



**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL:**  
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(IOLA, KANSAS) Thrive Allen County announced today that G&W Foods, Inc., a Willow Springs, Missouri-based supermarket chain, has submitted a letter of intent to build a new store in Iola. The proposed 15,000 square foot store would be constructed at 101 South First Street on the site currently occupied by the former Allen County Hospital facility.

The proposed project is contingent upon reaching agreement with Allen County on terms for purchase of the land, and is further contingent upon enhancements and modifications to street and utility infrastructure. The existing ACH Medical Arts Building would be unaffected by the project and will remain in use for the foreseeable future.

Thrive also released a preliminary site plan for 101 South First that proposes the construction of 8-10 apartment units along East Street/US 54 in the area northeast of the existing former ACH emergency room. This building would be the first of 4 new residential buildings proposed for county-owned property in this neighborhood. The site plan was developed by Landworks Studio of Olathe, which was hired April 7 by the Allen County Commission to provide concepts for redevelopment of the property.

Iola Industries, Inc. has been approached by Thrive to be the lead investor in the first phase of the apartment project and is currently evaluating the project's feasibility. "We believe the addition of the G&W supermarket, along with new apartment units, will create a vibrant new community in Iola," said John McRae, President of Iola Industries. "Our board is determining how best we might be able to support this project." When completed, the new neighborhood surrounding the G&W Foods store would have 24-30 new apartment units and 8-10 townhouse units; the full project (supermarket and all phases of housing) represents approximately \$7 million of new investment in the core of Iola. All of these units are proposed to be market-rate units built with private financing.

"We have been working with Thrive to find a site to build a store in Iola for well over a year," said Dan Williams, President of G&W Foods, Inc. "If we can work out final terms with the county we think this is the perfect location for our company's newest store and for the Iola community."

Thrive Executive Director David Toland noted that this project has been in the works for several months, and that Thrive's work to recruit a supermarket has been ongoing for two and a half years. "This store will be a huge shot in the arm to the core of Iola and to the area as a whole. But it is not a done deal, and we need people to speak up if they want to see this happen." He noted that several activities need to occur for the full project to come to fruition:

- Demolition of the existing hospital building;
- Sale of approximately 72,000 square feet of the cleared property by Allen County to G&W Foods;
- A firm commitment from a housing developer(s) and sale of proposed residential parcels by Allen County to that developer(s);
- Agreement by the city of Iola to make street and related infrastructure improvements to accommodate the new development.

Toland also applauded the Allen County Commission, which owns the hospital property and will decide its ultimate fate. "The commissioners, past and present, have been supportive and visionary when it comes to economic development. This project is an opportunity to do something that will have a positive impact for generations, and we hope the Commission will look favorably on this proposal."

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