

Hammond Square

Best Buy to open in June, Target, T.J. Maxx in July



Photo by Joan Davis

PREPARING TO OPEN — Construction workers put down a slab outside Best Buy in preparation for opening in June.

Job fair coming in May

By **JOAN DAVIS**
Daily Star City Editor

The opening of electronics retailer Best Buy in June followed by Target and T.J. Maxx in late July will mark a summer of openings at the new Hammond Square open air center.

Lights are on and carpeting down at the 30,255-square-foot Best Buy, with fixturing contractors coming in May to prepare the store for opening. Workers were busy vacuuming carpet and cleaning bathrooms on Wednesday.

Erin Bix, Best Buy spokesperson in Bloomington, Minn., said the retailer is very glad to be coming to Hammond and bringing approximately 100 full- and part-time jobs. A job fair will



Photo by Joan Davis

TRADEMARK SIGN — Workers put down cement in front of Target in preparation for the opening in July.

take place at Vutera Plaza, 1665 S.W. Railroad Ave., in May. Anyone interested can apply online at bestbuy.com until announcement of the date.

Workers were also busy in

front of Target's 127,300-square-foot store installing concrete pads in preparation for the big red balls, synonymous with the Target trademark.

Other June openers include Santa Fe Cattle Co., a road-house-style steak restaurant chain headquartered in Nashville, Tenn., building a
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HAMMOND SQUARE OPENINGS

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5,500-square-foot store near the interstate; Raising Cane's second Hammond store on Hwy. 51 across C.M. Fagan from Wendy's; and Verizon Wireless, near the main entrance.

With the perimeter stores near completion, work is under way in earnest on the first group of retail shells on Main Street. The screen visible from Hwy. 51 blocking the view of construction between Rite-Aid and Dillard's will come down temporarily in the next few days.

Dick Cyr, project manager for Stirling Properties, said the screen will go back up further back, behind Sears, blocking view of the remaining Main Street construction and allowing Stirling Properties access to begin building new entrances for both Sears and Dillard's and a parking lot. Stirling is currently revamping the facade on Rite-Aid while the store is handling renovations inside.

The area between Rite-Aid and Dillard's is still very much a construction site with front-end loaders moving dirt and other materials, and 18-wheelers steadily entering the site. Curbing is up, so the contours of Main Street are becoming visible, said Jimmy Maurin, Stirling/Palace Properties owner. Paving of Main Street near the rear between Target and the new restaurants is complete to the western edge of J.C. Penney.

The first cluster of small retailers, between 15 and 25, will open on the same day in the last week of September, Maurin said.

"The big slug of main street tenants will open between September and Thanksgiving," he said. "We won't open any more stores after Thanksgiving. The next bunch of stores will open in January and February."

While the open air center is in the leasing mode, Maurin projected adding tenants through Easter 2010.

Main Street anchors will be Encore Shoe Show, 12,000 square feet of "nothing but shoes," and book retailer Books a Million which will move into its new 9,000-square-foot store from its present location in the former True Value Hardware building, Maurin said. Encore Shoe Show is the same company as formal mall tenant Shoe Department but represents a more upscale high-end type of shoe store. Workmen were installing the concrete floor at the new Books a Million Store on Wednesday.

Maurin said a number of former Hammond Square tenants are returning, but there will be many new tenants, making up the 50 to 60 different retailers in the completed open air center, a retail offering twice the size of the old enclosed mall which was torn down starting in December of 2007. Maurin said the names of those stores will be revealed in the coming weeks.

In addition to retailers, Maurin revealed the identities of three more future restaurants at the site, all located in two buildings at the foot of Main Street near the AMC Palace Theater.

