

From bleak to bistro



Seven years after it was proposed, construction is set to begin Thursday on a European-style market in the concourse of the Ogilvie Transportation Center in the West Loop.

The concourse under the Metra tracks between Canal and Clinton will include a "French Market," which will sell fresh produce, cheeses, meat and baked goods, and a CVS drugstore.

It is set to open in summer 2009.

Other potential tenants of the bleak and largely unused structure north of Citicorp Center could include fine-dining restaurants and a wine bar.

U.S. Equities Realty is developing the "MetraMarket," after securing \$25 million in financing from German lender Europhypo AG for the first phase. The project is intended to draw West Loop residents as well as Metra passengers.

Metra is spending \$6 million for structural improvements to the space. In exchange, Metra expects its share in the project's revenue will be between \$38 million and \$40 million over the next 25 years, according to Metra executive direc-

tor Philip Pagano.

"Clearly this is a project we're very excited about that can bring significant revenue to Metra and amenities to our passengers," said Pagano.

The project was delayed in part because of difficulty obtaining financing in a tight market, according to U.S. Equities Realty.

In other Metra news, the agency reported that July saw the highest ridership in the commuter rail service's 26-year history, with more than 8 million passenger trips