

New Concept Organic Grocery Store

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Fresh Thyme Farmer's Market, a newly-developed concept in organic grocery stores, will be opening in about the next 10 to 12 months in Fairview Heights, according to an announcement made at a special ground-breaking program and ceremony held on Thursday, August 8.

For the ground-breaking that took place at Fairview City Centre, to be located on the northwest corner of the intersection of North Illinois Street and Lincoln Trail, Dan Gibson, vice-president for the Dayton (Ohio) region of the Kimco Realty Corporation, announced the inclusion of Fresh Thyme in this project.

Fresh Thyme will be in the shopping center that was formerly the site of a K-Mart store and some smaller shops and businesses like Crown Optical, the original structure where those were located currently in the final stages of its demolition.

Chris Sherill, president and chief executive officer for Fresh Thyme, told those at the ground-breaking ceremony that while organic produce will be one of the primary features of the new store, it will also be offering frozen items, meats and much more. He said the company feels it is more appropriate to call the store a "farmer's market" because of the products and atmosphere it will be offering.

The agreement between Sherill's company and Kimco to locate in Fairview Heights has taken about four to six months, he said, adding, "We're as excited as heck" to be part of this project.

Sherill said he has looked and/or visited 300 possible store sites in the past six months and had a bit of confusion about Fairview Heights because with it being in Illinois, it is not easy



Fresh Thyme Farmer's Market Chief Executive Officer and President Chris Sherill talks about the new grocery store during the groundbreaking held Aug. 8.

for someone like him, from Phoenix, Arizona, to identify this community with St. Louis which is in another state.

There was a commitment made by Fresh Thyme, Sherill said, to pursue a total of 18 to 20 stores in Illinois, many of them in the Chicagoland region, and a longer range goal of about 50 stores within six years, covering an area that takes in a lot of the upper Midwest in Minnesota, Milwaukee and Madison in Wisconsin, Indianapolis, around the Great Lakes and over into Ohio and up into Michigan.

Sherill explained that he had worked for the Wild Oats grocery chain for about 10 years before breaking away and opening some Sunflower Farmer's Markets in the southwest USA, utilizing a concept similar to the one being implemented

with Fresh Thyme and resulting in 44 stores being opened in nine years.

"It should be exciting for the community," Sherill commented. "We're certainly anticipating and hoping for that. We were looking for something that catered to the masses. Unfortunately, 100 per cent of the community does not earn what the top 10 to 15 per cent (of the people) in the world do."

The majority of the public does not have the opportunity, he continued, to shop at the higher priced and less accessible, at least for this part of Illinois, markets like Whole Foods, Sherill noted.

"We were looking for something more value oriented in the natural food store specialty market. Certainly not a discount store by any means but really the

goal was to open a store that was better than supermarket quality at better than supermarket prices."

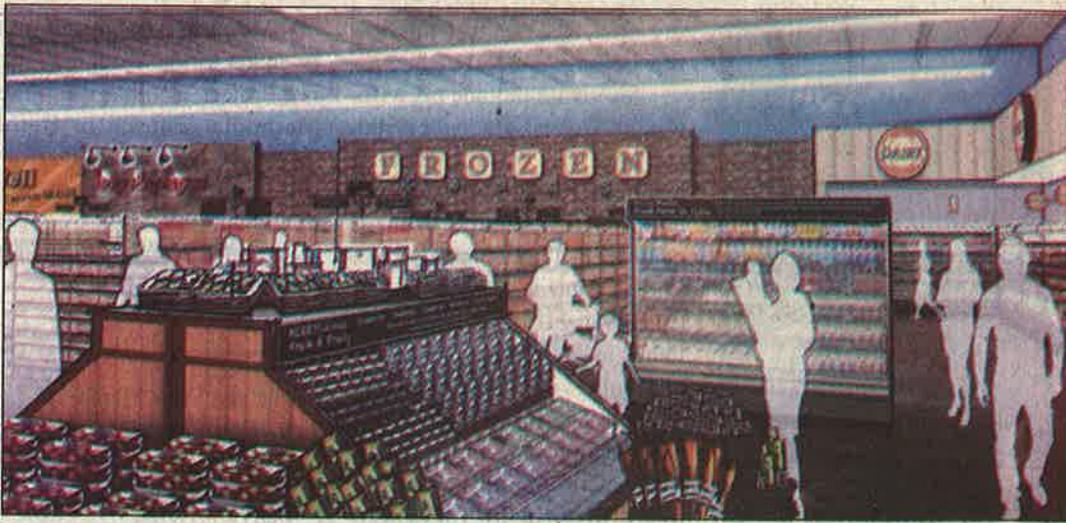
The first Illinois Fresh Thyme should open upstate in Mount Prospect in January, Sherill said.

"We're not going to sell 18 packs of Coke for 13 cents," Sherill said. "That's not what we do. We're not going to compete in that world but what we are going to do, we're going to sell produce cheaper than any you have ever seen any day of the week and we're not talking about number two or number three produce, we're talking number one, grade A produce. Across the board, every day, we will have produce cheaper than just about anyone in town."

"It really kind of pushes us where we are going with our concept which is living a healthier lifestyle. It all starts with fresh food and produce. People ask all the time what diet they should go on, what should they do to eat healthier and change my lifestyle? Do you stop eating processed foods?"

"It doesn't have to be 100 per cent organic, it doesn't have to be natural. Just start in meats and produce and fresh foods. Natural foods, natural lifestyle, healthier lifestyle, it's here to stay."

Coming to Fairview Heights



Pictured above is a rendering showing what the inside of the Fresh Thyme Farmer's Market will look like. Organic produce will be one of the primary features of the new store.

Fresh Thyme Farmer's Market is "certainly a full service grocery store," Sherill added. There will be a bakery, cheese, sliced meat, a salad bar, a full service fresh seafood department, 300 to 350 bulk items

plus "natural living" items like vitamins, body care, dairy selections, with Sherill remarking that people will have to go elsewhere to get tires for their car, toiletries, pet food and other non-edibles.