



SSA #26 BROADWAY RENEWAL

Community Meeting #1 Summary

Date	April 16, 2025 (Virtual / Zoom)
Meeting Format	Community Meeting #1 of 2 required for SSA Reconstitution
Facilitators	Garrett Karp & Jessica Wobbekind, Edgewater Chamber / SSA #26 Scott Goldstein & Erin Cigliano, Teska Associates, Inc.
City Representative	Eileen Sweeney, City of Chicago Department of Planning & Development (DPD)
Purpose	Inform property owners and stakeholders about the SSA #26 renewal process, proposed tax rate, boundary expansion, and gather community input and answer questions.

Attendees and Speakers

- Garrett Karp, Executive Director, Edgewater Chamber of Commerce (SSA Service Provider)
- Jessica Wobbekind, Community Development Director, Edgewater Chamber of Commerce
- Eileen Sweeney, City of Chicago Dept. of Planning and Development
- Scott Goldstein, President, Teska Associates, Inc.
- Erin Cigliano, Principal, Teska Associates, Inc.
- Kameraia Nichols-Hazziez, Teska Associates, Inc.
- Tim Harrington, Barr Funeral Home, property owner, resident, former SSA Board President
- Summur Lawson, Director of Neighborhood Initiatives, Loyola University Chicago
- Mark Towns, Business Owner, Edgewater Candles; SSA Board Member;
- Todd Baisch, Edgewater Historical Society, Bryn Mawr Historical Society
- Genell Scheurell
- Berkin Ozisikyilmaz

Meeting Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions (Garrett Karp and Jessica Wobbekind, Edgewater Chamber)
- SSA stakeholder testimonials (Tim Harrington, Summer Lawson, Mark Towns)
- Overview of the SSA program (DPD presentation by Eileen Sweeney)
- SSA #26 current services overview (Scott Goldstein, Teska)
- Needs assessment survey (Erin Cigliano, Teska)
- Proposed tax rate and budget (Scott Goldstein, Teska)
- Reconstitution process and next steps (Scott Goldstein, Teska)
- Q&A (Garrett Karp, Edgewater Chamber)

SSA #26 Stakeholder Testimonials

Tim Harrington, Founding Committee Member, Former Board President

Tim spoke about the invisible-until-it's-gone nature of SSA services. He noted that most people think the SSA is just snow shoveling and flowers, but the real value is in the things you don't notice — no cigarette butts, no litter, streets that "just look right." He proposed a thought experiment: stop services for one month and count complaints. Visitors to his funeral home from outside the city regularly comment on how clean and green Broadway is. Tim expressed strong support for renewal and expansion, particularly westward along Devon toward Clark, noting that corridor "is in need of something to amp it up and create cohesiveness."

Summur Lawson, Loyola University Chicago

Summur emphasized Loyola's institutional stake in the SSA as a long-standing property taxpayer and one of Edgewater's major institutional anchors. She noted the SSA's importance in providing corridor-wide coordination, supporting small businesses, enhancing cleanliness and safety, and enabling marketing initiatives like dining crawls. Loyola was also a partner in the Elevate Devon initiative. She stated that SSA coordination is "more important now than probably ever before" given increasing competition and challenges along Devon, and that Loyola "strongly supports" the reconstitution.

Mark Towns, Edgewater Candles, Bryn Mawr

Mark described his path from market vendor to storefront owner, a choice made deliberately to be part of the post-pandemic Renaissance of Bryn Mawr. As a newcomer who "didn't really know what an SSA was," he came to see the SSA as "magic" and commented on planters appearing, snow vanishing, litter disappearing. He noted the stark contrast between litter on streets that are not within the SSA and a perpetually clean Bryn Mawr frontage. He also credited the SSA-sponsored street festival return and mural above Double Bubble as quality-of-life gains.

SSA Program Overview (DPD)

Eileen Sweeney provided an overview of the SSA program structure and legal framework:

What Is an SSA?

