

# Calumet City seeks help with River Oaks

Officials request state support for eminent domain of mall after court delay

By Olivia Stevens  
DAILY SOUTHTOWN

After a recent setback in eminent domain proceedings, Calumet City is pushing for Illinois General Assembly approval this month of its proposed quick-take of River Oaks Center mall.

The city last month voluntarily dismissed its Cook County court proceedings that asked a judge to deter-

mine how much the city owes Namdar Realty Group for the involuntary purchase of the 96 River Oaks Center Drive property.

“They’re not investing in the mall — they’re not going to invest in River Oaks (Center) mall,” Calumet City Mayor Thaddeus Jones said. “They’ve made that clear, and they’re just holding on to River Oaks mall for what they’re getting out of it right

now. And that’s not right to the community, it’s not right to the school districts and it’s not right to the region.”

More than a year after bringing the case, attorneys for the city said they found discrepancies between the land parcels listed in court documents and those the city previously had appraised at a value of \$4.6 million and offered to purchase from Namdar for \$13.2 million.

Namdar declined the city’s offer, asking for about \$40 million for the long-declining mall that has held on to two of its four anchor stores, Macy’s and JCPenney.

Five days before the city petitioned the Cook County court for eminent domain of the property, the realty group filed a lawsuit claiming the city sent a letter to



River Oaks Center mall in Calumet City is shown May 1. DAILY SOUTHTOWN STAFF

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Tori Lawson, of Calumet City, during the ‘50s with a Twist hair show Thursday at South Suburban College in South Holland. JANICE NEUMANN/FOR THE DAILY SOUTHTOWN

# Back in style

South Suburban College cosmetology students test 1950s hairstyles in contest

By Janice Neumann  
FOR THE DAILY SOUTHTOWN

Pin curls, finger waves and Barbie dolls made a comeback at a recent 1950s hair show and contest at South Suburban College.

Though the students in the school’s cosmetology department were too young to remember the 1950s, each got into the nostalgic mood with their mannequin hairstyles, backed by poster boards with decorations from the era.

“For some reason when I think of the 1950s, I think of video games (with that historical theme) and diner themes,” said Alycia Bolek, as she showed off her mannequin with pin curls and finger waves in front of a poster board with pictures of ‘50s diners.

In June, the class will start doing hair for clients who come to their class for the service.

“I’ve been passionate about hair for a long time,” said Bolek, who lives in Orland Hills. “I just enjoy making people feel like themselves.”

This was the first such competition for the class, which includes hair cutting, styling and color, skin care, nails and barbering. Students also learn about skin and nail disorders and time management.

The college’s barber program, led by Jai Rodriguez, has held a superhero competition, which included Batman and Captain Marvel styles.

Cosmetology is popular, too, with a wait list of 190 students for an upcoming night class in August. There were 15 students in this class and contest.

“A lot of them are into nails but want to learn cosmetology to be business owners,” said Sikisha Bramlett-Randle, cosmetology career training instructor.

Randle said she loves teaching the

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Above: Savannah Pruitt-Upshaw won first place in the ‘50s with a Twist hair show at South Suburban College.



Left: Chloe Buford stands beside her mannequin and rock & roll board at the hair show.

# Cook program administers free at-home maternal care

By Evy Lewis  
DAILY SOUTHTOWN

Three months after her daughter, Za’Mor Caldwell, was born, a county nurse came to Zaharia McLaurin’s home to make sure both mother and baby were healthy and well.

“She assessed the baby, just gave me tips on how handle her and what to do, especially with her growth and development, just making sure she’s healthy,” McLaurin said, holding Za’Mor on her lap.

McLaurin lives in Matteson, and Za’Mor is her first child.

“It’s helped a lot, because in a traditional setting you really don’t get the help like how they do it,” McLaurin said. “It’s been amazing for me, because I have another set of help.”

Her care was provided by Healthy Beginnings, a program run through the Cook County Department of Public Health intended to improve health outcomes by providing prenatal and postnatal care to suburban mothers.

“We want to prevent mortality, want to prevent morbidity and mortality,” said Maria Ajuzie, the nurse looking after McLaurin and her daughter.

The program also focuses on mothers’ mental health, McLaurin said.

“I think that’s important,” McLaurin said. “If I’m not in the right mental state, then I can’t take care of and provide for her.”

The program launched in January, said Michele Spikes-Cain, associate director of nursing at the Cook County Department of Public Health.

“If mother is uncomfortable meeting in the home, we can meet at the doctor’s office, library,” Spikes-Cain said. “We just want to meet them where they are so we can provide the resources, education and just wrap-around support they need during the critical part of pregnancy.”

Mothers are educated on topics including safe sleep and the importance of vaccinations, Ajuzie said.

“It’s extremely comprehensive,” Spikes-Cain said. “We try to touch on cardiovascular disease, any comorbidities the mother may be dealing with like diabetes, asthma.”

There are several ways expecting and new mothers get connected with the program, which generally provides support for a year after birth, with home visits once a quarter.

“(McLaurin) was referred to us from the hospital,” Ajuzie said. “Some of them, we see them before they have the baby. We educate them around prenatal, everything about prenatal.”

In addition to pure health concerns, the program also aims to help in other areas that

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Maria Ajuzie and Zaharia McLaurin discuss Za’Mor’s development Monday during a home visit in Matteson. EVY LEWIS/DAILY SOUTHTOWN