

# Builder/Architect

A man in a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie stands in front of a row of townhouses. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The townhouses are multi-story with brick and stone accents, and a black wrought-iron fence runs along the sidewalk in front of them. The scene is outdoors with greenery and trees in the background.

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Paramount Homes: More  
Than One Idea of Success**

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# Bruce Fogelson and Paramount Homes: More Than One Idea of Success

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By Donna Kozik

Builder and neighborhood developer Bruce Fogelson is described as both “complex and complementary” in his field. First of all, he prefers “neighborhood” developer to the description “real estate” developer.

Fogelson began Paramount Homes modestly with a dozen or so homes in west Wicker Park in the 1980s and Paramount Homes has been building in “emerging” as well as “turn-key” neighborhoods, turning buyers into neighbors for 20 years now; from Lincoln Park to Hyde Park and from affordable to “upper bracket,” and with single-family, condos and mixed-use of every size and shape.

**Two of several award-winning projects in Bucktown, and now building a third on the same block (not shown).**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RICHARD FOERTSCH; RICHARDFOERTSCH@SECGLOBAL.NET



**Paramount Homes' office in Lincoln Park.**

“A builder’s job does not stop at the front door, coming or going,” Fogelson says. “I have an obligation to my customers, but also a responsibility to my community and to my profession.” With more than 20 years of experience in all aspects of Chicago real estate, Fogelson knows “buying a new home and moving can be daunting ... so I know I’m in the business of building, but also of building in neighborhoods. People pick neighborhoods just as they do their new home.”

Fogelson has grown Paramount Homes in several different directions, starting as a builder of single-family homes and progressing to build rowhomes, townhomes, mixed-use, condominiums and commercial projects. He’s also evolved from being a builder to being a developer who specializes in complex sites. Currently working on his fourth “triangle-shaped” site called “Bucktown Station,” there’s clearly another side to how



Fogelson's 2003 Showcase Homes event for charity.



Fogelson at the job site of the upcoming Bucktown Station ([bucktownstation.com](http://bucktownstation.com))

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RICHARD FOERTSCH; RICHARDFOERTSCH@SBGGLOBAL.NET

Fogelson can make things work.

Truly a neighborhood developer, this is also the third development within the same block in Chicago's Bucktown that also features his award-winning "Bucktown View" and "Stamp-Works" projects. There's actually quite a bit of complex symmetry to Fogelson's work, down to the details of the self-made graphical three-house logo for Paramount Homes that he created forming the letters Z, M and A — the initials of his boys. It's not noticeable until pointed out, but Fogelson adds, "There are real people in every house and that's what makes it a home."

Paramount Homes has put its company name, logo and motto, "Building Neighborhoods and Turning Buyers into neighbors," to work on numerous larger developments in the last two de-

**Fogelson's continuing art initiative, the "Bloomingdale Wall Mural" project.**



acades. Paramount has proven it's in the business for the long run for both its customers and communities. In fact, Fogelson was also featured on the cover of *Builder/Architect* magazine a dozen years ago. Development work by Fogelson and Paramount Homes centers on making homes and neighborhoods complete for all residents — it's much more than putting up a building. For starters, Fogelson has a greater vision of the future than most and has promoted the greater good by including a charity, arts or public work with each Paramount Homes project. These projects have included sponsoring a mile-long wall mural along the Bloomingdale Avenue rail line in Bucktown to the first ever City Parade of Homes with the local home builders,

to creating his own Chicago Showcase Homes which shows decorated homes in conjunction with ASID to raise money for local public, private and parochial schools. From land donations for parks and parkways to clean-up programs for Earth Day and work with local schools, the list goes on.

The combination of quality, value and contribution to the neighborhood are three criteria of the Chicago Association of Realtors' coveted "Good Neighbor Award." It's no coincidence that Paramount Homes has won, probably more than any other Chicago builder, and in nearly all categories. In fact, Fogelson has won every year since 1993 and in some years he's won twice for different types of buildings.