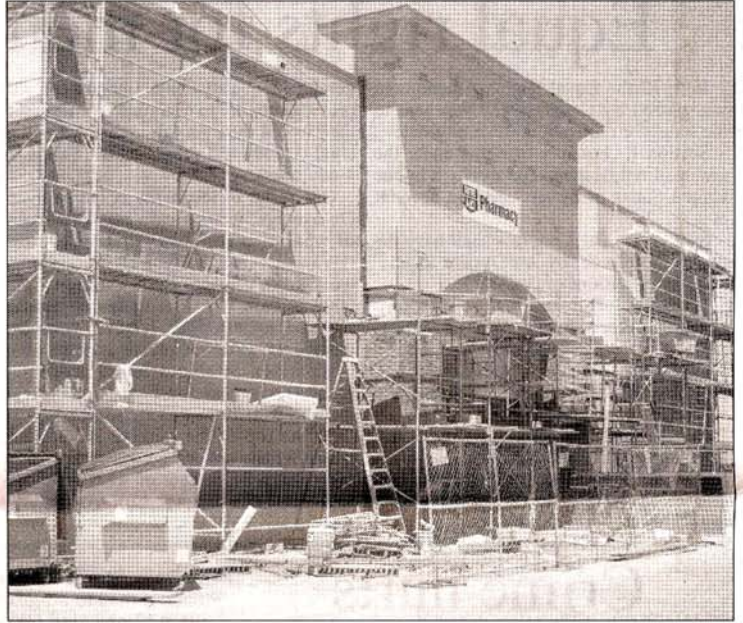


Photo by Joan Davis

RITE-AID FACELIFT — Scaffolding on the Rite-Aid pharmacy at Hammond Square shows work under way on the facade. Inside, the store is undergoing renovations as well. The mall developer and the store owners are investing about \$1 million combined in the new exterior and state-of-the-art layout inside, slated to be finished by end of June.

The three will open between the middle of June and the first of August and include Albasha, a Greek and Lebanese chain; Phil's Grill, a specialty hamburger restaurant out of New Orleans; and Cafe Roma,

an Italian style restaurant popular in Lafayette and New Orleans.

Maurin said he was not ready to reveal the identity of the remaining restaurant. **Contact Joan Davis at 254-7833.**



Photo by Joan Davis

BOOKS A MILLION — Workmen smooth concrete on the interior of the new location of book retailer Books a Million, relocating to Hammond Square. The first group of Main Street retailers will open between September and Thanksgiving.

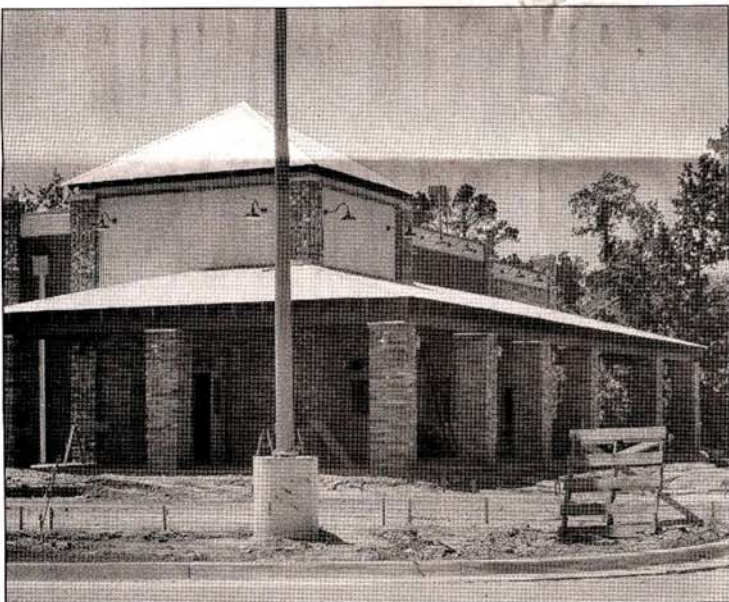


Photo by Joan Davis

SANTA FE CATTLE CO. — Another June opener, the roadhouse-style steak restaurant, a 5,500-square-foot store near the interstate, is headquartered in Nashville, Tenn. Other restaurants opening at Hammond Square include Raising Cane's, the chicken finger franchise; Albasha, a Greek and Lebanese restaurant; Phil's Grill, a gourmet hamburger chain; and Cafe Roma, and Italian-style restaurant.