

Upscale retail shops in mix again

BY TIM LANDIS

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A Chicago development company is taking another run at the notion of upscale retail shops - including Starbucks and a neighborhood grocery store - at MacArthur Boulevard and South Grand Avenue.

Purinton Development Co. is negotiating to buy the site of the old Esquire Theatre, as well as a former gas station to the north and other property to the south, and has a preliminary plan for eight to 10 retail shops, a grocery store, a bank, a pharmacy and a Starbucks.

The development would occupy the old Esquire property, an area to the north that includes a former gas station and convenience store, and property to the south,

“Certain things have to fall into place, but plans are moving in the right direction,” said James Purinton, principal in the Chicago firm. Purinton outlined his concept last week at a meeting of the newly formed MacArthur Boulevard Business Association.

The company has developed a variety of similar projects around the country, including one in Champaign-Urbana. Purinton is working with Springfield’s Illini Properties on the local project.

Purinton said he initially was attracted by the possibility of a retail center as part of the MacArthur Boulevard extension. Work on the \$22.5 million extension between Wabash Avenue and Interstate 72 begins Monday.

But Purinton said he also saw possibilities at the north end of the MacArthur corridor.

“We pursued both, and we thought this one seemed to be on a faster track,” Purinton said. “I really think it is a great site, and our concept is to make it a neighborhood shopping center.”

A similar proposal for upscale shops stalled in 2005 after the Illinois Department of Transportation raised questions about access to the site from MacArthur Boulevard, which is a state route.

Original plans for the Cherry Groves Shoppes included closing Conklin Avenue, which runs through the center of the property, and for a single entry road. Purinton said he has yet to meet with state transportation officials, but Conklin Avenue would remain open as part of his project.

In addition to completing the land purchases, the development also would have to be approved by the city.

But surrounding neighborhoods have generally supported the idea of upscale shops on the site. Some type of grocery store has been on the wish list in the area since Schnucks closed its store in Town & Country Shopping Center in 1996.

"I'd say, at this point, we're optimistic," Purinton said.

The Esquire closed in 2003.

GATEHOUSE MEDIA INC., owner of The State Journal-Register, has completed the buyout of four daily newspapers from Gannett Co., including The Rockford Register Star. The \$410 million deal also included papers in New York, Connecticut and West Virginia.

GateHouse, based in Fairport, N.Y., completed the purchase last month of nine publications from The Copley Press Inc., including The State Journal-Register, The Peoria Journal Star, The Courier in Lincoln, The Galesburg Register-Mail and the weekly Galva News in Illinois, as well as three dailies and one weekly in Ohio.

The latest buyout brings the number of GateHouse dailies to 88 nationwide.

Fourteen months after tornadoes struck Springfield, **PJP AUTO ENTERPRISES** Wednesday officially marks completion of a facility at 3100 S. Douglas Ave. to replace one damaged by the storms. The dealership is just off Wabash Avenue.

Owners Janette and Paul Peak reopened the day after the March 12, 2006, storms using a tempo-ary trailer. Janette Peak said construction of a new building and expanded lot took time as the couple decided to buy the property. They also purchased the adjoining Jiffy Lube oil-change center.

They had a temporary lot for about six months at Ninth and Cook streets while the work continued.

Hours at the dealership are from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday. The phone number is 793-3550, and the Web site is www.pjpautoenterprises.com.

The pharmacy has opened at the **CUB FOODS** store on South Veterans Parkway as part of plans by the parent company, Niemann Foods Inc. of Quincy, to convert both local Cub stores to the County Market format.

Niemann said last month the conversion to County Market should be completed by this fall. The store at 3001 S. Veterans Parkway opened in 1987, while the store at 2777 S. Sixth St. is in the former Jewel-Osco space.

Niemann also converted the former Jewel store in Fairhills Mall to a County Market.

The **PRAIRIE CAPITAL CONVENTION CENTER** has updated its Web site, www.springfieldpccc.com, to include more information on convention and meeting space. The update includes information on the new PC3 club, which provides e-mail notification of events, exclusive advance tickets and ticket discounts. Membership is free and sign-up is through the Web site.

Former Springfield airport executive director **BOB O'BRIEN** will return to the airport, briefly, on Tuesday. O'Brien, who left in 2002 to take the same

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job at the Rockford airport, will be with a delegation of approximately 160 Rockford city leaders and residents for a lobby day at the Statehouse.

The group has chartered a jet to Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport. O'Brien held the Springfield job for a little more than seven years.

A plan to convert the **ST. NICHOLAS** apartments in Springfield to condos hasn't entirely gone away.

A group of developers using a Chicago real-estate firm floated the idea early this year of creating 110 condos in the 11-story building at Fourth and Jefferson streets. There was even a formal presentation to residents of a plan that included a 24-hour restaurant, spa and pool, health club and room service.

But the idea fell flat almost as quickly as it was announced, partly as the result of an initial average price of \$175,000 for the condos.

The idea came up again as part of last week's announcement of a new economic-development partnership between CX Construction of Central Illinois and local labor unions. But no specifics just yet.

Former Springfield public works director Richard Berning has joined the Springfield office of **CRAWFORD BUNTE BRAMMEIER** as a traffic engineer and business development specialist. Berning retired in 2004 after 16 years with the city.

Crawford Bunte Brammeier, based in St. Louis, also has an Illinois office in Glen Carbon.

Two changes have taken place at the Foxx Creek Plaza in Chatham.

PAINTER'S PARADISE has opened in the strip center on the north edge of Chatham. Customers can select and paint their own pottery or create stuffed toys at the shop that is owned by Allison Howard.

Hours are from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. The phone number is 697-4839.

STATE FARM INSURANCE agent Steve Bedford, meanwhile, has moved his office to Foxx Creek Plaza from the Main Plaza.

Hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday. The phone number is 483-3711.

If you have a business that is opening, closing, relocating or expanding, or simply have an unusual story to tell, contact business editor Tim Landis at The State Journal-Register. He can be reached at 788-1536 or tim.landis@sj-r.com.

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