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## Puri

### REAL ESTATE ■ ROCKFORD

**Sunil Puri, 45**, founder and president, First Rockford Group Inc.

**Bharat Puri, 31**, finance director/commercial development (nephew)

**Jenine Cannell-Puri, 43**, director of design (Sunil's wife)

**Bombay boot-strapper:** Sunil Puri arrived in Rockford from Bombay in 1979 at age 17 to pursue an education. He says he had \$142 in hand and not much else. He worked his way through Rockford College by cleaning bedpans at a nursing home, graduating with a finance degree in 1982 — in the depths of a recession, with Rockford unemployment at 26%.



Sunil Puri, left, Jenine Cannell-Puri and Bharat Puri are a force in real estate development in the Rockford area.



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formed First Rockford Group in 1984. The partnership broke apart in 1991, with Mr. Puri becoming sole owner.

**Family ties:** Nephew Bharat Puri joined First Rockford Group in 1998 after working as a senior commercial credit analyst at First of America Bank in Chicago. Bharat Puri handles commercial development for the firm. Sunil Puri's wife, Jenine Cannell-Puri, is design director.

**Looking ahead:** One of the Puris' newest projects is Streets of Rockford, a \$50-million, 350,000-square-foot upscale shopping complex similar to Geneva Commons. It's set to open on Perryville Road in 2007.

In addition, Sunil Puri invests in retail and residential developments in India, the Middle East and China. To date, he has avoided buying within the city of Chicago.

"By choice, we are not going to fight that battle," says Sunil Puri. "I decided strategically to focus on communities that are not as large as Chicago."

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