

## North Lafayette development meets demand of untapped consumer market

**Stirling Shopping Center expands options for consumers looking for alternative to trek south; other retailers expected to follow soon**

Bob Moser  
bmoser@theadvertiser.com

Barbara Letchworth wasn't an avid Target shopper before Wednesday, but she plans on becoming one.

The north Lafayette resident hustled through the parking lot of the newly opened Target at Louisiana Avenue and Interstate 10, eager to grab a fresh cart. It's one of two anchor stores for the 20-tenant Stirling Shopping Center, which is expected to breathe life into Lafayette's north side.

Letchworth grew tired of the traffic-light maze she's faced on shopping trips to the south side, and said she's thankful for options and jobs that Stirling's big investment has brought to the city's north side. Based on the word-of-mouth crowd Wednesday, she's not alone.

Target was busy on its first full day of business, following a Tuesday night "soft opening" meant for employee families and friends. It's the first store in Stirling Shopping Center to open, the next possibly being J.C. Penney in August, which is the other large anchor store for the complex.

When completed in the fall, Stirling Shopping Center is expected to rival the retail options of Ambassador Caffery Parkway and draw shoppers from north Lafayette Parish and neighboring parishes.

"I was so excited, personally, I got there at 5 p.m. Tuesday. This really is a green light for people to invest in upper Lafayette," said Jan Swift, attorney and executive director of the Upper Lafayette Economic Development Foundation. "It's a huge investment people have made, and it's a huge economic indicator that this is a good place to invest in."

Target and the Stirling center will most certainly draw shoppers from Carencro, which now has no major retail department store. There is a proposed retail complex at the Hector Connolly Road exit off Interstate 49, Mayor Glenn Brasseaux said, and news on that project should come in a few weeks.

Scott is another small city in northwest Lafayette without a major department store or many shopping options. Mayor Hazel Myers expects her citizens to jump on I-10 to zip over to Target from now on, avoiding the long drive to



John Rowland/jrowland@theadvertiser.com

Joseph Thibodeaux prepares to erect a street sign near the new Stirling Shopping Center at Louisiana Avenue and Interstate 10 in Lafayette. Consumers and developers alike are hopeful that investments in the north Lafayette shopping complex will spur economic growth.

### Who else is moving in?

Other confirmed tenants:

- Office Depot
- Ross Dress for Less
- Petco
- Lane Bryant
- Cacique
- Hibbett Sports
- Maurices
- Rack Room Shoes
- Squire Formal Wear
- Luxurious Nails
- AT&T
- GameStop
- GNC
- Jackson Hewitt Tax Service
- Dagwood Subs
- Dress Barn

south Lafayette.

About 175 people are employed at the new Target, with some transfers from the Ambassador Caffery store. The new location is still hiring, said store team leader Paul Dejean. While the number of potential jobs at the other retailers hasn't been estimated, retail jobs in Lafayette average \$10.98 per hour, according to 2006 statistics from the Department of Labor.

The Lemoine Co., which is doing construction on the rest of Stirling Shopping Center, is on pace for a late summer/ early fall opening for most stores, Project Superintendent Jim Earnest said.

- Capital One Bank
- Portrait Innovations



Leslie Westbrook/lwestbrook@theadvertiser.com

A shopper checks out recently at the new Target. Business was brisk as the store's doors opened officially Wednesday.

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