

Mall renovation schedule outlined

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HAMMOND — The bulk of the big-box retailers and restaurants that will make up the \$100 million transformation of Hammond’s former enclosed mall into an outdoor upscale shopping center will open in summer 2009, Sterling Properties Chairman Jimmy Maurin said Thursday.

Maurin offered in a speech to the Hammond Chamber of Commerce on Thursday few new details on the 2-year-old project to redo the former Hammond Square Mall. He mostly went over updated timelines for the opening of each portion of the 100-acre project.

Maurin said he declined to offer specifics on which national retailers would be a part of the proje

ct, in part, because of the uncertainty in the retail market during what he called an ongoing recession.

Maurin also said he is now more cautious after one of the announced big-boxes, Home Depot, backed out after signing a lease.

“I’ve never seen (more) fear in the eyes of the retail world than I’ve seen now,” Maurin said. “We’ve got to keep their courage up and tell them Hammond and south Louisiana is different.”

The new shopping center, now called simply Hammond Square, will have more than 60 retail stores in 850,000 square feet of retail space, which is nearly double what was offered in the former mall, Maurin said.

It will be a hybrid of a power center and a lifestyle center, Maurin said. Power center-style big-box retailers, such as Target and Best Buy, will anchor an outdoor, landscaped main street of smaller stores similar to a lifestyle center, Maurin said.



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The first new store to open in the redeveloped Hammond Square will be J.C. Penney in the first week of October. The retailer closed its 59,000-square-foot store during the old mall’s decline in Hammond, but is erecting a 86,000-square-foot facility just west of Sears.

The first new store for the project, J.C. Penney, will open in the first week of October, Maurin said. J.C. Penney closed its former 59,000-square-foot store during the old mall's decline, but the retailer is erecting a new 86,000-square-foot facility just west of Sears.

Sears, Dillard's and Rite Aid have all remained open during the construction, Maurin said.

Sears and Dillard's also plan to remodel their Hammond stores, but no timelines for those projects are available, Maurin said. Dillard's plans to add another 30,000 square feet to its 70,000-square-foot store, Maurin said.

The main street portion offering more than 200,000 square feet of shops is scheduled to open in June 2009, Maurin said. Construction on this portion is expected to begin in September, and Maurin said he would make more announcements of what will open at that time.

Six restaurants, one of them a fast-food eatery, are planning to open in the spring and a seventh by the fall, Maurin said. Four new big-box retailers, including the previously announced Target and Best Buy, are to open in July 2009, he said.

More big-box retailers are expected to open on property near the old mall in late 2009 or early 2010, Maurin said.

Hammond city government paid for \$12 million in drainage and road improvements to go with the mall redevelopment, including a widened Interstate 12 westbound exit and two new left-turn lanes for U.S. 51 Business. Maurin said the roadwork should be completed by Aug. 31.

"No matter how well Hammond does, there is a tremendous amount of out-shopping," Maurin said. "With \$4 gas, it is about time we don't have to drive 25 miles, at least, for some new shops."

Maurin bought the mall from Sizeler Properties for \$14 million in June 2006.