

An project to honk about

Blue Goose start of St. Charles redevelopment

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Calling it a "milestone" for the city, St. Charles Mayor Don DeWitte and local business leaders broke ground Thursday for what some consider the cornerstone of a \$105 million effort to rebuild downtown.

The purpose of the ceremony was to celebrate the construction of a new Blue Goose Super Market at Second and Indiana streets.

But officials agreed the event was symbolic of the much larger task of redeveloping nearby First Street.

"This is another milestone in the First Street redevelopment project," DeWitte said. "Without the Blue Goose's support, this project would not be possible."

The city has committed some \$25 million toward the rebuilding of six blocks of First Street with shops, condos and public gathering places.

The Blue Goose, an 80-year-old business owned by the Lencioni family of St. Charles, is abandoning its current location at 164 S. First St. to make way for the redevelopment.

In return, the city and developers paid about \$5 million for the independent grocer's existing site and offered up the new site, valued at \$1.3 million.

In addition to making the project possible, City Administrator Brian Townsend said the grocery's relocation is vital to the overall plan because incoming First Street residents will need a place to buy groceries.

"It's one of the linchpins of the residential component," he said.

The new store will be about 30,000 square feet, or about 50 percent larger than the old store, owner David Lencioni said.

It will face north from the southwest corner of Indiana and Second streets. That block of Indiana is being vacated by the city and will act as an access drive between the store and a parking area to the north.

The new store also will include expanded bakery, deli and produce departments, Lencioni said, as well as the addition of a sushi bar. Lencioni said he hopes to open by Thanksgiving.

The First Street redevelopment project is slated for completion in 2012. So far, the effort is