

# Mell talks ward redevelopment

By **PATRICK BUTLER**

*Staff Writer*

Ald. Richard Mell (33rd) said the ward is looking better than it has in years -- and offered a simple formula for keeping things that way.

"This year, I want everyone to just worry about the 25 feet in front of their homes or businesses," he told a Thursday, Feb. 26, luncheon of the Montrose/Kedzie Chamber of Commerce and the Kedzie/Elston Business and Industrial Council.

That's all it takes for everything to fall into place, Mell told his audience of about two dozen business and civic leaders.

Even Manzo's Ristorante, 3210 W. Irving Park Road, which hosted the luncheon, plans to expand by replacing a former liquor store with a small banquet hall and more parking spaces, Mell said.

And the redevelopment of the 3100 block of West Irving Park Road could even be finished by this time next year, Mell said, adding that "all that's holding things up right now" is waiting for the city to cut a deal with the owners of two pieces of property.

Mell said that, while a suitable buyer still hasn't been found for International Paper Co.'s now-vacant 11 acres at Addison Street and Kimball Avenue, "There's no way a 'big-box' type operation is going to go in there."

Several years ago, he said, the property had been cleared to make way for a Builder's Square.

When that didn't materialize, Home Depot expressed interest, provided it got tax-increment-financing assistance from the city.

"I told them I wasn't going to use the TIF power for something like that," said Mell, adding that "Addison Street is already congested, with three high schools (Gordon Tech, Lane and Schurz) as well as a semipro baseball team, the Chicago Cubs."

If anyone is going to get a TIF, it will be a "low-impact, clean manufacturing operation" like the Ampiere auto-parts plant that moved into that neighborhood about a year ago, Mell said.

Unfortunately, he conceded, industry usually can't pay the same prices for land as residential and commercial developers.

Manufacturers, he said, can usually pay \$6-8 per square foot, compared with \$12-\$14 for commercial and \$16 or more for residential developments.

Maybe, just maybe, a TIF district would be all that's needed to narrow the gap between what International Paper wants and what the right manufacturer can pay, Mell said.

He said he soon will pass along International Paper's corporate address so local business and civic groups "can write them letters, asking them to be good neighbors and not let dollar figures be the bottom line."

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