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## Mariano's, Wal-Mart push into Bronzeville

By Micah Maidenberg  May 29, 2013

Two big retailers are honing in on properties for new stores in Bronzeville on the South Side.

Milwaukee-based Roundy's Supermarkets Inc. plans to open a Mariano's Fresh Market on land owned by the Chicago Housing Authority near 39th Street and Martin Luther King Drive, according to a person familiar with the project.

Less than a mile from that site, at 39th and State streets, Bentonville, Ark.-based Wal-Mart Stores Inc. wants to open a supercenter, another source said.

The projects provide a vivid example of how retailers are scouring the market for development parcels with strong population densities, often in Chicago.

"It's kind of what most retailers have been doing over the last few years — finding sites in the urban fabric, with the density that the city provides," Todd Cabanban, principal at Chicago-based brokerage Cabanban Rubin & Mayberry LLC, said of the potential deals.

Yet parts of Bronzeville, once home to scores of public housing units that have been demolished, have grappled in recent years with vacant lots and population loss, which could complicate both companies' plans.

The number of residents living in the zip code covering much of the neighborhood fell from 34,502 people in 2000 to 29,908 in 2010, a decline of more than 13 percent, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Mr. Cabanban said the neighborhood's population density still beats "green grass" sites on the suburban fringe.

A Roundy's spokesman declined to comment on the prospective Bronzeville Mariano's.

The store would be in Oakwood Shores, the development replacing the housing authority's former Ida B. Wells Homes, a source said.

The housing authority has shown that it's open to swapping out former public housing sites for retail, cutting such a **deal** to pave the way for a Target Corp. store on a former Cabrini-Green parcel in the Clybourn Corridor.

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In an email, a housing authority spokesman confirmed "preliminary" discussions with Roundy's.

Wal-Mart may seek to go through the housing authority for its potential project in Bronzeville as well.

The mega-retailer apparently wants to open the supercenter at the northwest corner of 39th and State streets, land controlled by the CHA and Chicago Public Schools, according to a map recently published by the city's Department of Housing and Economic Development.

The housing authority spokesman did not respond to requests for comment about the supercenter. A

Chicago Public Schools spokesman declined to comment.

"The city is in discussions with both of these retailers, and other retailers, as part of a broader effort to attract new retail to Bronzeville," a spokesman for the city's Department of Housing and Economic Development said of the potential deals, declining further comment.

Wal-Mart has already jumped into the neighborhood, signing a **20-year lease last year** to anchor a mixed-use project at 47th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue with one of its small-store formats.

The company continuously looks at potential development sites but has no new stores to announce, a Wal-Mart spokesman said in an emailed statement.

Wal-Mart supercenters usually cover about 182,000 square feet, the firm says on its website.

Besides each other, the potential Mariano's and Wal-Mart stores would face relatively little competition in the immediate neighborhood.

One of the only other grocery stores in the area is a Jewel-Osco near the intersection of 35th Street and Martin Luther King Drive.

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