



Advocate staff photo by ROGER ZETTLER

Jimmy Maurin, left, Stirling Properties chairman of the board and Hammond Square owner, points out a feature of the shopping center renovations to Hammond Mayor Mayson Foster while walking down Main Street during the grand opening ceremonies Oct. 1.

Hammond Square center 90% occupied

BY CHRISTINE MORGAN ARCENEAUX

Livingston-Tangipahoa editor

HAMMOND — As onlookers waited at Albasha Greek and Lebanese Café for the reception to begin, the Hammond High School band led a second line down the new Hammond Square's Main Street during the shopping center's grand opening celebration Oct. 1.

"We've built over 2.5 million square feet of shopping centers in the last seven years, but this one is unique,"

said Jimmy Maurin, owner of Hammond Square and chairman of Stirling Properties.

"Our vision for the rede-

velopment was to provide a more significant retail offering for the market. Hammond Square, in my opinion, is the center of the future of retail in the region."

The opening celebration marked the end of a \$100 million transformation to the city's former indoor mall.

To date, Hammond Square is 90 percent leased and occupied, with 60 percent occupancy in the square's Main Street, a landscaped section of smaller shops, Maurin said.

During the past three months, three big-box retailers new to Hammond have opened: Best Buy opened on June 10, Target on July 26 and TJ Maxx on Aug. 2, said Grady Brame, executive vice president and partner with Stirling Properties, which is developing Hammond Square.

All are doing well, Maurin said, adding that Target's profits are already 75 percent better than the company first predicted while the Santa Fe Cattle Co.'s Hammond location is the No. 1 performing restaurant in the company. Not to be outdone, Best Buy profits are up 35 percent, Maurin said.

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JIMMY MAURIN, owner

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MAYOR MAYSON FOSTER

HAMMOND

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On Thursday, several stores including Books-A-Million, Maurices, Paris Parker, Foot Locker, Rue 21, Great American Cookie Company, Merle Norman, Purse Bag Pattie's, Coach House Gifts and Hibbett Sports, joined the big three in opening.

While several retailers are already doing business, more are expected.

Soon to open are Shoe Department Encore, GNC, Zales, Nagoya Sushi and Japanese Steakhouse, Smoothie King, East of Italy and Menchie's Frozen Yogurt.

Maurin said he's also saving spots for retailers who have never before been to Hammond.

"It's not a matter of just filling up the space but getting the right mix (of retailers)," he said.

Maurin said he plans to bring in about half a dozen new tenants by March.

Originally developed in 1976 as the 430,000-square foot Hammond Square Mall, the new Hammond Square is twice the size of the original enclosed mall, with 700,000 square feet.

Hammond Square is designed as a combination power/lifestyle center. The development site is located at the intersection of Interstate 12 and U.S. 51 Business (SW Railroad Avenue) and has unparalleled access and visibility to I-12. It is located near Southeastern



Advocate staff photos by ROGER ZETTLER

Officials cut the ribbon for the opening of the \$100 million transformation to the city's former indoor mall. From left are Gordon Burgess, Tangipahoa Parish president; Bob Zabbia, mayor of Ponchatoula; Calvin Fayard, Hammond Square owner; Robert Maurin, Hammond Square owner, Jimmy Maurin, Stirling Properties chairman of the board; Mayson Foster, Mayor of Hammond; Lillian Maurin, wife of Jimmy Maurin; Mike Williams, Hammond City Council president; the Rev. Ed Everett, pastor of Holy Ghost Parish; Don Pierson, state assistant secretary of economic development; Grady Brame, Stirling Properties executive vice president and partner; and Dick Cyr, Stirling Properties project manager.

Louisiana University and North Oaks Medical Center.

While Hammond Mayor Mayson Foster said that he won't know the effect of the openings until December, Hammond Square "will do several things for us, including giving our citizens a first-class shopping experience without them having to go to Baton Rouge or St. Tammany."

"We will keep them in Tangipahoa Parish," Foster said. "It will also improve our image throughout the retail group and will hopefully bring other stores to our area."

Foster said based on the crowd at Hammond Square Friday and Saturday, "the public has received it with great anticipation."



The Hammond High School Army Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps present the colors for the kickoff of the grand opening of Hammond Square on Oct. 1. The cadets are, from left, Cadet Capt. Stephen Cheramie, Cadet 2nd Lt. Thomas Doughty and Cadet Command Sgt. Maj. Triston Manuel.