

STATE FAIR SECRETS REVEALED—BUD FORD TELLS ALL!

SpringfieldTM magazine

First Look Inside Prairie Crossing

Suit Up
With Jim Herron

College Guide—
8 Steps to Success

Harlington Wood
Chronicles

Summer Events

- Ethnic Festival
- LPGA Rail Classic
- Springfield Mile
- Illinois State Fair



August 2000

\$2.75

William Grant Jr., Susan Langheim, and Charlie Sattler

Serious Shoppers Have a New Place to Play: *Welcome to Prairie Crossing*

BY DAN NAUMOVICH
PHOTOS BY TERRY FARMER

It was while on a trip to California that Sapp, along with John Schroeder, founder of Friendly Chevrolet, was first exposed to the concept of the multi-dealer auto mall. Together with Susan Langheim, president of Friendly Chevrolet/Honda, Charlie Sattler of Cadillac/Oldsmobile/Saturn, and William Grant Jr. of the Landmark Automotive Group signed on to form the auto mall at Prairie Crossing. Garrison had visited a Meijer store in Michigan and worked hard to bring it to Springfield. Both the auto mall and the Meijer store, which form the foundation of Prairie Crossing, are prime examples of how businesses have responded to consumers' demands.

For a community like Springfield to prosper, it takes the vision of people like Sapp and Garrison. Their work in commercial development feeds the local economy by providing a shopping experience that can compete with that of larger cities, thus keeping the local dollar at home. By introducing new shopping concepts such as the multi-dealer auto mall, they've made Springfield an attractive regional shopping area as well.

As home to the Lincoln sites and the future presidential library, it is worth noting the popularity of shopping among tourists. The number two tourist attraction in Illinois last year, second only to the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago, was Gurnee Mills, an outlet mall in northeast Illinois. International visitors rated shopping as their favorite activity while visiting the United States. So while visitors are drawn to Springfield largely by their interest in the Lincoln legacy, it is very likely, given the opportunity, that they will lighten their wallets at our shopping developments as well.

More than just an odd collection of businesses brought together on a prime piece of property just off I-72, the Prairie Crossing development is the result of years of planning and negotiations. And when you sell land by the square foot, as

Like most of us, when Leonard Sapp of Lincoln Land Development and Glen Garrison of the Garrison Group travel, they like to do a little shopping. If they find something they like, however, Sapp and Garrison just might bring back the entire store. The Prairie Crossing development project is the culmination of their efforts to bring the newest and most exciting concepts in shopping back home to Springfield.



Meijer Store Manager Craig Knapp



is customary with commercial property, the level of negotiations can be quite intense. It is the businesses themselves, however, and the changes they have made in response to consumer needs and demands that shoppers will find most exciting about Prairie Crossing.

The favorable economy of recent years has changed the act of shopping from one of filling basic needs into an activity that has prompted some to describe shopping as America's favorite indoor sport. Eileen Montgomery, spokesperson for Lincoln Land Development, says her company is well aware that it is in the business of entertainment. The mix of stores that comprise the development were carefully selected to turn a quick trip to the store or a peek at a new car into an activity that can last an entire afternoon.

While it is true that shopping has become a form of entertainment, that doesn't suggest that consumers are willing to toss their money at anyone who hangs out their "open for business" shingle. The Internet has created competition for the brick and mortar stores that make up Prairie Crossing, but it also has created a more sophisticated and informed consumer. This high level of involvement that many shoppers take on while making a buying decision is where most of the entertainment value lies. They enjoy the role of professional buyer rather than casual shopper. Car buyers in particular like to put their knowledge to work and car dealers to the test.

