

Postal Service eyes redevelopment of Dearborn site

By Eddie Baeb

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(Crain's) — The U.S. Postal Service is laying the groundwork for a possible redevelopment of its River North outpost, known as Fort Dearborn Station, at 540 N. Dearborn St.

The 105,000-square-foot building that occupies an entire block has been eyed as a development candidate for years.

One idea that's also been considered is turning the site into a park through a land swap with the city that would move the post office to a different location.

The postal service has hired the Chicago office of Staubach Co. to advise the agency, and also has scheduled a public hearing on the matter to be held Jan. 30 at the Fort Dearborn Station.

"We're just really beginning the process of exploring the options for leveraging the value of that property," says a local spokesman for the postal service. "We do need a facility in the area to service those customers, and that's a convenient location, but it may have some untapped economic potential."

Alderman Brendan Reilly (42nd) says he had a preliminary discussion with postal service officials about the issue last month. Reilly says he would like to see a land swap that would convert all, or most, of the site into a park.

"They (postal service officials) expressed a willingness to explore that option and that's music to my ears," Mr. Reilly says. "My constituents who live in River North are very excited about the possibility of converting that property into open space."

Mr. Reilly says one possibility raised by postal officials would see a building built on a portion of the property that could include a new post office.

The postal service will issue a request for proposal from developers some time after the public hearing, says Hugh Murphy, a senior vice-president with Staubach.

The facility primarily serves two zip codes, 60610 and 60611, and employs 266 workers, according to the postal service spokesman. The station includes a retail operation as well as the sorting area for local carriers.
