



# SSA #26 BROADWAY RENEWAL

## Advisory Committee #2 Meeting Minutes

March 18, 2026, 11:30am – 12:30pm · Virtual (Zoom)

### **Present:**

#### **Advisory Committee**

Rajan Shahi, Sewa Senior Care, Chair

Karen Ami, Chicago Mosaic School

Agnes Chan, 48th Ward

Zach Joseph, 49th Ward

Summur Lawson, Loyola University

Ben Rees, MacMaster Properties

Margaret Hagerty, State Farm Insurance

Mark Towns, Edgewater Candles

Jenny Yang, Phoenix Bean Tofu

Joe Zureikat, Castle Liquors

#### **Edgewater Chamber of Commerce and SSA #26 and Teska Associates**

Garrett Karp, Edgewater Chamber of Commerce

Jessica Wobbekind, Edgewater Chamber of Commerce

Erin Cigliano, Teska Associates

Scott Goldstein, Teska Associates

Kamaria Nichols-Hazziez, Teska Associates

### **Not Present**

Mike Waszkowski, Rivers and Roads Café, Advisory Committee

## **1. Welcome & Introductions**

Garrett Karp, Executive Director of the Edgewater Chamber of Commerce and Program Manager for Special Service Area #26, called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees to the second and final Advisory Committee meeting of the renewal process. Garrett invited a brief round of introductions. Members shared their names, organizational affiliations, and connections to the Edgewater business district and SSA #26.

Garrett introduced the Teska Associates team, including Scott Goldstein, Erin Cigliano, and Kamaria Nichols-Hazziez, noting their role as project consultants supporting the Chamber through the renewal effort. He acknowledged the participation of Zach Joseph (49th Ward) and Agnes Chan (48th Ward) as ward representatives with an interest in the SSA district and thanked all committee members for their continued engagement.

## 2. Visioning Recap & Needs Assessment Survey Results

Scott Goldstein briefly recapped the visioning activity conducted at Advisory Committee Meeting #1, summarizing the priorities and observations shared by committee members at that session, including appreciation for the colorful street chairs, the Edgewater Music Fest and Indoor Market, CleanSlate litter abatement, trash pick-up, patio rebates, street banners, and placemaking murals.

Erin Cigliano then presented an overview of the SSA #26 Needs Assessment Survey results. The survey launched on March 6th, 2026 (the date of the first Advisory Committee meeting) and as of March 18th, 2026, had received 149 responses—a strong showing that reflects marketing by Edgewater Chamber and the community’s engagement with the district. Key findings included:

- Respondents represented a broad cross-section of stakeholders, including residents, customers, business owners, property owners, and non-profits, with a wide range of tenure and connection to the neighborhood.
- Highest-priority services identified include sidewalk snow plowing, safety initiatives, streetscape improvements, and enhanced cleaning and litter abatement.
- Overall satisfaction ratings were highest for cleanliness, pedestrian experience, and special events and programming.
- Open-response comments highlighted strong support for local businesses, interest in expanded marketing and visibility for small businesses, attraction of businesses to vacant storefronts, and further investment in public art and placemaking.
- A recurring theme in open responses was the desire to improve the pedestrian experience along Broadway, which respondents noted feels more auto-oriented given its width. Suggestions centered on creating a more hospitable, Main Street environment through streetscape investments, increased shade and seating, and improved accessibility.

Erin noted that many of the highest-priority services are subject to cost increases over time, reinforcing the relevance of the tax cap discussion to follow. She also highlighted the survey’s finding that a more comprehensive pedestrian and streetscape planning effort—one that would engage City agencies such as DPD and CDOT—may be a natural next step. The SSA can serve as a catalyst and funding source for such an initiative, and it is an eligible activity within the economic development line item of the SSA budget categories.