Prairie Crossing is home to a new concept in the auto industry. While most towns, Springfield included, have a stretch of road where many dealers are



Charlie Sattler's Oldsmobile-Cadillac dealership at Prairie Crossing Drive

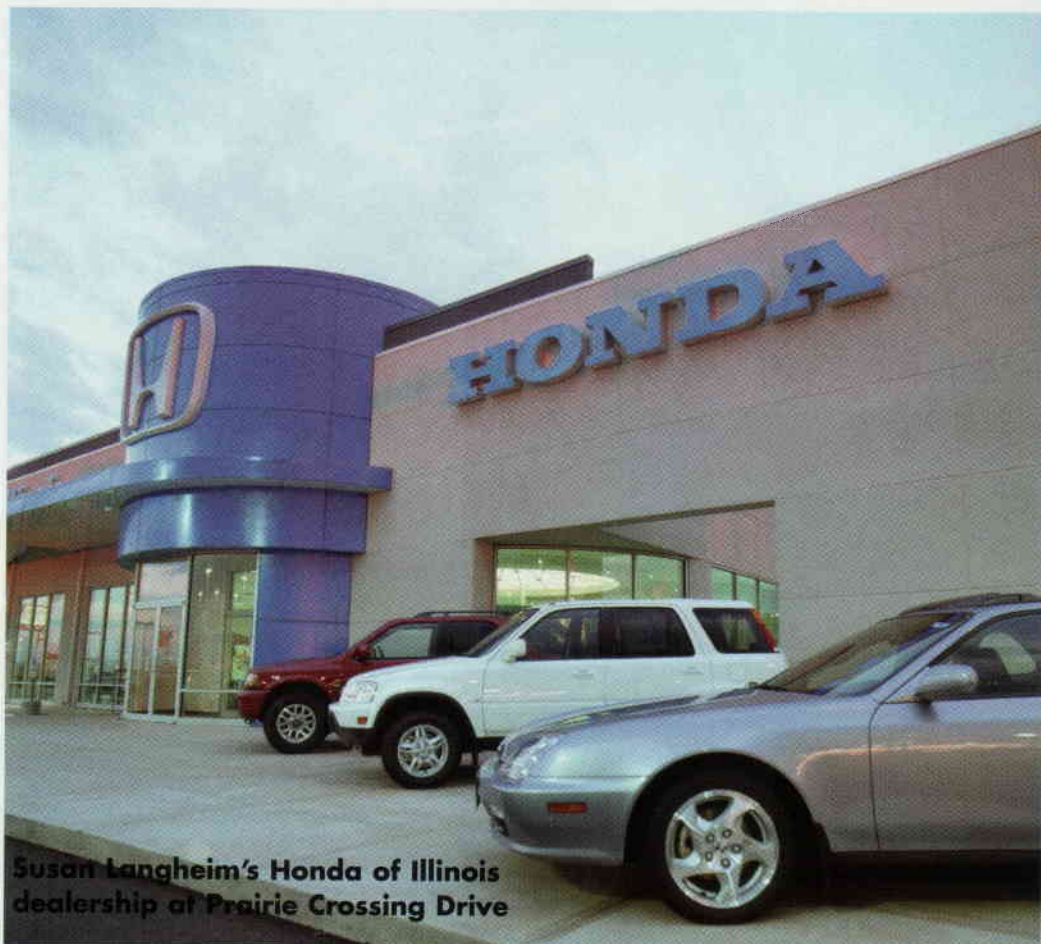
The amenities offered by the dealers also are more in touch with today's car buyers. While you're still likely to be offered a free cup of coffee and a choice of magazines to peruse while you wait for your car to be serviced, dealers such as Charlie Sattler recognize that your time is valuable. Fax machines, telephones, and Internet access are available and Landmark offers expanded shuttle service for customers who need transportation to or from their dealership. All of the dealers, in some measure, have taken steps to provide a more relaxed atmosphere.

While we often think of economic growth in terms of new businesses being brought into the community, the auto mall at Prairie Crossing is a prime example of how existing businesses can provide increased tax revenues by expanding their operations. All of the dealerships have increased the acreage of their operations at their new location. By grouping together, they've also made themselves more attractive to out-of-town shoppers. The City of Springfield will definitely

located, the auto mall creates a sort of neighborhood of dealers. The arrangement makes it convenient to park at one dealer's lot and then to wander on over to the others to see what the competition has to offer.

