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City snatches up property for O'Hare expansion

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BY [CHRIS FUSCO](#) Staff Reporter

Chicago's efforts to buy suburban homes and businesses to help clear a path for O'Hare Airport expansion are kicking into high gear.

Confident that the Federal Aviation Administration will sign off on the multibillion-dollar project in September 2005, the city already has acquired 65 percent of the land it needs in Des Plaines.

It soon will begin sending letters to property owners in Bensenville and Elk Grove Village -- communities whose taxpayers have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars fighting the proposed expansion.

Court ban

Unlike in Des Plaines, a federal court order bans the city from buying parcels in Bensenville and Elk Grove until the FAA approves the Chicago Aviation Department's plans.

But the city soon will send letters to property owners in the two communities stating that Chicago is ready to negotiate written sales deals and then pull the trigger on them if the expansion decision goes the city's way.

If people don't voluntarily sell, the city would go to court to buy the land, arguing it's needed for the public good.

"We want to be prepared to move immediately," said Rosemarie Andolino, executive director of the O'Hare Modernization Project.

Joseph Karaganis, lawyer for the anti-expansion Suburban O'Hare Commission, believes homeowners won't jump at the city's offers.

"This is more of the same scare tactics," he said. "The city has announced from day one they wanted to acquire individual homes within a block, bulldoze them and leave the remaining homeowners with a perception of a checkerboard desert."

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