## 3. Costs & Tax Rate Considerations

Scott Goldstein presented an overview of tax rate levy, cost scenarios, and SSA budget projections. He recapped the distinction between the Maximum Tax Rate and Annual Levy, noting that the current Maximum Tax Rate for SSA #26 is 0.55% and the 2026 Annual Rate is 0.53%—meaning the district is operating at nearly its full cap, with very little room to absorb cost increases or pursue additional investments.

Scott presented scenarios illustrating the impact of raising the maximum tax rate, expressed in monthly cost per \$100,000 of Equalized Assessed Value (EAV). At the current rate of 0.53%, the cost is approximately \$44–45 per month.

At a proposed cap of 0.80%, the maximum possible cost would be approximately \$67 per month, though the commission would set the actual levy annually and would be unlikely to reach the cap

immediately. Raising the cap to 0.80% would generate additional annual revenue of approximately \$110,000 above the current rate, enabling expanded investment in services such as streetscape improvements, banner replacement, events, holiday decorations, and litter abatement.

Key points raised in discussion included:

- The commission sets the annual levy each year based on service needs, cost projections, and affordability, and is unlikely to jump to the cap rate in any given year. The maximum rate simply establishes the ceiling for the 15-year term.
- Any annual levy increase exceeding 4.9% requires an additional public meeting and increased City scrutiny, providing an important accountability check. The Chamber noted that such increases have occurred in recent years only as a modest market correction following a period of flat or declining levies.
- Service costs—for cleaning, maintenance, landscaping, garbage collection, and events—are increasing. Without additional headroom in the tax cap, the SSA may lack the capacity to maintain current service levels, let alone expand or increase them.
- The SSA currently does not have the budget to add more garbage cans (which would require ongoing servicing costs), increase litter abatement days, scale up holiday decorations, or expand display advertising and marketing—all priorities identified by stakeholders.
- Garrett and Jessica shared that holiday decorations, while sometimes perceived as discretionary, have a measurable impact on winter business activity and generate significant community feedback when scaled back. They noted that requests to match the streetscape aesthetics of comparable business districts like Lincoln Square are common.
- The current 0.55% tax cap is among the lower maximum tax rates in the City of Chicago. A rate of 0.80% would remain under 1% and fall well within the range of comparable SSAs.
- Raising the cap does not mean the SSA would immediately levy at that rate—it simply provides the flexibility for the commission to respond to opportunities, cost increases, and priorities over the 15-year term.
- Opportunities to leverage additional funds—such as CDOT streetscape investments that require an SSA to maintain enhanced plantings—are currently out of reach given the lack of budget headroom.

#### **4. Vote: Maximum Tax Rate**

Following discussion, Rajan Shahi, Chair of the Advisory Committee, opened the floor for a motion on the proposed maximum tax rate for the SSA #26 renewal ordinance.

**Motion:** Summur Lawson moved to adopt a maximum tax rate of 0.80% for the SSA #26 renewal.

**Second:** Margaret Hagerty seconded the motion.

**Vote:** Motion carried unanimously. No committee members opposed or abstentions.

The committee confirmed that the adopted rate of 0.80% represents the maximum cap for the 15-year renewal term, and that the SSA Commission will set the actual annual levy each year based on service needs and affordability.

#### **5. SSA Boundary Discussion**

Scott Goldstein presented the proposed SSA #26 boundary map and led a discussion on a potential westward expansion along Devon Avenue on both sides of the street to Clark Street. At the prior meeting, the committee had discussed this expansion as a possibility; this meeting provided an opportunity to make a formal recommendation before the signature collection process begins.