The multi-dealer auto mall wasn't born of the concept "keep your friends close and your enemies closer." Rather, it's based on two commonly known principals of business. The first, that competition is healthy. And secondly, that more businesses create more traffic—so the more car dealers there are, the more car buyers there will be.

The Prairie Crossing salespeople don't worry if a customer starts glancing over at a neighboring lot. They know that customers have always checked out the competition, although it was never quite this easy. If anything, the new arrangement keeps them sharper. "All of our sales staff are familiar with the competing makes and models," says Friendly Chevrolet/Honda of Illinois' Langheim. This means customers are less affected by salesmanship and can more easily make a decision based on the value of the deal they are being offered.



Susan Langheim's Honda of Illinois dealership at Prairie Crossing Drive



Charlie Sattler's Oldsmobile-Cadillac dealership at Prairie Crossing Drive

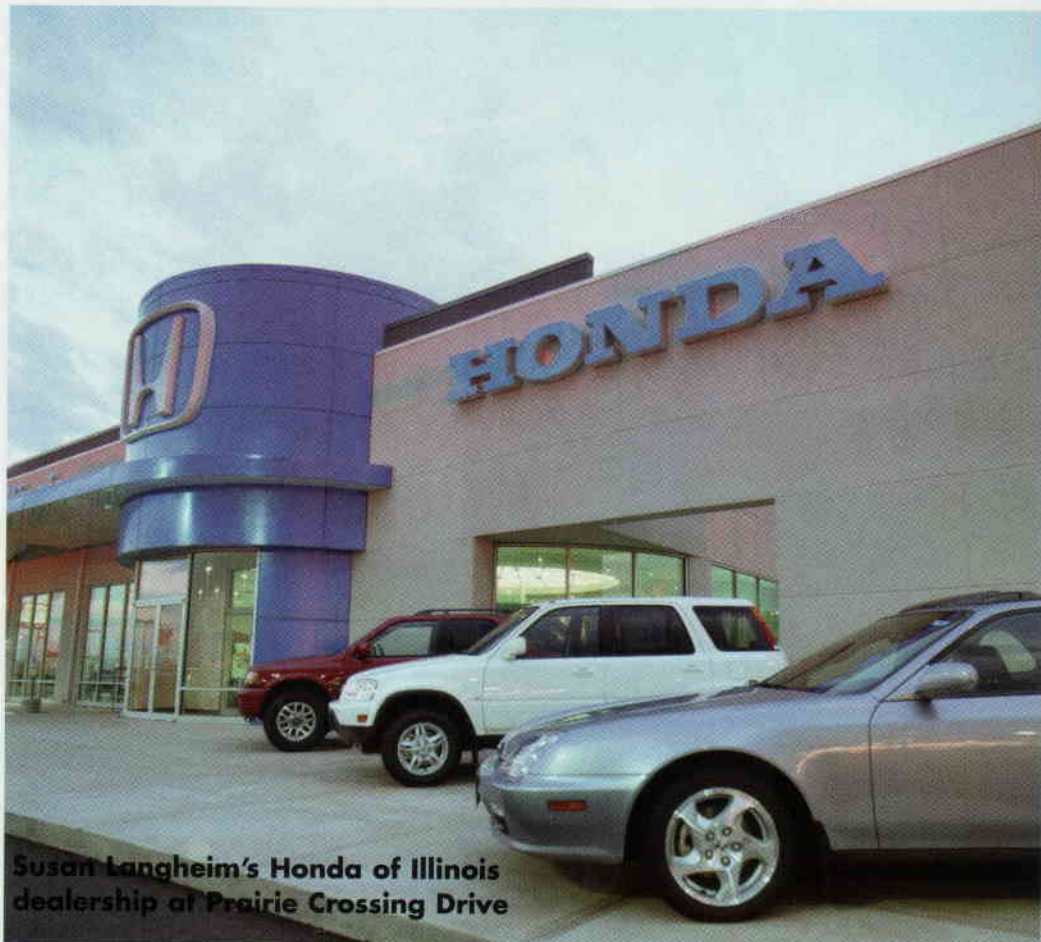
The amenities offered by the dealers also are more in touch with today's car buyers. While you're still likely to be offered a free cup of coffee and a choice of magazines to peruse while you wait for your car to be serviced, dealers such as Charlie Sattler recognize that your time is valuable. Fax machines, telephones, and Internet access are available and Landmark offers expanded shuttle service for customers who need transportation to or from their dealership. All of the dealers, in some measure, have taken steps to provide a more relaxed atmosphere.

