

## Council OKs prison project partnership

### JOLIET CORRECTIONAL CENTER

September 4, 2008 By [BOB OKON](#) bokon@scn1.com

JOLIET -- The city council on Wednesday agreed to a public-private partnership with a Chicago developer that wants to put the closed Joliet Correctional Center into commercial use.

Steven Bandolik, with Platinum Realty Partners, offered only a small glimpse of what he has in mind for the old prison on Collins Street.

But local officials have talked about possibilities ranging from a prison museum to stores and residences -- presumably ones in which occupants would be free to come and go as they please.

The agreement passed by the city council simply obligates Joliet to work exclusively with Platinum Realty Partners for 18 months as they both pursue redevelopment opportunities for the prison.

### Future of the prison

The Joliet Correctional Center, built in 1866 with limestone walls and a fortresslike appearance, was closed in 2002 and currently is surplus property owned by the state.

"It's a gorgeous structure," said State Rep. A.J. Wilhelmi, D-Joliet, who co-chairs a Collins Street Task Force formed to find new uses for the prison and vacated steel mill nearby. "It has a lot of history -- a lot of the history of Joliet."

Wilhelmi's role so far has been to pursue state cooperation in a future deal that could put the prison under the city's ownership before it is redeveloped.

Wilhelmi has said state officials, from the Department of Corrections to the Bureau of Tourism, are enthusiastic about the possibilities.

Although its been closed for six years, the prison has continued to be put into use as a setting for TV shows and movies.

Johnny Depp was there this summer with crews filming "Public Enemies," a movie about John Dillinger and his partners in crime, to be released next year. The prison also provided a realistic setting for the filming of the first season of the Fox TV series "Prison Break."

### Projects in the works

Bandolik made a presentation to the city council in which he spent more time talking about his projects elsewhere than what he might do with the prison. Those projects include:

- The Glen, a 45-acre retail and residential development at the former naval air base in Glenview;
- Point Molate Resort, a \$900 million plan that would include an Indian gaming resort at a former Navy yard near San Francisco in the town of Richmond;
- Riverway and O'Hare International Center, two hotel-office developments totalling more than 1.5 million square feet in northwest suburban Rosemont.

Bandolik told the council his company would not work alone on the prison: "I'll be joined by a number of local and national partners in this project."

Bandolik later declined to talk with The Herald News about what attracted him to the Joliet prison, saying he was not prepared to do any interviews about the project.

City Planning Director Don Fisher, however, said he has been working with Bandolik for about two years on the possibility of redeveloping the prison.

Joliet officials have said that any plan would include keeping the prison building intact.

The agreement approved Wednesday calls for the city to pursue possible acquisition of the prison from the state.

Potential uses for the prison are wide-ranging in the agreement, also including entertainment, offices, industry, recreation and open space.

Bandolik, managing principal of Platinum Realty Partners, also is managing director of an investment

bank called White Cap Private Equity Management and has held executive positions with several investment and real estate companies.