

Newsletter: October 2009

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Upcoming SLN Events

Chicago International Film Festival Sampler:
SLN Invites You to join us for a special cultural program: three international films at CIFF and two nights of lecture and guided discussion at the historic Cliff Dwellers Club with noted film scholar (and long-time South Loop resident) Virginia Wright Wexman.

Program Dates:
Wed. Oct. 7 and Wed. Oct. 21
7 p.m. at Cliff Dwellers Club, 200 S. Michigan, 22nd floor
\$40 for the two-evening series; \$30 for members of SLN or Cliff Dwellers. Price includes lecture, discussion and snacks at the meetings. Cash bar available. [Click here for more info or to register.](#)

Loft Walk 2009 Sunday, Oct. 18, 12:00-5:00 p.m.
This popular, annual home tour showcases a selection of private residences that will be open for public viewing for one day only. It's part history tour; it's part architecture tour; it's part design and home decor tour. There's something for everyone. And, if you live in the South Loop, it's a great way to meet your neighbors. **Buy advance tickets before Oct. 12 for only \$20 each and save \$10 off the regular ticket price.**

[Buy Loft Walk Tickets](#)

For more Loft Walk info, see article to the right.

Quick Links

Join SLN or Renew Your Membership
At the website, click **Join** on the right end of the menu bar.

Did you try to join SLN recently and were not able to complete your registration online? We were having some problems with our system. But that has now been fixed, so please try again. We truly want you as a member! Feel free to call with any questions or concerns: Helen at 312-427-2692.

Happenings

2nd Ward Fall Clean and Green Sat. Oct. 17
9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Lunch will be provided.
Meet at True Rock Church, 57 E. 16th St.
RSVP to:
Maritza Garcia at (312) 263-9273 and tell them SLN sent you.

Chicago Book Festival. The Chicago Public Library presents a celebration of books, authors, and reading throughout October. A few highlights: **Madeleine Albright** at Borders Books and Music, 150 N. State, Wed. Oct. 7, 12:30 p.m.; **Creative Nonfiction with Luis Urrea**, Columbia College Film Row Cinema, 1104 S. Wabash, 8th floor, Mon. Oct. 19, 6:30 p.m.; **Chef Laura Frankel on Jewish Slow Cooker Recipes**, Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies, 610 S. Michigan, 6:30-8:30 p.m.; **Salman Rushdie** at Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State, Cindy Pritzker Auditorium, Thurs. Oct. 15, noon;
Allison Lurie and Bill Savage: Literary Laughs, Ida Noyes Hall, Max Palevsky Cinema, 1212 E. 59th St., Sat. Oct. 17 3 p.m. For full schedule of events, visit [chpublib.org](#).

Amish Festival Sat. Oct. 24
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Homemade breads, pies, furniture, and more.
True Rock Church
57 E. 16th St.
312-939-1109

Prairie Avenue Gallery: Art Opening Indie/South Indie Sat, Oct. 3rd,
5:00 - 9:00 p.m.
Show continues through Nov. 15.
Prairie Avenue Gallery, 1900 S. Prairie Ave.
A group show of independent artists, most who live and work in the South Loop. Featuring painting, sculpture, photography, printmaking, and mixed media works. Gallery hours Saturdays & Sundays 12 noon - 3 p.m.

Think Peace / Take Action A Day of Artful Action and Creativity Sat. Oct. 10th
12:30 registration, 1-5 p.m. seminar.
SGI-USA Chicago Buddhist Center
1455 S. Wabash
Guest Speaker: Ronni Favors, Rehearsal Director for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.
Enjoy a day of speakers, workshops, stimulating dialogue and collaborative art performances. Free and open to the public.

Volunteer for Chicago Marathon!
The Bank of America Chicago Marathon is in need of volunteers to staff the Runner Information booths at the expo (at McCormick Place) **October 9th and 10th**, and also on race day in Grant Park, **October 11th**. Work about four hours at a time (8 am - 9 pm, Friday; 8 am - 7 pm Saturday, or 5 am - 5 pm on Sunday). You'll be armed with more information than you thought you'd need to know about the marathon and race weekend, as well as some snacks or meals and a tee shirt. If you are interested, please contact **Dona Nishi** by email or phone at 312-953-8886.

Peace Concert featuring classical pianist, Toshiko Dunleavy Sat. Oct. 30, 7 p.m.
Soka Gakkai International Buddhist Center
1455 S. Wabash
The free performance promotes values of peace and respect for all people. Contact 312-913-1211.

Vet Art Project: Family Theater Night Wed. Oct. 14, 6 p.m.
Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington, Garland Room, 1st floor.
Join Salvation Improv Group as we learn basic improv techniques to recreate stories from our lives for sharing and support.
Please register in advance by calling 773-301-5366 or 708-715-5488. For more info, [visit the VetArtProject website.](#)

Between the Chicago International Film Festival (and SLN's CIFF Sampler program at Cliff Dwellers Club), the Chicago Book Festival, and Loft Walk 2009, October will be jam-packed with culture for South Loopers. But, I am biased: Being the Loft Walk Chair this year, my world this month is all about South Loop loft living. This year's event promises to be one of the best, as it will include some historically and architecturally fascinating buildings that have never before been included in Loft Walk. Plus, we'll be featuring a true artists' loft with artists in residence to show their work on the day of the event. So don't delay: get your tickets before Oct. 12 for the advance-sale \$10 discount!