Fogelson's award-winning Paramount Homes.

family homes and mixed-use multifamily buildings, and the knowledge and understanding Bruce brings to the table far exceeds that of the usual range of clients that I have been involved with.” Katz notes Fogelson understands the markets where he does development work and is able to foresee evolving trends and patterns. “He is able to deal with the intricate infrastructure of municipal politics, along with planning and zoning complexities,” says Katz. “When we meet to discuss design implications of a project, it’s as if I’m consulting with another design professional too. Although we do not always agree, our discussions are lively and challenging. He is a clever storyteller who has a vast array of knowledge.”

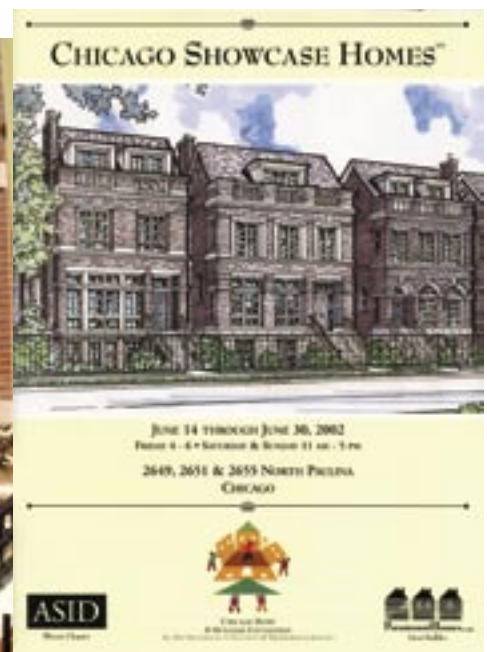
Contractors agree and Fogelson’s always helped bring quality to the job site and the relationships built as buildings go up. “Bruce Fogelson builds properties that buyers turn into the homes that they love. Knowing how much Paramount respects the trades and craftsmanship just adds to the pleasure of working with Bruce,” adds Jerry Ryce Masonry.

It may be diversity, curiosity, restlessness or imagination that sways Fogelson into so many Chicago neighborhoods and areas ranging from Lincoln Park to Hyde Park, Lakeview, Logan Square, the Gap to Bucktown. Fogelson was a founding member of the Chicago Chapter of the Home Builders Association,



Architects and industry professionals agree. “I have only known Bruce for the last several years, but in my almost 40 years of practice he is one of the most astute individuals that I have ever met,” says Robert Katz, RKTECTS, LLC. “My architectural practice specializes in residential with emphasis on custom single-

**Wrightwood Park Place — a block of Paramount Homes’ semi-custom Lincoln Park mini-mansions — began as the Chicago Showcase Homes for charity.**





Paramount helps design dream homes.

which included the first ever City Parade of Homes. Fogelson served on his local HBA board for its first 10 years and focused on codes and government affairs, as well as industry promotion and public relations with numerous citations. More recently, Fogelson has won builder award Sales and Marketing Council “SAMMY” award for best City Special Events for his first ever Chicago Showcase Homes and creating his Chicago Home and Builders Foundation for local community building (see [www.chicagohomeandbuildersfoundation.com](http://www.chicagohomeandbuildersfoundation.com)).

The citations and commendations are practically wallpapering his office. A complex clutter of pride of product, Fogelson rarely builds out of Chicago, but will when he can bring his core values with him.

Paramount strives to be both a good builder and a good corporate citizen, and Fogelson aims to earn respect from the people he builds with and for, and the leaders of the neighborhoods he’s helped grow. “If a project is not successful for the community, it’s too much ‘inward’ thought and not as much ‘thought out’ or ‘forward,’” he says. “I believe every single development that I’ve had has some sort of public value directed outside of project boundaries.”

