

Retail growth continued in 2007

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Southeast Shreveport and north Bossier City continued to see retail growth this year with the arrival of several anticipated developments, including Regal Court, [Stirling Bossier Shopping Center](#) and more.

"As far as retail in real estate, it was an excellent year for those two areas throughout 2007 and I think the same will hold true in 2008. They will continue to be hot spots for retail development," said Jim Dowling, president of Coldwell Banker Dowling Gosslee Beauvais and Associates.

Sales tax revenue for Shreveport increased 9.7 percent from last November to this November, according to the Caddo-Shreveport Sales & Use Tax Commission. Bossier City saw an increase of 2.4 percent during that same time period.

Becky Berry, director of LSUS Center for Business and Economic Research, said the retail growth and increase in sales tax revenue are good news for the area, especially in a time when the national economy is seeing a little bit of softening.

"We've had a lot of new establishments as well as events that have been going on in town and that's been a great draw, not only from local residents but from the regional area as well," Berry said.

Dowling doesn't see the recent closings of The Bombay Company and Smokey Bones Barbecue as bad signs. "Those closures that I'm aware of are not a reflection of a lack of business, but a reflection of company strategy nationwide to restructure and redirect their marketing efforts," Dowling said.

Some expect that growth to continue next year, but at a slower rate.

"I don't foresee any softening in this area and it doesn't seem to be happening on a national level. Consumer confidence is still fairly strong, the economy here is diversified enough that we're a little more protected, we're not dependent on one market to sustain us so that helps. Let's hope it continues," Berry said.

Dowling agreed.

"The market is not to a point of being saturated, but we are to a point of having a lot of new stores that have come in the last couple of years and those stores now have a pretty strong penetration into the marketplace. Consequently that reduces the opportunity for some of their competitors that might have otherwise come into this market, had not the existing retailers beat them to the punch," he said.

Here are the highlights in retail development for 2007:

n Regal Court debuted in October as the newest shopping center to come to the ever-growing, traffic-heavy Youree Drive corridor in southeast Shreveport.

The shopping center included the return of J.C. Penney and newcomer Kohl's as anchor stores along with Dick's Sporting Goods, T.G.I. Friday's, Logan's Roadhouse Grill, Buffalo Wild Wings, DSW Shoes, Accessory City and more.

Next door, King's Crossing Shopping Center saw its first restaurant closing in May when Smokey Bones Barbecue & Grill closed its doors due to company restructuring.

Earlier this fall, The Bombay Company announced it was closing its doors as well, not only locally, but nationwide. The store filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in September.

n Twin Oaks Investment president Ronnie Remedies announced plans in August to develop a \$2 million upscale shopping center. The groundbreaking date was initially scheduled for mid-September, but plans have since been delayed.

n [Stirling Bossier Shopping Center](#) celebrated its grand opening in mid-October.

The 600,000-square-foot development in north Bossier included the opening of many new stores to the area, including Target, Best Buy, PetSmart and more. At least five more stores, including AT&T, Today's Tanning, Serenity Spas, FedEx Kinko's and Wondercuts, are expected to open before the year's end.

Phase II will begin in late summer, according to [Stirling Properties](#) officials.

n Wal-Mart SuperCenter came to the Shreveport-Barksdale corridor in Shreve City, bringing new life and more traffic to the once-booming area.

Several businesses along the Shreveport-Barksdale corridor underwent makeovers and renovations in anticipation of the new store as well as the completion of the bridge, a \$25 million project expected to be complete in January or mid-February.

Some of those building makeovers included McDonald's, which was demolished, rebuilt and reopened earlier this month; Lorant's Sports Center and Scrubs Unlimited, which put up new storefronts; and on the Bossier City side, Johnson's Furniture remodeled its storefront and completed renovations inside the store.

n Louisiana Boardwalk welcomed a host of new businesses and restaurants this year including the long-anticipated Copeland's Cheesecake Bistro along with O'Brien's Irish Pub. Both opened in August.

Earlier, in July, the University of Phoenix announced plans to come to the Boardwalk.

The outdoor shopping center additionally saw the opening of one of two new Fuddrucker's restaurants. New businesses included Bath and Body Works, Liz Claiborne and most recently DKNY Jeans.

n Alexandrine Place, along Fern Avenue in southeast Shreveport, made its debut in August with Home Design Center, the first of several new businesses to come to the shopping area.

n Last spring, Shoppes at Bellemead on Youree Drive welcomed additional stores Talbots Woman and J. Jill.

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