Loft Walk is Here!

by Helen Kaplow, SLN VP



It's one of the South Loop's most anticipated events -- South Loop Neighbors' **Loft Walk**. Now in its 11th year, this popular community happening showcases a unique selection of private residences that are open for public viewing for one day only. This year, it's **Sunday, October 18, 12:00-5:00 p.m.**

It's part history tour; it's part architecture tour; it's part design and home decor tour. There's

something for everyone. And, if you live in the South Loop, it's a great way to meet your neighbors. (Be a Loft Walk volunteer docent: get a free ticket to Loft Walk and an invitation to the after-party. [Click here for more volunteer info.](#))

In the only event of its kind in Chicago, Loft Walk puts lofts and the loft lifestyle on display, featuring various exemplary, ingenious, and often visually stunning solutions to the basic challenges of architectural transformation and city living in general. The self-guided tour (with docents in each home) begins at Chicago historical landmark Dearborn Station (47 W. Polk) and winds its way through the South Loop.

Every fall, hundreds of people come from the South Loop and around the Chicago metro area to see inside 100-year-old printing factories that have been converted into stylish urban residences on Printers Row, or 100-year-old automobile showrooms that have been likewise converted on Motor Row, as well as shiny new high-rises and "soft lofts" that offer all the modern amenities on Michigan Ave.

As more people are attracted to the idea of living, working and playing in the same area, demand for both industrial-to-residential conversions and new housing is increasing in the South Loop. Anne K. Ream is a Chicago-based writer and the Chief Creative Officer of [Girl360net](#), a webzine for teens, and her home-office loft is part of the tour this year. Ms. Ream says, "For me, loft living is all about the possibilities provided by open space. There is something freeing and creatively compelling about living in a home without boundaries. It's a metaphor for how to approach life, really."

The Loft Walk tour is really about a lifestyle - Chicago's urban, loft lifestyle - and how that lifestyle very specifically grew out of this area's history, first as a railroad hub and the nation's printing center at the turn of the century, which created the high loft buildings with large windows on the narrow blocks near Dearborn Station. Then there was the abandonment of these buildings and their discovery and re-use as residences and studios by artists and bohemians. And now, all sorts of people love living in these old, converted factories and warehouses.

To meet the demand, developers are now putting up new buildings and re-creating many of the features of the old converted lofts - the open space and flexibility it gives, the large scale, high ceilings, big windows and the light. Plus, many of the new buildings incorporate industrial elements - exposed pipes, bare bricks - because people want that allure, that sense of story, a romantic feeling that something important happened here before them.

And the South Loop gives people all those things. We have an authentic industrial heritage, which later created an artistic legacy. And that all plays a part in the lives people are living here today. The Loft Walk tour is a window into that world.

Loft Walk tickets are \$20 in advance (if purchased by Oct. 12th) and can be purchased on the [SLN website](#) or simply by clicking the Buy Now button below. Tickets will be **\$30 after Oct. 12th and on the day of the event** and available after 11:00 a.m. at the tour starting point, Dearborn Station, 47 W. Polk Street.

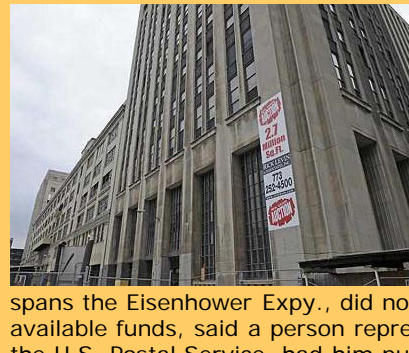
Buy Your Loft Walk Tickets Now and Save \$10!

[Buy Loft Walk Tickets](#)

Note: **Bring your PayPal email receipt to the Will Call table** at Dearborn Station on the day of the event to receive your Loft Walk ticket.

Development Update

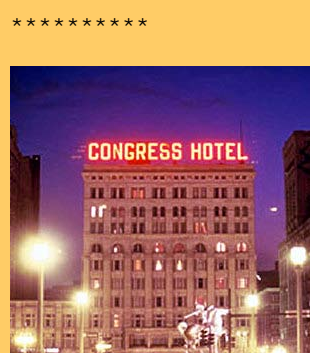
by Helen Kaplow, SLN VP



The *Sun-Times* reports that the **Old Post Office deal is not sealed and delivered yet**. According to reporter David Roeder, "The sale of the Old Chicago Main Post Office remained a muddled affair after the buyer who won it at auction missed a deadline to close the deal. Bill Davies, a globe-trotting investor who pledged \$40 million at the Aug. 27 auction for the vacant hulk that spans the Eisenhower Expy., did not close the sale despite having the available funds, said a person representing him. The property's seller, the U.S. Postal Service, had him put down a \$4 million deposit after the auction, and he was required to pay the balance by Wednesday."

