

Blight to bonanza: State grants to help Hilbert renewal

By Ed Byrne
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HILBERT – The state Department of Administration has awarded the Village of Hilbert two major grants that total over \$700,000 and will go to turn the former Bel Brands cold storage warehouse, on the south side of Chestnut Street between Seventh and Eighth into a property for new development.

The “white elephant” warehouse has been idle and vacant for several years and Bel Foods agreed to sell it only to the village for redevelopment.

The grants are both Community Development Block Grants. One, for public facility blight removal, is for \$491,933. The other is for \$214,853, and came through Calumet County, which had the funds left over.

The Bel Foods property is on the east side of State 57/32 (Eighth Street) and is considered prime property for redevelopment.

It is also across Chestnut Street from Hilbert’s showcase Civic Park.

The award comes from the federal government’s Department of Housing and Urban Development,



The old Bel Brands complex in Hilbert has many additions, plus a small office building, all boarded up and waiting for demolition. Grant money will flip the property for new development. It is in the State 57/32 highway corridor. (Ed Byrne/BN)

and is funneled through the state Department of Administration (DOA), which gave the approval.

The village was notified of the award on August 21, but had to hold the notice in confidence until it was accepted by the village and approved by the DOA.

It became part of the public record when the Hilbert Village Board formally accepted the grants at the

September 8 board meeting.

It was accepted on a unanimous vote by the board.

The funds will allow for demolition of the building and preparation of the site for new development.

That work has to begin by July 1, 2021, and must be completed no later than October 31 of 2022.

Village Administrator Dennis DuPrey said there is a lot of paper

work associated with the grant money and asked that the village contract with Cedar Corporation to handle the reporting requirements of the CDBG program. His request was approved.

Cedar Corporation will handle all of the grant management for \$17,500.