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## Plan Commission hears First St. design proposals

By Meghan C. Smith

Staff writer

Developers for St. Charles' First Street redevelopment project will wait until next week to continue a public hearing with the city's Plan Commission as the members are waiting for more testimony before they make their final recommendation.

On Sept. 19, developers from St. Charles-based First Street Development LLC unveiled their entire proposal before the commission. It was also the first time developers introduced plans for the new Blue Goose Super Market and the site of the former Manor Restaurant, 1 W. Main St., to the public. The public hearing will continue at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 3, in the council chambers of the St. Charles Municipal Building, 2 E. Main St.

St. Charles' senior planner Rita Tungare said the hearing was continued so additional testimony can be submitted. Among the additional testimony to come forward, said Tungare, are comments from the St. Charles Fire Department and the affirmative recommendation made by the St. Charles Historic Preservation Commission Sept. 20. Tungare said she also anticipates the hearing will close Oct. 3 and commissioners will "most likely" make a recommendation to the City Council that night.

First Street Development is designing the city's estimated \$100 million, multi-year initiative that will revamp First from Prairie Street north to Main Street (Route 64).

Lead developer Bob Rasmussen said Sept. 19 the overall project will have a mix of retail, office and residential uses. He said the project will include about 100,000 square feet each of retail and office space on the new buildings' first floors, as well as 16 apartment units and 80 condominiums on the upper floors.

Also proposed in the plan are 893 new parking spaces, with 666 of the spaces in two new garages hidden by buildings. Two hundred twenty-seven new spaces will be surface parking or diagonal on-the-street parking. Rasmussen said short-term parking for deliveries, shopping and dining will only be on the first floor of both parking garages, deterring day-time workers from parking on the first floor.

For the first time, Plan Commissioners saw plans for the relocation of the Blue Goose Super Market. Developers are building a new grocery store on nearby First Street on the southwest corner of Indiana and Second streets. The iconic store has been in St. Charles' downtown at 164 S. First St. for more than 75 years.

Designs show the store will be increased to 30,500 square feet.

"Which in turn will help handle the many new people living (there) and working (there)," said Rasmussen.

A parking lot for the grocery store will be accessed off Indiana Street, between First and Route 31. Essentially, Indiana Street will transform into a drive aisle, which is similar to what typical grocery stores have with stop signs in the middle of the road alerting motorists to watch for pedestrians going to and from the grocery store.

Plan Commissioner Renee Hanlon said she is not in favor of closing Indiana Street.

"You should never close a public street in a grid system. That doesn't make sense to me," she said.

Instead, Hanlon recommends developers keep Indiana open, and have shoppers coming and going to their vehicles to cross the street at the corners and not in the middle.

Dan Marshall, of St. Charles-based Marshall Architects, also showed designs for the Manor Restaurant building, which will be a 17,000-square-foot, three-story structure. On the first floor, he said, will be a pub-type establishment with offices on the second and third floors. Marshall said a unique quality of the building is an octagon design on the corner of First and Main to "strengthen" the corner. He said he has also designed the building to follow the characteristics of the rest of the buildings on First designed by First Street Development.

A scale-model version of the entire proposed project and the surrounding area of the downtown is now available for public viewing in the council chambers of the City Hall.

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## City releases construction schedule

St. Charles staff and the city's contractor, Bartlett-based Benchmark Construction Co. Inc., have announced the construction schedule for the First Street work.

The city entered into a contract with Benchmark for work on the project's underground utilities -- sanitary sewer, water and electrical lines -- for about \$2.9 million in August. Work is primarily on First Street from Prairie Street north to Main Street (Route 64) in downtown St. Charles.

There will be no road closures before Monday, Oct. 9. It was decided to allow staging and preparatory work to start Monday, Oct. 2, but to postpone road closures until after the Scarecrow Festival, which is Friday, Oct. 6, to Sunday, Oct. 8, in the downtown. Additionally, Nicor has a small section of gas main to relocate prior to Oct. 9.

Work will begin at the south end of the project on Prairie Street with water main and electric work. The Prairie Street Bridge will be closed for two weeks with a detour in place.

Once work on Prairie is completed, the contractor will move on First north to Indiana Street. The contractor expects this phase to be completed by the end of November.

In December, the intersection of First and Indiana will be closed as the contractor begins working west on Indiana toward Route 31. Once the contractor moves out of the intersection of First and Indiana it will be opened up. The contractor expects this phase to be completed by the end of December or early January.

In January, the contractor will begin installation of a water main on First north of Indiana and will continue through the Illinois Street intersection all the way to Main Street. Each street block will be closed as the contractor moves northward. The contractor expects this phase to be complete by the end of January.

In February, the contractor will then go back to First Street between Indiana and Illinois streets and install sanitary sewers and electric duct. The contractor expects this phase to be complete toward the end of February.

In March, the contractor will continue northward with sanitary sewer and electric duct installation from Illinois to Main. The contractor expects this phase to be completed in mid-March.

**In April, the next phase begins with work on Illinois at the west abutment to the Fox River Bridge. Significant sanitary sewer work is scheduled that will close the bridge from mid-March until early May. A detour route will be posted during the closure. Additional water main and sanitary sewer work will continue on Illinois working towards Route 31. The contractor expects this phase to be completed in early May.**

**The last phase includes work on Route 31 from Illinois Street working north toward Walnut Street. This will include a closure of Route 31 with a detour. Work is contemplated to continue during extended hours possibly even 24 hours/seven days until completion. This last phase is expected to be completed by the end of April or early May.**

**The city's required completion date is mid-June 2007 and therefore allows for weather and field conditions to have a potential impact on the schedule noted above.**

**This schedule, along with regular construction and project updates, is also available on the city's First Street Web site at [www.1stStreetSTC.org](http://www.1stStreetSTC.org).**

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