



Here's the truth about the whipping boy known as tax-increment financing.

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Revolution's Josh Deth is enjoying the bittersweet brew of tripling capacity. Page 3

# CRAIN'S

## CHICAGO BUSINESS



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# For Sox, growth is en español

Ticket sales to Latinos grow even as overall numbers are falling

BY DANNY ECKER

The Chicago White Sox have seen the writing on the wall, and it's in Spanish.

While U.S. Cellular Field has been plagued by empty seats during an eight-year slide in ticket sales, one part of the Sox's fan base has shown dramatic growth: Latinos.

Nearly 17 percent of fans at Sox games last season were Latino, up more than 50 percent over the previous year and nearly three times the total of a decade ago, according to the team, whose data are based on more than 8,000 annual in-stadium fan surveys during games. The Sox say the total number of Latino ticket-buyers is growing in addition to their percentage of the total.



A White Sox fan cheers during the 2014 season.

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Chicago bloggers Jess Keys, from left, creator of TheGoldenGirlBlog.com; Kit Graham of TheKittchen.com and Kelly Larkin of KellyInTheCity.com



# The new influencers

Hundreds of people are turning their personal blogs into businesses

BY BRIGID SWEENEY

Four years ago, Kit Graham was a paralegal who liked to cook. Today, when she's not at her day job at Groupon, she's a popular food blogger and cookbook author who's worked with brands including Macy's, Shake Shack and Coca-Cola. Graham, 30, author of

TheKittchen.com (7,952 Instagram followers), is one of hundreds of Chicago bloggers, largely female and in their 20s and 30s, who have parlayed their blogs from personal creative outlets into small businesses.

"The blogging community has exploded here," says Graham, who in 2013 also founded the Windy City

Blogging Collective, a networking group (and blog, of course) that provides advice to new bloggers and helps them link up with sponsors. "The fact that I actually run a blog about blogging shows just how much opportunity exists."

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# Expansion to test Aldi's no-frills formula

Chain wants to have more stores than any competitor in Chicago

BY H. LEE MURPHY

As she checks out at the Aldi grocery store in west suburban Geneva, Michelle Mustard is busy bagging her own produce and canned goods while her two young twins circle the

bulging cart.

She figures she has saved \$30 on this trip, or 20 percent, by shopping here instead of the country's biggest discount grocer, Wal-Mart, let alone a higher-priced place like Jewel. If being her own bagger is part of

the deal, that's just fine, says Mustard, 38, a stay-at-home mom. "The bargains here are amazing."

Aldi, long known as a repository of knockoff brands of canned goods and essential staples and not much else, in

the past few years has broadened its assortments to include meat, wine and beer and, at some locations, organic vegetables and fruit. Dimly lit shops that once covered less than 10,000 square feet are being replaced with stores of 15,000 square feet and more with shiny tile floors and wide aisles.

The chain, German-owned

and once concentrated in mostly lower-income neighborhoods, is seized with the ambition to expand its American presence.

Aldi, whose U.S. headquarters are in Batavia, has grown to 36 stores in Chicago and 150 including suburbs. Its share of

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# EXPANSION

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# Super pantries serve many purposes—and hide lots of clutter

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Architects and designers in the Chicago area say the No. 1 “want” these days from not-first-time buyers in the city and suburbs is a dedicated space separate from the kitchen where they can do messy chores like repotting a plant, as well as store wine, barware, wrapping paper, a printer, dog food, everyday gear and oversized items.

These extra spaces can be as small as a large closet or as spacious as the kitchen. Closed off from public areas of the house, these workrooms can cost less than the same space within a kitchen because less expensive cabinetry, including open shelves, may be used. The Skarzyskis outfitted their expanded pantry with off-the-rack cabinetry and countertops. But many super pantries are just as glamorous as the kitchen they’re beside, with stone counters, custom cabinetry, high-end appliances.

“It’s a newer ‘ask,’” says Elissa Morgante, president of Morgante-Wilson Architects in Evanston. “We’ve always done nice pantries; these are a second space tucked away, to do prep work and shut the door.” Components differ by client need and budget, she says, but all offer a lot of storage and a work counter.

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For Cindy and Mike Bonds, an airline executive, a newly built home in Winnetka will have a second space “to hold the mess of the kitchen,” says Cindy Bonds, 53, a homemaker. “It’s for cleanup. There’s a disposal and dishwasher and a lot of counter space.” Empty nesters, they both like to entertain and neither likes clutter, so everyday appliances, like the coffee maker, will be housed in the super pantry. “Everything will have a place.”

