Restaurant supply warehouse set to open on Pulaski Road

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by BRIAN NADIG

A warehouse that will supply food to restaurants is one of several development projects planned for the 39th Ward, according to Alderman Margaret Laurino (39th).

A recent influx of public and private investment in the Peterson-Pulaski Industrial Corridor is a sign that the economy is on the rebound, Laurino said during her annual "state of the ward" address at a Feb. 7 business luncheon.

Laurino announced that Restaurant Depot, which has a warehouse at 1030 W. Division St., is planning to open at 5800 N. Pulaski Road, which is the former site of the Chicago Food Corporation. Chicago Food, which sells Asian groceries, restaurant supplies and sundries, has moved to a warehouse at 5825 N. Tripp Ave.

The wholesale operation will not be open to the public.

The project will bring 60 jobs to the area, Laurino said. "If you’re not familiar with Restaurant Depot, I think of it as a Costco for restaurants," she said. "Local restaurants will be able to purchase their produce, meats and seafood nearby rather than having to travel to their facility in Goose Island."

Laurino said that Restaurant Depot had considered another Northwest Side location for its new facility. "It was too close to a residential area, and neighbors would have opposed it," she said. "However, we wanted this business in the community. It has a great reputation and has been very successful.

"I worked with Janita Tucker from the Peterson Pulaski Business and Industrial Council and Rich Danelli from Restaurant Depot to try to find a location in the industrial corridor, a better location fit for this type of business," Laurino said. "Together we found the perfect spot at 5800 North Pulaski."

The Pulaski property initially was not for sale, but Restaurant Depot eventually was able to acquire it, Laurino said.

Also in the area, an expansion by New World Van Lines, 5875 N. Rogers Ave., will bring 160 new jobs to the area, Laurino said. The moving company, which has 15 U.S. locations, has built a new storage facility on an adjacent parcel.

Laurino also reported that a $1 million streetscaping project is planned for this year in the Elston-Armstrong Industrial Corridor. The project will include the installation of decorative lamp posts on Elston Avenue between Forest Glen Avenue and Central Avenue.

Laurino said that another streetscaping project is planned for Foster Avenue between Kedzie Avenue and Kimball Avenue. The cost of that project will be close to $3 million.

The $40 million Albany Park tunnel project should be close to completion by 2015, Laurino said. The tunnel will divert flood waters that have plagued the area twice in the last 6 years, she said.

A new special service area should foster revitalization of the Peterson-Cicero commercial district, Laurino said. The special service area will levy a property tax on commercial properties, and its expenditures will be decided by a commission of merchants. "We didn’t move on this until we got buy-in from the local businesses," Laurino said.

Also in Sauganash, the construction of 35 single-family homes is planned for the former Skil power tools site, 4300 W. Peterson Ave., Laurino said. The property, where the headquarters of Walgreen’s was once located, has been vacant for several years.

A $65 million improvement project is planned at Northeastern Illinois University. "We’ve started the public process, and we’ll be having many more meetings this year," Laurino said.

Laurino said that an additional 63 low-income senior housing units are planned at North Park Village, 5801 N. Pulaski Road. The project will cost $12 million.

"The amount of investment that has been made, and will be made, signals that we’re coming out of the economic slump with trumpets blaring," Laurino said. "More business investment means more jobs and greater tax revenues. Dollars invested in the community stay in the community."

Also at the luncheon, state Comptroller Judy Baar Topinka discussed the responsibilities of her office. The comptroller is in charge of maintaining the state’s central fiscal accounts and ordering payments into and out of the appropriate funds.