



Local News

Redevelopment likely to move forward

Fairview to vote on TGI Friday's plan

BY WILL BUSS
News-Democrat

Fairview Heights City Council will vote on a plan to build a new TGI Friday's restaurant to replace the existing one in town.

The council is expected to approve the \$3 million project at the April 15 meeting. The new 6,600-square-foot building will house only the restaurant with 157-space parking lot. Additional space also will be reserved for a possible future hotel develop-

ment.

The plans call for demolishing the building at 6900 N. Illinois St. that houses both the existing restaurant and the Ramada Inn. The building was also home to a succession of comedy clubs. The last was Comedy Etc., which left more than a year ago.

Fairview Heights Economic Development Director Mike Malloy said the restaurant will remain open during some of the demolition and is only expected to close for no longer than four

weeks while the new restaurant is built on the property.

Tricorp Management Co. in Chesterfield, Mo., owns and operates 12 TGI Friday's in four states, including the one in Fairview Heights and four others across the river in the St. Louis area.

Chief executive officer Steve Bell said he anticipates the demolition and redevelopment to begin by late next month or June. The Drury Inn had purchased the building a year ago, but since has decided to tear it down. He said the current restaur-

ant is old and needed to be renovated. He also said Tricorp typically has generated better business with its free-standing locations.

"We're not overall proud of the condition of that restaurant," Bell said. "Drury bought it a year-and-a-half ago and they decided that it's outlived its use, as has the restaurant. So we basically made the decision to not put more money into the existing facility or renegotiate a new facility, which would be the best

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course of action. We finally decided it would be better to build a new restaurant."

The new restaurant will have a large kitchen that opens into the dining room and a large outdoor patio that will face St. Clair Square, located south and across Interstate 64.

The new restaurant's interior will break with tradition and be decorated in a more contemporary style and not with

historic photos and memorabilia that cover the walls in the current restaurant.

"We'll be excited about putting a new building into the Fairview Heights market with a new prototype for TGI Friday's that will have interesting aspects to the facility," Bell said.

Bell expects the development will take about four months to complete. The new restaurant would open by the fall and employ 75, including as many as 20 new employees.

Malloy said the TGI Friday's has committed to

increase its annual revenues in Fairview Heights by 12 percent, from \$2.4 million to \$2.7 million. The business also will provide \$5,000 during a five-year period for the maintenance of the nearby I-64 corridor.

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