Fogelson’s community service works number in the dozens. He’s done a number of literacy and artistic projects with every type of local school, both of his own accord and involved with formal programs, including “Principal for a Day” and “Real Men Read.” His own “Bloomington Wall Mural Project” in

Fogelson’s visions extend beyond typical boundaries.



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## Logan Station ([www.logan-station.com](http://www.logan-station.com))



Logan Station the development has truly left the station and is running down the tracks. With Phase I sold, Paramount Homes is under construction with Phase II of this three-phase project. Logan Station is a series of 6-flats, some with commercial facing Milwaukee Avenue, and the back-to-back facing the quiet cul de sac of Willets Court, just half a block off the grand Logan Boulevard.

Logan Station features two-bedroom and three-bedroom units that are all duplexes. These bigger and wider floor plans feel much more like a home than the typical condo. This award-winning design is not the first for Paramount Homes, which has found much success with these types of buildings among its many types of projects.

A transportation-oriented development, Logan Station features a number of commuter-friendly items in addition to proximity to CTA stations, such as bicycle facilities, and Car Sharing, a co-op service with cars that are environmentally sensitive.

Bucktown has sparked similar programs where Fogelson continues to be involved and contributes when called upon.

“The building business is so much more than just building buildings to me,” says Fogelson, “and the development business is more about developing concepts and ideas. I don’t know if it’s restlessness or a plan, but I tend to move back and forth over time between certain markets and try to stay in front of trends and get the timing right.” About marking 20 years in business, Fogelson says, “For me it feels a little longer. It’s not that I’m older than anyone else, but I don’t sleep much — so I say I’ve been awake longer.” He’s a man with an incredible long-term vision for Chicago communities and the industry, and an industrious work ethic that lets him make his own success.

Creating physical neighborhoods isn’t Fogelson’s only passion. He’s also determined to bring a sense of community and business ideas to both his vocations and avocations. You can’t say “there are no new ideas” to Fogelson, who’s recently been awarded several U.S. patents for his “Builder On Line Assistant” ([www.builderonlineassistant.com](http://www.builderonlineassistant.com) for further information), the patented process for [www.homebuildershowroom.com](http://www.homebuildershowroom.com). Home Builder Showroom was reported in “New Web Businesses” in Chicago’s *Builder/Architect*

**Fogelson working toward TOD (transportation-oriented development)**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RICHARD FOERTSCH; RICHARDFOERTSCH@SECGLOBAL.NET

**Right: Work to date**  
**Below: The early years**



magazine in June 2000. Home Builder Showroom is the process for selecting “Standards and Extras Online” and, as Fogelson would say, that was just the beginning.

“To a hammer, every problem looks like a nail” is a famous saying that seems like it would have come from a builder, but not Fogelson, who enjoys solving problems. For example, he is currently working on and seeking a patent on a project that could generate millions for charities. AdBookOnLine.com is a tool that groups and organizations can use to make their fundraising “ad books” and related print publications much easier. The idea stems from Fogelson’s own experience and others’ frustrations with creating charity ad books. “No one wants to be the ad book chairman twice,” says Fogelson, who put together his own ad book for





**Above: Fogelson in front of the new Bucktown Station.**

**Right: Half a block away, past projects still looking new.**

www.chicagohomeandbuildersfoundation.com. His new Web business means to be the one and only “ad book chairman” a group would ever need and is scheduled to launch later this year. Fogelson is not expecting compensation for this charity invention, being content to offer a way to help causes by taking a vision and creating the tools to get the job done.

