

Ravinia honors rehab efforts

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More change is on the way for the Ravinia neighborhood business district after a summer in which merchants and building owners have undertaken an across-the-board rehabilitation effort.

To recognize what has been done, the **Ravinia Neighbors Association** will host an awards ceremony at Ravinia Bistro from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Saturday with Highland Park Mayor Daniel M. Pierce serving as presenter.

The long list of achievements from the summer program is merely the starting point for what was accomplished, said Don Miller and Doug Purington, two leaders for the rehabilitation effort.

"It's been very rewarding," said Purington.

The **Ravinia Neighbors Association** has obtained 100 percent participation of 44 merchants and 18 property owners in the Ravinia business district to repair facades and buildings and to make other improvements. Members have worked with the Ravinia Business Association, the Highland Park Business and Economic Development Commission and City Council member Mari Barnes to provide assistance for improvements. The changes complement the Walgreens Drug Store development on Roger Williams Avenue as well as street re-surfacing improvements by the city.

One of the more extensive improvements will be at Vogue Cleaners, 2640 Waukegan Ave. A new awning will be installed with financial assistance from a City improvement loan program, and the store's front will be repainted.

"It's going to be beautiful," said Miller.

Members of the association's improvement program walked through the district with a designer from Signs Now, 716 Central Ave., to develop a concept for better signs in the district along with cost estimates.

Also, members met with the Business and Economic Development Commission Oct. 22 to describe what they are doing.

"It was wonderful," said Purington. "We were very well received."

He said The Custom Framer and Joe Palminteri's State Farm Insurance office, 479 and 477 Roger Williams respectively, have two of the new style signs, which can be personalized for each business in Ravinia and will tie the business district together.

"I think it's going to be a great addition," Purington said. "We want each merchant to have their individual identity."

Members also met with City Forester Larry King to discuss further foliage improvements.

"We even found another place where a tree could go up," Purington said.

Miller and Purington praised cooperation they have received from the Ravinia Business Association.

"We'd like to see more merchants be members of the Ravinia Business Association," Purington said. "Having their own voice is going to be important. Mari Barnes and Charlie have been very supportive. Mari has volunteered in many ways to help. She's a great liaison."

Charlie Barnes is president of the Highland Park Chamber of Commerce. He and wife, Mari, own The Custom Framers.

Initial improvements by merchants this summer included painting storefronts, placing displays in empty windows and cleaning windows. Business owners will install awnings, add new signs or improve existing ones, creating new window displays, and add more landscaping.