



Grant Place on track

Work on Sheridan Road 'small mall' could begin by May

By [Ralph Zahorik](#)
STAFF WRITER

NORTH CHICAGO — The Grant Place retail development on Sheridan Road in the city's old downtown area is alive and well, and construction could begin as soon as May, said Mayor Bette Thomas.

A small veterans park and a memorial to black sailors who trained at nearby Great Lakes Naval Training Center during World War II is planned for a triangle at the far south end of the development.

City officials hope the project — the smallest of three commercial ventures proposed for the city and described as a "small mall" — will revive commercial activity and bring new life back to a blighted two-block area north and south of 18th Street.

Grant Place is the name of a small stub of a street that once served as an entrance to the former First Midwest Bank branch off Sheridan Road.

The city now owns the entire 2 1/2-acre Grant Place tract, which includes the bank building — torn down last summer — and another building at 1801-1807 Sheridan Road with four storefronts. The second building and parcel was bought last month by the city for \$165,000 from the Youn family.

Grant Place hit a snag last fall when Thomas and aldermen got into a squabble over a signature on a purchase-authorization document. The development is proceeding now as a project of the city and Five Points Development Corp., a federally-funded city agency, the mayor said.

It will mark the first time **Five Points** has been a developer and contractor in a major project. Until now, Five Points has only loaned relatively modest sums to new and expanding businesses in the city.

Grant Place is expected to cost \$3 million or more. Grants and loans totaling more than \$1 million already have been approved or received for the development.

The plan is for the city to transfer the property to Five Points for \$1. A resolution approving the turnover was approved last May by the City Council.

Five Points, using loans and grant money, would contract for demolition of existing buildings and, in the first phase, construction of four new buildings totaling about 17,000 square feet of retail and office space.

The main structure, a two-story, 8,000-square-foot building on the southeast corner of Sheridan Road and Grant Place, will be designed for offices and retail, said Rob May, community development director.

The city wants to attract a "nationally recognized" convenience store like 7-Eleven or White Hen Pantry, a locally-owned or regional restaurant, a cleaners, bank, coffee shop, offices and other shops to Grant Place, May said.

A North Chicago police substation will occupy space in one building, he said.



A CCLF PROJECT

One of the first steps will be to relocate Brother Loan & Financial Co., 1807 Sheridan Road, the only functioning enterprise on the site, to a new space at 1721 Sheridan Road, a store formerly occupied by Wheels and Deals, a bicycle shop. The building at 1801-1807 Sheridan Road is scheduled for demolition in March.

The city will seek a clean bill of health from the state Environmental Protection Agency over the next month, May said. A paint store, hardware store and, many years ago, a blacksmith shop, once occupied the site, he said.

Promotional signs taken down last fall will be replaced soon with new signs, May said.

Thomas, May and Jim Ellis, president of Five Points Economic Development Corp., acknowledged there was some risk in the project.

"It won't fail," Thomas said.

"Everything you go into is a risk, but I think this is a positive risk," Ellis said. "The city has been stagnant for years." Without taking a chance, it will remain stagnant, he said.

May noted the major companies involved in Grant Place. DeStefano and Partners, a Chicago-based architectural firm, was hired last year with landscape architects Wolf-Clements to design the center. NAI Hiffman, a Chicago commercial real estate company, will market it, and ViCor Development Inc., Chicago, has been hired to advise Five Points on the project.

"We're leveraging grants and loans to do this, and Five Points is a separate entity from the city," May said. "It will shelter the city in a way."

"We hope to break ground in May, and once people see this development is going up, it will bring the community together," Thomas said. "We're ready to go. All we need is the cooperation of aldermen, and we can get this done ... Together we have an opportunity to accomplish great things."

Ellis was named to Five Points last year to replace Shaunese Teamer, who is now an alderman. Ellis himself got a \$25,000 Five Points loan 13 years ago to buy his Citgo gas station at the corner of King Drive and Prospect Avenue.

The two other bigger commercial developments on North Chicago's drawing boards are the FreedomStart project, a \$300 million proposed research office/retail development on 40 acres at the northwest corner of King Drive and Sheridan Road, about a mile south of Grant Place, and a supermarket-anchored development on 22 acres at the southwest corner of Green Bay Road and King Drive, on the west side.

The west side project is dormant, Thomas said.

01/27/04

<http://www.suburbanchicagonews.com/newssun/>