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Retail center coming, West Fargo to see \$10 million project

By Gerry Gilmour

A Chicago developer has filed plans for a \$10 million retail center adjacent to Menard's in West Fargo. Gary Pachucki, principal investor in IBT Group LLC, said Tuesday he hopes to break ground yet this fall on the 103,000-square-foot project. Pachucki said it will be developed as a "power center strip," anchored on the east side by a 32,000-square-foot Linens 'n Things store.

He said he is in negotiations to land two additional nationally known retailers. Leases with those retailers have not been signed, Pachucki said.

Potential tenants include Old Navy and Marshalls. Both of those retail chains deal primarily in apparel. Old Navy is a subsidiary of Gap Inc. The company started as Gap Warehouse in 1994 and became Old Navy the following year. It has grown from just 59 stores in 1995 to more than 500 today. Marshalls, with 500 stores in 37 states, sells brand-name fashions, giftware and domestic items at discount prices.

Founded in 1975, Linens 'n Things is one of the nation's leading "large format" retailers of home textiles, housewares and home accessories. The company operates 244 stores in 40 states. According to the company's Web site, sales of "linens" (bedding, towels and pillows) accounts for about 60 percent of sales.

The flip side, "things" (housewares and home accessories), accounts for 40 percent, compared to just 10 percent 10 years ago. The project, including more than 500 parking spaces, will be built on a 9-acre parcel owned by Menard's. The West Fargo Menard's store and lumber yard opened two years ago, replacing a smaller Menard's store and yard near West Acres.

The retail project, also near the new Sunmart grocery store, will enhance an already bustling retail area for West Fargo. "I think it's a great location, right next to Menard's and Sunmart," Pachucki said. "Those two tenants create a lot of synergy. They have a lot of repeat business and that will generate a lot of traffic for our tenants."

With approval from the city, work can begin this fall, Pachucki said, with completion by fall of 2001. His development company has hired Olaf Anderson & Sons of Fargo to design and build the project. Olaf Anderson & Sons has submitted a concept development plan for the project to the city of West Fargo's planning department.

The West Fargo Planning Commission Monday will consider an amendment to a planned unit development for the Menard's land. Final project plans will have to be approved by the Planning Commission before the matter can be forwarded to the West Fargo City Commission, according to Larry Weil, city planner.