Suburban houses have more wiggle room to carve out a super pantry. Creating one in a city home or apartment often means giving up a bedroom or a study. And that’s what experienced buyers are doing, says Gail Drury, president and creative director of Drury Design in Glen Ellyn. An Astor Street client swapped a den for a super pantry that houses a wine bar and cooler, space for a printer and paper, file drawers, a second refrigerator and



MICHAEL ROBINSON



ERIC NUHSMAN PHOTOGRAPHY



SUPPLIED BY DESIGN CONSTRUCTION CONCEPTS AND NUHAUS

Top left: Morgante-Wilson designed this pantry in Glencoe. Top right: a Drury Design pantry in a Chicago midrise hides a printer. Bottom: In this Highland Park kitchen, a coffee bar is hidden, back right.

open shelves for easy access to oversized and rarely used items.

Many clients want that second space for a specific task, Drury says. For a family that keeps separate kosher kitchens for dairy and meat, she designed a workspace beside the kitchen. For a baker, she designed a super pantry with a

marble-top workspace and storage for mixers, bowls and cutters.

In Highland Park, architect Tom Wynn of Lichten Craig Architecture & Interiors in Chicago created a dog pantry beside the butler’s pantry. It holds storage bins for the dog’s food and a sink. The dog’s bowls are tucked

underneath the sink instead of being underfoot in the kitchen.

In a Michigan beach house, Chicago-based NuHaus co-founder and designer Doug Durbin created an overflow workspace behind the wall of a kitchen for a couple who cooks and entertains often. It holds open shelves, appliances and heavy-duty cookware. The space doubles as the wife’s home office. “It’s a sanctuary, but she has a very specific use for the space,” Durbin says. “It holds all the overflow.”

Redfin real estate agent Mary Helen Cutler, who’s based in the North Shore, is seeing “a total reuse of space” in North Shore homes, typically the laundry space off the kitchen. “They’re saying, ‘This is a lot of space—there could be so much more function.’” Mostly, homebuyers are trying to keep everyday kid clutter and paperwork from the kitchen, she says. “You don’t want a bill to get lost under the pizza box.”

Not every client is looking for that combined super space. Northwest suburban physician Archana Shrestha, 36, and her husband are looking for a new home in Barrington or Inverness for their family, which includes two young daughters. At their current house in Palatine, the mud room and the pantry are separate, well-used spaces. One is by the back door and is lined with hooks and cubbies. The pantry is beside the kitchen, closed off by a door that locks. “If I didn’t lock it,” she says, “the girls would be eating Gummi Bears all day.” She wants the same setup in their next home.

For others, super-pantry space is a must, especially in new city condo construction, says Kathleen Malone at Related Realty in Chicago. Instead of a third bedroom, buyers expect a large, separate space that can be used for storage, laundry, wine and chores. “As much as people say they want the urban lifestyle, they still want to make that Costco trip, they want to entertain luxuriously, they want a place where no one sees all the mess that goes on.”

They use the space to store glassware, vases, candlesticks, a built-in espresso maker, a second dishwasher, a wine tasting room, she says. “As long as the space is there, they can specify.”



## THE TAKE-AWAY

Veteran British punk rocker **Martin Atkins**, 55, has played drums with and managed bands including *Public Image Ltd*, *Killing Joke*, *Ministry*, *Pigface* and *Nine Inch Nails*. He came to Chicago in 1989 to collect money from a delinquent concert promoter but was so taken by the lake and the industrial music scene that he stayed. These days, he lives in Bridgeport with his wife and four sons (6 to 19). He writes books and chairs the music business department at SAE Institute in Chicago, a school that offers diplomas and associate degrees in the creative media industries.

**Describe today’s music industry in one sentence.** The same magnificent combination of massive opportunity and people complaining about the lack of opportunity that it always has been.



**You were an early Twitter adopter (@marteeen) in 2008, and it’s now 19,400 tweets later . . .** It’s a very punk, open way to talk to people. I like the discipline of coming up with something short. I call it “tweeting like a T-shirt.”

**In fact, you also screenprint T-shirts, including one with the slogan, “Education is the next punk rock.”** I screenprint many things. One of my favorite suits is a Tommy Hilfiger pinstripe, which looks from a distance like I’ve gone over to the other side, but you look closer and you see these puffed-ink flies all over.

**Who would play you**



**in a movie?** The temptation is to say Harvey Keitel because of my misspent youth. But the probability is that the script would be rewritten as a crazy role for **Melissa McCarthy**.

**You funded a book (“Band: Smart”) using Kickstarter, offering band memorabilia as donor rewards. Would you do that again?** Oh yes.

It feels like a hoarder’s benefit to put that stuff into people’s lives.

**Performing vs. teaching?** Producing is one thing—it’s kind of awesome when people say, “We conceived our first child listening to your album”—but when you bump into a former student and they thank you, man, that’s awesome.

Christina Le Beau

