

Booming Bridgeport

The neighborhood is a burgeoning hot spot for arts, culture and entrepreneurs

BY LISA SKOLNIK

Once known as the birthplace of politicians (including five Chicago mayors), the formerly Irish enclave of Bridgeport now boasts one of the most diverse communities in the city. It's also home to a thriving arts scene anchored by the Zhou B Art Center and Bridgeport Art Center, which sit a block apart from each other on 35th Street, and to impresario **Ed Marszewski**, who owns the popular Maria's Packaged Goods & Community Bar (960 W. 31st) and is working to turn the neighborhood into an entrepreneurial and cultural hub. So far, Marszewski has founded experimental arts center Co-Prosperity Sphere (3219 S. Morgan), co-organized the annual alternative-culture showcase Version Fest and started the Small Manufacturing Alliance, which promotes local companies.

Bridgeport's recent renaissance means that it's also an ideal place to live. "It's so unbelievably affordable and has such a strong sense of neighborhood and family — all of the people that grew up here and moved to the suburbs are moving back. They realized that Bridgeport is so much more convenient and has it all, from great school options to fantastic public transportation," says Prudential Rubloff broker **Kevin Green** (left, call 312-520-8485). In truth, the only thing in short supply in the community — which is bordered by the South



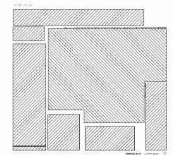
Branch and jutting South Fork (aka Bubbly Creek) of the Chicago River, Pershing Road and the Union Pacific railroad tracks — is good real estate. "You rarely see 'for sale' signs, because existing housing passes from generation to generation," says Green.

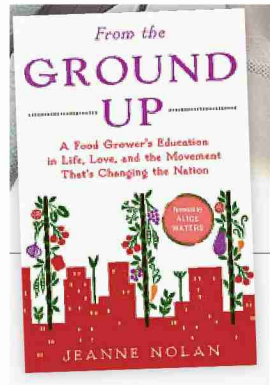
This makes Lexington Homes' new development on Sangamon Street a welcome addition. Its first developments, 39 row

houses called Lexington Square and nine single-family homes called Lexington Place, "sold really well, even in an iffy market," says Green. Now, Lexington Square 2 at Sangamon and 37th is going up, featuring 21 row homes and 20 single-family abodes. Three-bed, 2.5-bath row homes with roof decks include the 2,200-square-foot Grant for \$379,900 or the 2,500-square-foot Buckingham for \$409,900. If you're looking for a three-bed, 2.5-bath single-family space with a sprawling front porch, two-car garage and heavy-duty curb appeal, Lexington Place 2's options include the 3,030-square-foot Donovan for \$462,500 or the 3,639-square-foot Bridgeport for \$509,500 (add an extra car space, bedroom or bathroom for an upcharge).

On the rise

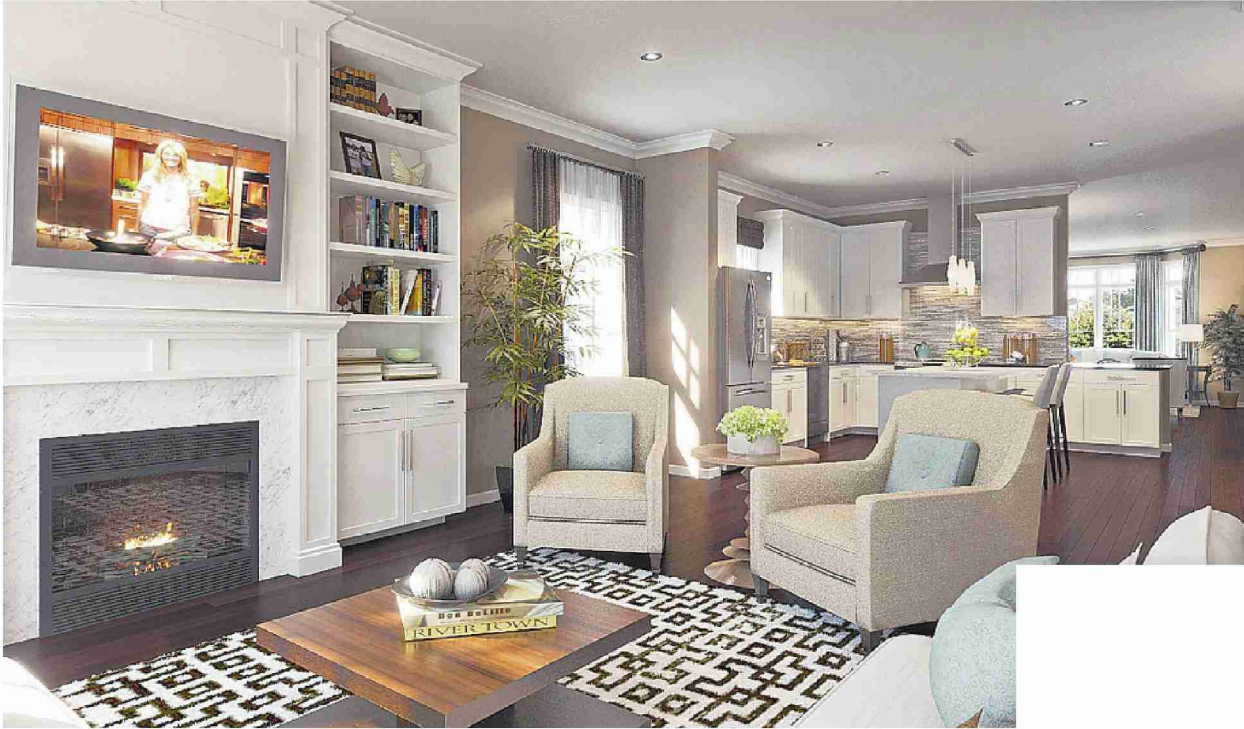
Another hotspot to consider is the 15-home Morgan Street Development, also at Sangamon and 37th, featuring three-bed, 2.5-bath homes. The spaces — which come in at 3,000 or 3,300 square feet — start at \$459,000 and boast two-car garages and optional finished basements that add an extra bed and bath to the equation. Seven out of 15 are already gone; call Jameson Sotheby's broker **Jennifer Liu** at (312) 320-3505 to check out the remaining homes.





OPTIMIZING OUTSIDE

In her new book, *From the Ground Up*, nationally renowned organic gardener **Jeanne Nolan** explains why it's never been easier to grow edibles in a yard, on a rooftop or even on a tiny balcony. Nolan would know — she designed, installed and maintains the Edible Gardens at Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo. \$17.82; Amazon.com



Above: An artist's rendering of 821 W. 37th. Right: A Morgan Street Development at Sangamon and 37th.