What’s in store for the next 20 years for Fogelson and Paramount Homes? Well, as they say, “That train seems to have left the station” — transportation-oriented development, or TOD, as he refers to the name associated with his new development concept. His new chosen niche is in response to community and conservation needs. In fact, he has coined the phrase and minted a new logo-image to identify with the concept. TOD is a way of creating a legacy of conservation in commuting ideas

in each development. “It’s recognizing the ‘commute’ in ‘community,’ not just ‘building green’ but ‘living green.’” Things like bike stations, for air and repair on site and even a website promoting eco-friendly travel make up the TOD concept. All of Fogelson’s newest projects are designed this way inside and out. First of all, they are all located next to active commuter trains. “That’s a happy coincidence,” says Fogelson, “since sometimes projects just seem to pick developers, just as much as the other way around.” He adds that it made it easy to pick names: Logan-Station ([www.loganstation.com](http://www.loganstation.com)), Bucktown Station ([www.bucktownstation.com](http://www.bucktownstation.com)), Polk St. Station ([www.polkststation.com](http://www.polkststation.com)) and, next up, Grand Station Chicago ([www.grandstationchicago.com](http://www.grandstationchicago.com)). Paramount Homes approaches these projects and the city with TOD-oriented considerations. For instance, it is making Bucktown Station 95% handicapped-accessible as opposed to the 20% standard, since Bucktown Station is next to a new handicapped-equipped “L”





**Bruce Fogelson, builder/developer**

station. At the upcoming Grand Station project, Fogelson offered to go a step further to help the city make the Grand Station “L” subway more accessible by taking on some of the costs himself and moving his building 6 feet back from the property line to make room for a future elevator, parkway and public bike spaces. Fogelson says, “I didn’t ask if we should do these things, I asked how we can. And I asked how can I help? . . . You can’t pay me for the value of doing something like that. I live here in Chicago and I view this sort of thing as just as a good idea.”

Logan Station, like all the other TOD station projects, will feature special bike garages, helmet racks, bike maps, pumps and tune-up kits, plus the new share-car concepts like “I-Go Cars.” The upcoming [www.transportationorienteddevelopment.com](http://www.transportationorienteddevelopment.com) website will give each building its own list of TOD sensitive lifestyle tools to live a better life, as a buyer, a neighbor and a community of the wider world.

Another example is Polk Street Station, where Fogelson has figured out how to just make do with less. Polk Street Station, across from the famed Dearborn Station and in historic Printer’s Row, will only be built to half its allowed height of 12-1/2 stories and with only five units versus 20+ units.

## Project: Bucktown Station ([www.BucktownStation.com](http://www.BucktownStation.com))



Bucktown Station, one of four TOD or “transportation-oriented developments” by Paramount Homes, is a 15-unit mixed-use condominium and retail development currently under construction at 1840 N. Winnebago in Chicago’s hot Bucktown neighborhood.

This unique triangle-shaped site is sure to be a modern landmark for the community. It’s also the third of three projects that Paramount Homes has developed within the same block. The development sits just across the street from CTA’s Blue Line Station at Western Avenue and features big two- and three-bedroom residences that range in size from 1,216 to 2,396 square feet. Prices start in the mid-\$400,000s for the two-bedroom units and in the upper \$400,000s for the three-bedroom residences.

A transportation-oriented development, Bucktown Station features a number of commuter-friendly characteristics, including proximity to CTA stations; handicapped accessibility, state-of-the-art bicycle facilities; and Car Sharing, a co-op service with cars that are environmentally sensitive.

By donating the air rights and view of this historic district, Fogelson hopes to get credits and benefits for his team, his buyers and their neighbors.

Any 20-year retrospective can’t ignore the fact that Fogelson comes from strong real estate roots with a family name being the premier developer in Chicago. “You can’t fight biology,” says the 46-year-old Fogelson, who adds that he came into the business naturally. Yet, as he develops his own name, he does tip his hat to his father, saying, “Some of the credit for my success should go to my education, and the man who paid for it.” Fogelson earned a college degree in real estate development before it became more popular.

What’s next for the next 20 years for Paramount Homes and Fogelson the builder? More of the same, we suspect, propelled by a great deal of determination and his own vision. “We all do the best we can. I’m hoping to mellow, knowing others move at their own pace,” he says. “The world develops at its own pace but needs good help. Some find it too fast, some find it frustratingly slow. I just try to see it coming.” ■

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