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## A spook-tacular success

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Forgive this interruption of the dog days of summer with some thoughts on Halloween inspired by North Riverside examining its trick-or-treat hours.

Village officials are considering reducing by one

hour the time for youngsters to go door to door. It's a good move. It will bring the village in line with surrounding towns and end the dilemma faced by North Riverside residents of turning away carloads of youngsters because the candy has run out.

Running out of treats is common for North Riverside homeowners, particularly those east of First Avenue, due the high number of visitors drawn by the incredible annual Halloween display on the 2200 and 2300 blocks of Forest Avenue. Trustees would do well to take a closer look at this event.

What is now known as Freaky Frights on Forest started out years ago as life-sized monster decorations for a private Halloween party. Each year longtime North Riverside resident Mark Sajatovic added another amazing character and let his creativity run wild as he incorporated moving parts, special lighting, sound effects, fog and even comical props into the display.

The Halloween decorations for his house spilled onto the lawns of cooperative neighbors and became an annual area tradition. When like-minded haunted house enthusiast Jim Currie moved to the neighborhood in 2003, his similar displays extended the reach of the attraction.

The very professional-looking, two-block display has become widely known through word of mouth and the Web site Currie created for haunted house fans. Thousands of people visit the two-block display each year.

That's why the village should take a closer look. This is no longer a neighborhood decoration. Neighborhood decorations don't have Web sites and corporate sponsors. They don't cost

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thousands of dollars and months of effort to produce. Neighborhood displays don't run from dusk until 11 p.m. or later from mid-October to the first weekend in November. And, most importantly, they don't draw thousands of people into a residential neighborhood that is physically not designed for it.

We would like to see village officials meet with these two creative, public-spirited people and devise a way to move the display to neighboring Commons Park. Doing so would provide greater walking room plus more and safer parking. (Other haunted house Web fans urge visitors to park in the municipal lot and walk across the railroad tracks. That's scary.)

There would be better police presence for pedestrian and traffic control and improved security for the expensive props, which have been targeted in the past by thieves. Moving the display would maintain the neighborhood's regular traffic pattern instead of redirecting streets for several adjacent blocks.

The display has made a name for Forest Avenue. Moving it to Commons Park could do the same for the village.

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