

Upscale Sam's Club will join River Chase development St. Tammany News - Online

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Stirling Properties has contracted with Sams Club to sell about 16.5 acres of slated retail property behind the theater and other retail areas of River Chase for a Sams Club store, said Stirling vice president for development Townsend Underhill. The property is already zoned HC3 and the zoning allows highway commercial up to 250,000 square feet. The proposed Sams will not only be 136,000 square feet, it will have a upscale look to the store, making it a first-class facility. The site is behind the retail development that contains Best Buy and Target and is in the southeast corner of the Interstate 12/Louisiana Highway 21 interchange. The new Sam's Club will be located near Hollywood Theaters in the River Chase development. (Map courtesy of Stirling Properties) The road infrastructure is well ahead of development that is planned for this area, said Underhill. Although it will be owned by Sams, it will still be part of River Chase, just like Target. All the retail will be complementary to each other and are co-located in shopping areas across the country. Underhill said that the nearby apartment complex in River Chase is already under roof and the luxury/garden apartments are on schedule for occupancy in October. They will be part of the Favrot-Shane apartments. Stirling is also in the pre-development stage for its first of four office buildings for the area. The first building will be six stories high with 150,000 square feet. It is in pre-leasing stages already, as office space is scarce in western St. Tammany in the 10,000-25,000 square foot range. They hope to have the first building fully leased by Christmas. Demand is strong for office space and Underhill said the four buildings will each have varying amounts of square footage, with a total between the buildings of around 600,000 square feet. Another part of the development has been sold to hotel chain Holiday Inn, pending approval. They will probably break ground in about 60 days, said Underhill. He added that the hotel would probably be open next summer. Debate about big box stores in the area was a major concern with the Nord du Lac project, north of I - 12, which would have partially abutted single-residential subdivision Flowers Estates. Big box stores such as Wal-Mart and Sams Wholesale Club are traditionally defined as stores that have a higher square footage and derive their revenue by providing discount prices and selling at a volume rather than price points. Homeowners were concerned about traffic and impact on their property values as well as the impact on the Tchefuncte River. It had originally been proposed for the area between the shopping center and the river on the northeast corner of the interchange. The location in River Chase will bypass residential concerns and will be buffered from residential areas by roadways already in place.