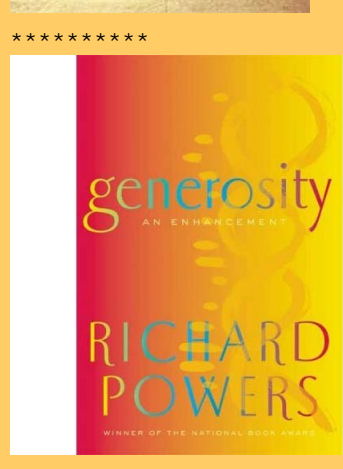
The *Sun-Times* article continues: "A statement from the company Davies is using for his bid cited disagreement with the seller over 'certain key issues' and said it 'decided to postpone its acquisition.' Davies has not explained what he wants to do with the property. He has failed at a number of attempts to redevelop parts of Liverpool, England, his former hometown, and local developers question his ability to deliver a project. The postal service said the sales contract gives Davies a 10-day 'cure period,' and that it will work with him."

The 14-story building on West Van Buren, which is between the size of McCormick Place and Willis Tower, has sat vacant since 1995. Walton Street Capital initially had an agreement with the postal service to buy it for \$10 and receive \$62 million in federal and local incentives to fix it up. That deal fell through, prompting the auction.



The Congress Hotel has won its permit suit. A federal judge has issued an injunction making it illegal for Ald. Fioretti and the city of Chicago to condition issuance of a **sidewalk café permit for the Congress Plaza Hotel** and Convention Center on the settlement of an ongoing strike there.

Judge Ronald Guzman agreed with the Congress's allegation that both Fioretti and his predecessor in office, Madeline Haithcock, used "aldermanic prerogative" to deny the hotel a fair hearing of their application for a sidewalk café. [Click for more on the story.](#)



Check out this excerpt from acclaimed writer **Richard Powers' new novel**: "One more angel giant rises from the pit, its girders taking on a sapphire skin. Luxury skybox living: late throes of a South Loop renaissance. Last year's homeless are all hidden away in shelters on the city's perimeter. Chicago hasn't looked better since the fire. The place is after something, a finish line beyond any inhabitant's ability to see, let alone afford." Yup, this Nobel Prize-winning author is featuring scenes from the South Loop in his new book,

Generosity: An Enhancement. [Click here for more on the story at the Chicago Journal website.](#)



Caught by the depressed market and **developer Keith Giles faces foreclosure** on a South Loop property where he had planned a 479-unit condo project. *Crain's Chicago Business* reports that "National City Bank has sued to collect \$20.2 million from Mr. Giles and partner Jerry Karlik, alleging that they defaulted on a loan for the site at 1712 S. Prairie Ave. Unable to secure a construction loan,

the pair ran out of time and options for a property that may now be worth a fraction of the \$13 million they paid for it in 2005. Units in the **X/O Condominiums** went on sale in November 2006; neighbors argued that the two-tower project clashed with their low-rise buildings. Alderman Robert Fioretti (2nd) tried to shrink the development by introducing a proposal to rezone the property, backing down only after Messrs. Giles and Karlik sued him in late 2007. But demand for new condos and construction financing was evaporating by then, and the X/O sales center shut down in 2008."



Debate continues on proposed new **South Loop student housing**. According to the *Chicago Journal*, **Keith Giles and Jerry Karlik are offering the city \$8 million for the land at 1136-40 S. Wabash**, far more than the parcel's appraised market value of \$3.4 million. That's according to the Department of Community Development staff report recommending the city sell the land to the two, whose Kargil Development has worked on a wide range of renovations and new-construction residential buildings on the Near South Side.

Ald. Robert Fioretti did not support designating the developers (operating here as South Loop Student Housing LLC) as buyer of the land, however, because they have yet to confirm a college would commit to sending their students to the structure. He's vowing to stall the proposal in the Committee on Zoning.

At the recent Community Development Commission meeting, (CDC is the public body charged with making recommendations on tax increment financing, land sales and other development issues) Fioretti left the hearing when the 1136-40 S. Wabash project came up.

Included in the staff report are letters from administrators at Columbia College and Flashpoint Academy. Mark Kelly, Columbia's vice president of student affairs, notes in a letter in the staff report that the school is "interested in discussing with you the possible master lease or ownership arrangement of your proposed student housing development." [Click here to read more.](#)



Last month we reported that the Chicago Planning Commission signed off on the **Chicago Central Area Action Plan** in a unanimous vote in late August. Discussion continues on the benefits and drawbacks of the plan, including questions about funding. This month, the *Gazette* published an interesting article that details many of the issues as they relate to our neighborhood.

"I don't think you can have a simple 'for' or 'against' position," said Brian Bernardoni of the Chicago Association of Realtors. "There is a lot to like in the plan, but some areas that bring us pause." [Click here to read the story at the Gazette.](#)

If you have South Loop news or event info to share with your neighbors, I invite you to send me the scoop at Helen@SouthLoopNeighbors.org. I hope to see you around the neighborhood!

Sincerely,
Helen Kaplow
Newsletter Editor
SLN VP, Membership