

Businesses popping up all over Times-Picayune - Online

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Host of sites opening at I-12 near La. 21

The retail business is bustling at two developments on both sides of Interstate 12 near Louisiana 21, with new stores and restaurants planning to open or break ground in the next several months.

At Colonial Pinnacle Nord du Lac, on the north side of I-12 near Covington, at least four new businesses should be open by June, said Ken Marshall, senior vice president of retail for Colonial Properties Trust, which is developing the center. The center opened in September.

And south of the interstate, Stirling Properties is working to break ground on a new building that will house several tenants, including one national retailer that has signed a lease, said Townsend Underhill, vice president for development.

The final building in the first phase of development at Nord du Lac will house seven businesses, though Marshall said he could divulge the names of just four. The building, which is in front of and west of Kohl's, will include Mandarin Moon, a Chinese restaurant; Mitsu Japanese Steakhouse, a sushi and hibachi restaurant; Swirl Frozen Yogurt; and Marvelous Nails, a full-service nail salon, Marshall said.

With the announced tenants, the first phase of the center will be 97 percent leased, he said.

Two other restaurants, Cracker Barrel and Olive Garden, already are under construction at the site, and Colonial Properties is continuing to negotiate with several other tenants, including restaurants that would be new to the New Orleans area market, Marshall said.

In addition, the company expects to start construction soon on an outparcel between Olive Garden and Texas Roadhouse that would include several restaurants and retailers, he said. And it is talking to some potential retailers about building a new strip of stores to the east of Academy Sports & Outdoors, he said.

Further, Colonial Properties is working to lease the unfinished buildings between the first phase and Louisiana 21, Marshall said. Once a portion of the buildings are leased, the company plans to resume construction, he said. Dillard's, which owns property at the site, is not ready to build there, Marshall said.

Across the interstate at River Chase, Stirling plans to break ground in August on a new 40,000-square-foot retail strip that will include Charming Charlie, a Houston-based accessories boutique with locations in Baton Rouge, Lafayette and throughout the country, Underhill said. The company plans to open the 8,000-square-foot store, which will be located with the building's other tenants on 7.5 acres just south of the now-closed Linens 'N Things, in the spring of 2012, he said.

In the meantime, Stirling plans to start construction on a 93-room Candlewood Suites Hotel and a 5,500-square foot Fidelity Homestead Savings Bank by June, Underhill said. The 55,000-square-foot, four-story hotel will be located on 1.8 acres along I-12, directly behind Hollywood Theaters, while the bank will sit on 1.6 acres at the northeast corner of Stirling Boulevard and East Brewster Road.

And construction began about two weeks ago on a project to build 240 apartments on 12 acres along East Brewster, south of the retention pond that abuts the movie theater. Stirling is partnering with developer Favrot & Shane to build the apartments, the first of which should be available for lease by November, Underhill said.

In the meantime, Stirling is working with a potential tenant for its planned office park along I-12 north of East Brewster that includes two six-story buildings in the 325,000-square-foot range and a six-story parking garage in between, he said. The company also intends to build 20 or so smaller offices and retail outposts just to the south.

Underhill noted that Louisiana Economic Development has named the project as a certified site, meaning that everything, including wetlands permits, zoning and infrastructure, is in place to allow a developer to break ground in 90 days. It is the only such site in St. Tammany Parish and just the fourth in the state, according to LED.

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