Key considerations discussed included:

- The proposed expansion would add approximately 50 non-exempt PINs, extending both sides of Devon Avenue from its current terminus at Glenwood westward to Clark Street.
- Once the signature process begins, boundaries can only be contracted, not expanded.
- The Devon corridor between Glenwood and Clark currently lacks a cohesive identity and consistent services. The Chamber noted that this stretch has been a priority area in prior planning efforts, including the *Elevate Devon Corridor Plan*, which envisioned unified branding and services across both sides of Devon.
- SSA-funded Devon banners currently extend from Clark Street to Broadway, but banners west of Glenwood are funded by the Chamber rather than the SSA—an arrangement that is atypical and underscores the gap in district coverage.
- The additional revenue generated by the expanded properties is expected to be roughly proportional to the cost of extending services to the area. Staff noted that landscaping costs may represent the most significant incremental expense, given the condition of planters in that stretch.
- Garrett and Jessica acknowledged they are inherently biased in favor of expansion, as it would increase the Chamber’s service area and organizational reach, but noted the genuine needs of the corridor and the alignment with prior planning goals.
- A question was raised about whether the proposed boundary expansion could dilute resources for the core Broadway corridor. Staff and the Teska team affirmed that the proportional revenue-to-cost relationship makes this unlikely.
- The committee expressed interest in pursuing the expansion through the community meeting and signature process, with the understanding that boundaries could be revised back to the existing limits if warranted before final submission.
- Staff noted that future community meetings slated for April, alongside ongoing outreach with PIN holders, would be monitored.

## 6. Vote: SSA Boundary

Committee Chair, Rajan Shahi opened the floor for a motion on the proposed boundary.

**Motion:** Rajan Shahi moved to approve the SSA #26 renewal boundary as presented, including the existing SSA #26 Broadway Commercial Corridor boundaries plus an expansion along both sides of Devon Avenue westward to Clark Street.

**Second:** Karen Ami seconded the motion.

**Vote:** Motion carried unanimously. No committee members opposed or abstentions.

## 7. Signature Collection Process

Scott Goldstein reviewed the City of Chicago’s signature collection requirements and process, which represent an additional accountability step beyond the State Statute requirements. Key points included:

- The City requires signatures from property owners representing at least 20% of all non-exempt PINs in the district. With approximately 1370 non-exempt PINs in the proposed boundary, approximately 274 signatures are needed.
- Signatures must be collected in two phases: a first round representing 10% of PINs by June 10th, and a second round representing the remaining 10% by August 1st, 2026.
- The signature form will reflect the adopted maximum tax rate of 0.80% and must be signed by an authorized taxpayer. For LLC or other entity-held properties, a brief authorization letter is required to confirm the signer’s authority.
- If a property owner holds multiple PINs (e.g., a condominium unit and a parking space), each PIN requires a separate signature from the same individual.
- The Teska team noted that residential condominium owners have historically been strong supporters of SSA renewal, given their direct experience and appreciation for SSA-funded services such as events, cleaning, and placemaking.
- Outreach strategy should include direct mail, followed by phone calls, with the understanding that email alone is typically insufficient. The goal is to identify supporters in advance through existing networks and then formalize the signature.
- A postcard will be mailed to all taxpayers within the proposed boundary notifying them of the renewal process and upcoming community meetings.

Garrett Karp noted that staff will be organizing a follow-up working session to review the full PIN list and identify known contacts, supporters, and priority outreach targets. Committee members were encouraged to leverage their own networks to identify property owners and relay the value of the SSA to their peers.

## **8. Next Steps & Adjournment**

Scott Goldstein reviewed the remaining milestones in the renewal timeline and encouraged Advisory Committee members to attend and participate in both upcoming community meetings:

- Community Meeting #1: April 16, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. – Virtual (Zoom)
- Community Meeting #2: April 23, 2026 at 1:00 p.m. – In Person, Edgewater Branch Library

Calendar invitations will be distributed to all Advisory Committee members. Committee members were encouraged to speak briefly at the community meetings if comfortable, sharing their personal connection to Edgewater and their support for the SSA renewal.

Additional timeline milestones include a second mailing to all taxpayers in the fall (a formal legal notice), followed by a public hearing and City Council adoption. The full District Plan and all required application materials are due June 10th.

The meeting adjourned with appreciation expressed to the Advisory Committee for their engaged participation, thoughtful questions, and commitment to the renewal process.