While we often think of economic growth in terms of new businesses being brought into the community, the auto mall at Prairie Crossing is a prime example of how existing businesses can provide increased tax revenues by expanding their operations. All of the dealerships have increased the acreage of their operations at their new location. By grouping together, they've also made themselves more attractive to out-of-town shoppers. The City of Springfield will definitely

located, the auto mall creates a sort of neighborhood of dealers. The arrangement makes it convenient to park at one dealer's lot and then to wander on over to the others to see what the competition has to offer.

The multi-dealer auto mall wasn't born of the concept "keep your friends close and your enemies closer." Rather, it's based on two commonly known principals of business. The first, that competition is healthy. And secondly, that more businesses create more traffic—so the more car dealers there are, the more car buyers there will be.

The Prairie Crossing salespeople don't worry if a customer starts glancing over at a neighboring lot. They know that customers have always checked out the competition, although it was never quite this easy. If anything, the new arrangement keeps them sharper. "All of our sales staff are familiar with the competing makes and models," says Friendly Chevrolet/Honda of Illinois' Langheim. This means customers are less affected by salesmanship and can more easily make a decision based on the value of the deal they are being offered.



Susan Langheim's Honda of Illinois dealership at Prairie Crossing Drive

benefit from the success of the Prairie Crossing dealers, but car buyers will be the big winners.

Car shoppers will benefit from the increased inventory allowed at Prairie Crossing. The additional space available at Sattler's new Saturn dealership is coming at an opportune time as Saturn is adding a series of midsize cars as well as an SUV and a light truck. William Grant Jr., president of the Landmark Automotive Group says the new facilities at the Prairie Crossing location will improve customer service. "The opportunity to expand and participate in an auto mall concept will greatly increase our ability to serve our customers in an environment that will provide a friendly, non-confining vehicle shopping experience," he says. Sean Grant of Landmark Chrysler estimates an increase of about 25 percent to their service department, which will operate 50 service bays, meaning buyers can expect prompt attention when repairs are needed.

The auto dealers plan to join forces in marketing the auto mall by forming an advertising association and may even do some promotions with other businesses at Prairie Crossing. Langheim mentioned the possibility of bringing out live music or even a carnival on occasion. "We have the opportunity to do some exciting and fun things here for our customers," she says. So while the Internet has expanded the market for consumers looking for the best deal, it can't match the "shopping experience" you'll find at Prairie Crossing. A commercial developer out of Ohio likes to put it this way, "When push comes to shove, you want to squeeze the tomatoes."

If you actually want to squeeze tomatoes, you'll want to visit the Meijer store at Prairie Crossing. With 185,300 square feet, divided into 35 departments of every staple, sundry, and necessity imaginable, it is their produce section that they are most proud of. So much so that the word "Fresh" appears under the Meijer name on the storefront. Ranked number one in the industry, store manager Craig Knapp says their produce sections are "a direct response to the needs of the customers we serve."

The Springfield Meijer store is among the first to feature the village concept. The exterior front is divided into separate sections, giving the impression that

it is actually several different stores. The exterior facade is carried through to the interior. Intermittent hanging signs, reminiscent of a Main Street from years gone by, identify the various services offered including postal service, lottery, one-hour photo lab, and perhaps most interesting, shoe repair. Far more than shoelaces and a can of Kiwi, Meijer offers everything from resoling to leatherwork.

