

Zelchenko didn't go to either hearing because he didn't know about them. He'd just moved back to his parents' house after getting divorced. "I grew up in this house," he says, "but I haven't lived here in years."

His parents, who are long retired, say they saw no notices about the hearings. Zelchenko, an outspoken activist who pursues his causes long after most people would have given up, was against the SSA as soon as he read the copy of the proposal he got from the chamber of commerce. He calls it a waste of money. According to the chamber, the SSA would hike property taxes in the district about 3.8 percent, rais-

ing around \$149,000 a year, and the owner of the average condo would pay \$260 more a year.

And what would residents get for that? The chamber wants to spend \$48,000 on 60 flower baskets to hang from street poles, \$22,750 for holiday decorations, \$20,000 on removing litter from sidewalks and gutters, \$18,000 on a planner to manage the program, \$12,000 to shovel and salt sidewalks each time at least two inches of snow have fallen, \$10,000 to landscape sidewalks, \$7,500 to cover budget shortfalls when people don't pay their property taxes, and \$6,000 for insurance and office supplies.

Klausmeier and Leibov think

all this will make the area more attractive and spare everyone the expense and time of arranging for such services themselves.

Zelchenko disagrees. "How does any of this benefit the average property owner on Lincoln Avenue?" he says. "OK, it's nice to have someone shovel your walk. But why would you have to set up this whole program just to hire someone to shovel the walk? It's nice to have people clean the gutters—but aren't we already paying the city to do that? And what's with the \$48,000 for 60 hanging plants? That's, what, \$800 a year for each basket? And \$22,500 for holiday decorations—didn't people used to put that stuff up them-

selves? And \$18,000 to hire someone to run the program?"

He says that the benefits will go mainly to the merchants and that the residents' taxes are already high enough. "My parents' taxes are going up every year as it is," he says. "Last year they paid \$13,000."

Klausmeier and Leibov say Zelchenko's the only resident who's strongly opposed the SSA. Leibov says, "I would say that, based on what we have heard, people either support the SSA or are indifferent to it."

Zelchenko thinks most residents simply don't know about it. Alderman Daley is also concerned. She says it's hard to imag-

ine people in Lincoln Park, who pay some of the highest property taxes in the city, welcoming another hike. "I think the SSA is a good idea, but I'm concerned about attendance at those meetings," she says. "I want to make sure enough people want it."

The City Council's finance committee will hold a hearing on the Lincoln Avenue SSA at 10 AM on November 4. Klausmeier, Leibov, and Zelchenko say they'll be there. The city has sent out notices informing property owners in the district of the hearing. Zelchenko's parents were watching for theirs this time and got it. Zelchenko hopes a lot of other people saw theirs too. **B**

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