

# City kicks off First Street redevelopment project

**By Janelle Walker**  
STAFF WRITER

**ST. CHARLES** — When the city finishes its First Street redevelopment plans, officials said, it is setting the stage for the next 100 years of its history.

Those 100 years kicked off Wednesday, Sept. 6, when city officials marked the official ground-breaking for a new entertainment/retail/residential corridor on First Street.

When finished, the redeveloped First Street corridor

will include eight acres filled with 933 parking spaces, 80 condos and 16 apartments, 97,000 square feet of retail space and 103,000 square feet of office/commercial space, officials said.

“The First Street redevelopment project will define our downtown for the next 100 years,” Mayor Don DeWitte said. “It will create a new identity not only for our downtown business district but for the entire community of St. Charles.”

What the city hopes to create, DeWitte said, is “a

welcoming, pedestrian-friendly downtown business district in the heart of the city, where people from both sides of the river can meet and enjoy the community and our beautiful natural setting along the banks of the Fox River.”

The entire project is expected to cost \$100 million-plus and is funded through private development and a tax-increment-financing district.

A TIF district is an economic development tool municipalities use to attract

private investment to a blighted area. In a TIF, property tax levels are frozen for purposes of distributing property tax revenues. Public investment in infrastructure such as water, sewer and roads is paid for through property taxes on the increased value of redeveloped property — or the increment — in the district.

St. Charles created the \$26 million TIF district in 2002 after two separate studies to ensure the city was moving in the correct

direction, DeWitte said.

“We tried to be deliberate and cautious” when approaching the First Street redevelopment, DeWitte said.

Residents will begin to see the fruits of those studies when the city begins infrastructure work Oct. 1 — replacing and rehabbing water, sewer and electric lines, and roads — to prepare for the future development. That is expected to cost \$2.9 million, he said.

After that, DeWitte said, the Blue Goose Supermar-

ket will begin construction of a new building to the south of its current site.

The existing Blue Goose then will be knocked down for a later retail and restaurant complex facing the Fox River.

While the redevelopment has begun, DeWitte said, it likely will be 2008 or 2009 before anyone will be sipping cocktails on the River Walk adjacent to the new buildings.

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struction, arched windows familiar with the area. He knew and there is a lot of opportu-