A Special Service Area is a geographically defined taxing district, not a government agency, in which property owners within the boundary self-impose a tax to fund enhanced local services. The City of Chicago grants taxing authority and appoints Commissioners; a designated Service Provider administers day-to-day operations.

Program Scale

- Chicago currently has 58 SSAs administered by 42 service providers
- First SSA established in 1977 (State Street) is still active today
- Typical term: Initial 10 years, then extensions of 15 years
- Median budget across all SSAs: \$462K
- Budget range: \$43K (smallest) to \$3M+ (largest)

Authorized Service Categories

- Customer Attraction: events, social media, marketing, website
- Public Way Aesthetics: plantings, cleaning, banners, streetscape elements
- Sustainability and Public Places: bike racks, CTA enhancements, bus shelter amenities
- Economic and Business Development: strategic planning, business recruitment support
- Public Health and Safety: surveillance/cameras, security services, safety rebates
- SSA Management and Personnel: annual audit, accounting, compliance (capped at 30% of levy by state statute)

Governance and Accountability

- Commissioners: Mayoral nomination, City Council approval; must file annual ethics disclosures; no outstanding city/county debt
- Service Provider: Must be in good standing with state and city; files Economic Disclosure Statement; no outstanding debt to city
- City DPD monitors annual audits, administrative expenses, and performance metrics on behalf of taxpayers
- Tax funds flow directly from Cook County to the Service Provider's bank account; funds never pass through City accounts

Legal Framework

- Governed by Illinois SSA Tax Law and City of Chicago ordinances
- Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act apply
- Annual levy ordinance approved each year setting the budget and tax rate for coming year

SSA #26 Current Services

Scott Goldstein provided an overview of services currently delivered by SSA #26:

Core Annual Services

- Sidewalk snow removal and ice management
- Litter abatement (frequent, ongoing street cleaning)
- Landscape plantings and maintenance (planters, trees, seasonal flowers)
- Banner program
- Holiday decorations
- Power washing

Business Rebate Programs

- Cafe/patio permit fee rebates (SSA #26 is one of very few SSAs citywide offering this)
- Facade improvement rebates
- Vandalism repair rebates
- Signage rebates
- Safety and public health upgrade rebates

Programming and Activation

- Music Fest and annual street festival sponsorship / activation
- Indoor Winter Market, Farmers Market and seasonal programming
- Corridor-wide promotional campaigns (in partnership with Rogers Park Business Alliance, Loyola, and local businesses)
- Mural program

Infrastructure

- 20 new branded Edgewater bike racks installed in the past year
- Ongoing streetscape maintenance in coordination with CDOT
- The SSA also serves as a leverage mechanism for CDOT streetscape investment, healthy SSAs can take on maintenance of higher-upkeep plantings installed during public infrastructure projects, enabling a higher quality streetscape.

Needs Assessment Survey Results

Erin Cigliano presented preliminary findings from the SSA #26 Needs Assessment Survey, which was distributed via postcards to all property owners in the SSA boundary (with a QR code link) and promoted through Chamber social media channels.

Response Overview

- 170+ responses at the time of meeting; survey remains open
- Respondent breakdown: ~50% residents, ~25% customers/visitors, ~20% property owners
- Good balance of long-standing community members and newer arrivals

Top Priorities Identified

- Snow plowing and ice removal, rated highest
- Safety initiatives
- Streetscape improvements
- Frequency of trash can service
- Landscape plantings and maintenance

Key Themes from Open-Ended Responses

- Pride in the depth and diversity of local businesses and restaurants
- Enthusiasm for events; Music Fest, Indoor Market, colorful street furniture / seating
- Desire for improved pedestrian experience along Broadway
- Interest in additional lighting and environmental improvements to enhance sense of safety
- Basic service fundamentals (snow removal, trash) remain highest community expectation

Survey results will be shared with SSA Commission to help inform FY2027 budget/service priorities.

