harlem Avenue. They are Bedford Park, Bridgeview, Burbank, Chicago Ridge, Oak Lawn, Orland Park, Palos Heights, Palos Hills, Tinley Park and Worth.

"I think this is a great initiative, and we are very appreciative of the [leadership](#) provided by the Southwest Conference of Mayors," said Karie Friling, Orland Park director of business services. "Our greatest asset is our commercial property and what we bring to the regional community."

Orland Park will feature two properties during the summit — Thomas House, a newly developed 80-unit senior living center at the northwest corner of Wheeler Drive and Harlem Avenue and a vacant property across from the [new](#) Copper's Hawk restaurant at 159th Street and Harlem Avenue.

"I think it's a great idea and perfect opportunity for commercial developers to see a variety of sites from Toyota Park to Tinley and get a gander of what's out there," said Chicago Ridge Mayor Chuck Tokar. "These are the vision people, it's not a one-size-fits-all type [developer](#). We'll meet with developers who specialize in retail, townhomes, commercial development and other highly specialized developers."

Chicago Ridge is expected to showcase properties off Southwest Highway and the 75-acre YRC Trucking site, formerly Yellow Freight at 103rd Street and Harlem Avenue, which was part of the SCM's 2010 study of the Harlem Avenue corridor.

"This is a great way to stimulate development, and I think a lot of it has to do with bringing people from outside the area to see the different parcels of land," said Palos Heights Mayor Robert Straz. "In the case of Palos Heights, we want developers to see that the quality of life is good and that we want them to come in and develop in our city."

Palos Heights will highlight three properties on Harlem Avenue: at 119th Street, at 127th Street and the downtown area.

"The [goal](#) of the summit is to take the economic development recommendations of the plan to the next level by marketing these parcels and communities to the larger development community," Smith said. "Officials from all 10 communities will be available to discuss opportunities and to answer questions."

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