It has been said in recent years that consumers have a bigger influence over shopping than shopping has over them. You'll find countless examples throughout the Meijer store that proves this theory.

The most obvious example is the food court section. The options surpass the usual fare of hotdogs and frozen pizza, offering a full grill and a soup and salad bar. The Caffe Coppa stand features gourmet coffee as well as Purple Cow ice cream. Once served, you won't be regulated to an orange Formica booth tucked into a corner of the store. High windows provide a solarium-type feel to the dining area. Although not enclosed, Knapp

points out that it is acoustically designed to keep the noise from the store out and the music in.

Walking through the grocery section at Meijer, you may observe that you could drive a car down the aisles. This is exactly what founder Henrik Meijer had in mind, although not literally. What this means to you is that if someone is debating on what brand of fish sticks to buy, directly across from someone contemplating a frozen waffle purchase, you still have plenty of room to bypass the holdup and make your way to the pizza rolls.

Should your tastes run a bit more refined than pizza rolls, Meijer features a gourmet cheese section, an international food section featuring everything from Greek to kosher, and a fresh seafood section complete with lobster tank.

Other areas of the store will especially appease those who crave logic in a store's design. Young parents in need of baby food, onesies, diapers, and a new stroller, won't have to travel to all points of the store. The Baby Center combines all of these items in one section. Likewise, the Media Center centrally locates everything from books and DVDs, to computers and stereos.

Prairie Crossing is home to Springfield's second Bob Evans, fourth Steak 'n Shake, and sixth Burger King restaurants. A newcomer to the dining scene will be O'Charley's, which features steaks, chicken, and seafood. Also in line to join Prairie Crossing is the Staybridge Suites, which offers residential-style accommodations.

The businesses that Leonard Sapp and Glen Garrison brought home to Prairie Crossing all recognize that the climate of retail has changed over the years. In 1881, a newspaperman called shopping a "purse-destroying vice." By 2000, as consumers continue to express their wants and needs, shopping has become both a favorite pastime and an essential ingredient to a healthy economy. At Prairie Crossing, they're listening to the shoppers. ■

It's A Family Tradition

The three Springfield auto dealers that now share a home at Prairie Crossing have a similar business philosophy as well. That is: If you need a talented, intelligent person that you can trust to run the operation, look no further than to your own offspring.

William Grant Jr., president of Landmark Ford, turned to his sons William III and Sean to manage the Ford and Chrysler stores. Likewise, Charlie Sattler brought his sons Chuck and Rob into the family business. And when John Schroeder decided it was time to hand off the responsibilities of the day-to-day operations of Friendly Chevrolet, the person he trusted most was, and is, his daughter, Susan Langheim.



Susan Langheim

This isn't to say that this second generation was raised to be auto dealers. Rather, they were raised to be honest children, who became responsible adults, and who chose to follow in their fathers' footsteps. When asked what the best advice his



From left: Bill Grant III, William Grant Jr., and Sean Grant.

father ever gave him about selling cars, Chuck Sattler remembers a lesson that he was taught early on. "It is very simple, it is called the Golden Rule. Treat your customers and team members the same way you would like to be treated."

From her father, Langheim learned that it is not only important to be loyal to the customers you serve, but also to be loyal to the community where you serve. "We're an active supporter of Big Brothers/Big Sisters and I'm sure everyone is aware of our involvement with the Girl Scouts," she said,

referring to their 'the cookies are coming' television spots. These are just two examples of how she continues the tradition of community involvement set by her father.

The family tradition at the Prairie Crossing auto mall dealers has proven to be a successful business plan. The three Sattlers have almost 100 years of service to the Springfield community. It makes you wonder if Chuck Sattler is really joking when he says, "we have a plan to have the Sattlers lead this corporation into the next millennium."

**From left:
Chuck Sattler
Charlie Sattler,
and Rob Sattler.**