Proposed Tax Rate and Budget

Current and Proposed Rates

Current Annual Rate	0.5274%
Proposed Maximum Rate (Cap)	0.80%
State Statute Maximum	Up to 3.0% (SSA #26 proposal is well within lower range)
Renewal Term	15 years
Current Annual Budget (approx.)	~\$600,000
Budget at Max Rate (hypothetical)	~\$880,000 (not proposed, illustrative only)

How the Rate Works

The 0.80% figure is a maximum cap; a ceiling, not a target. The SSA Commission recommends an annual levy to City Council each year based on actual budget needs. The county then sets the annual tax rate to raise the levy amount. The Commission has historically kept the rate as low as possible while meeting service needs.

Why 0.80% Tax Cap?

The SSA #26 Advisory Committee and project team conducted two meetings this renewal. As part of the second meeting, they confirmed the proposed boundaries and recommended the 0.80% tax cap for the 15-year renewal term based on discussion and a number of factors, including:

- Cost inflation: Service contracts (snow removal, cleaning, landscaping) are increasing 5–10% per year. The cap provides flexibility to maintain service levels without triggering additional required community meetings (>5% levy increase requires one).
- Consistent Quality Service: Current and future activated spaces within the SSA boundaries require SSA services to ensure consistent streetscaping, cleaning, lighting, etc. Based on the Needs Assessment Survey findings to date, there are other geographic areas and priorities that may warrant additional investment.
- 15-Year SSA Renewal Window: This is about planning for the long term and providing a comfortable buffer that is reflective of that span of time.

Proposed Boundary Expansion

The meeting included discussion of the proposed westward extension of the SSA boundary along Devon Avenue, from the current boundary (alley west of Glenwood) westward to Clark Street. Key points noted included:

- The expansion area is currently being actively served in part by the Chamber without SSA funding; the expansion would formalize and fund those services and.
- The expansion would support implementation of the Elevate Devon initiative (a prior planning project of the Chamber, Loyola, and Rogers Park Business Alliance).
- Revenue and service costs in the expanded area are roughly break-even; more tax revenue comes in, more services provided.
- Outreach to property owners in the proposed expansion area (Devon to Clark) is underway. Anyone with connections to property owners there is encouraged to make introductions.

Reconstitution Process and Next Steps

Eileen Sweeney and Scott Goldstein walked through the reconstitution timeline and requirements:

- 10% of PIN signatures (property identification numbers) required by June 12, 2026
- 20% of PIN signatures required by August 1, 2025 (full minimum)

Full Timeline

March – May 2026	Needs assessment survey; signature collection; district plan documentation
June	District plan and 10% signatures submitted to DPD (6/10/26)
August	Full 20% PIN signature threshold required (8/1/26)
October	Formal mailing to all property owners (large-format envelope)
November	Public hearing at Chicago City Hall (advertised in Daily Law Bulletin)
December	Ordinance introduced and passed by City Council
2027	New SSA levy collected and funds distributed; renewed SSA begins

How to Help

- Complete the needs assessment survey if you haven't already
- Sign the letter of support (contact Jessica Wobbekind or Garrett Karp at the Chamber)
- Share information with other property owners

Community Meeting #2 — Save the Date

Wednesday, April 23, 2025 at 1:00 PM | Edgewater Library (accessible location)
Same agenda as CM#1; share with fellow property owners and neighbors!

Questions and Discussion

The meeting concluded with an open Q&A.

CTA Under-L Area Question

An attendee raised a question about who will manage, program, and clean the space under the CTA elevated tracks as part of the CTA's active construction project in the area. Garrett Karp responded noting the following points and clarifications:

- SSA funds can only be spent within SSA boundaries. The under-track area itself is generally not within the SSA (the boundary follows the alley west of the tracks).
- East-west streets crossing under the L at intersecting points do fall within SSA boundaries, enabling SSA investment in bike racks, planters, trash cans, cleaning, and snow removal at those intersections (e.g., Hollywood and Broadway).
- The Chamber is in ongoing conversation with the CTA, the 48th Ward alderman's office, and neighboring Chambers and SSAs, including Uptown United, about management plans.
- This is also why having headroom in the tax rate cap matters for the 15-year term.