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Big Picture . Local Focus

Cook leaving Grove Ave.

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The same development company aiming to transform Elgin's former library into a bustling residential and retail center now has its eyes on the Cook Communications Ministries building.

Ryan Cos. Inc. is working on a deal to relocate the nonprofit Christian publishing company to the Randall Crossings business park, which Ryan is building near Big Timber and Randall roads, said Tim Hennelly, the company's vice president of development.

Meanwhile, environmental testing is under way to show if there could be any impact on the development company's plans to demolish the century-old publishing building and replace it with townhouses and condominiums, Hennelly said.

"It's a very old site, so it's a pretty detailed investigation," he said.

Representatives at Cook Communications did not return a phone call.

The 250,000-square-foot publishing center opened in Elgin in 1901 as the David C. Cook Publishing Co., according to the nonprofit organization's Web site.

The agency moved its headquarters to Colorado Springs in 1995. Printing at the Grove Avenue building has ceased, and the old building has become obsolete, Hennelly said.

The building at Ryan's business park where Cook is planning to move is about 100,000 square feet, said Hennelly, who would not disclose the price of the building or how much Cook is spending on its new location.

As far as Hennelly knows, the agency's employees will not be affected by the move.

If all goes well, Ryan hopes to begin demolition on the structure in the winter and have Cook moved into its new home by the end of the year, Hennelly said.

"What's great is we're keeping Cook in the city of Elgin, so it's a win, win, win," he said.

Preliminary studies show Ryan could fit 150 to 200 units on the 10-acre site. But Ryan will work with the city council to determine the density and the ultimate look of the project, which Hennelly said may mean the new structures will mimic the old.

At first, Ryan was hoping to preserve the existing structure and convert it to loft-style condos, he said.

"It's neat looking from the outside, but the inside is not salvageable, so all the structures on

the site will come down," he said.

It all depends, though, on how well environmental tests turn out, he said.

"It's not a done deal yet," Hennesly said. "We're cautiously optimistic that this thing will come together. We're excited about Elgin in general and this is a great site, so hopefully we can keep this thing together."

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