



Everything New Orleans

New I-12 exit will open this week

By Christine Harvey, The Times-Picayune

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Motorists soon will be able to take an alternate route to reach Louisiana 21 from Interstate 12, with a new interchange leading to the Colonial Pinnacle Nord du Lac site set to open by the end of the week.

Officials erected signs along I-12 earlier this year for the new Pinnacle Parkway-East Brewster Road exit, though work on those connector roads had not yet begun.

Now complete, motorists will be able to take the roads through the Colonial Pinnacle site to the north or the **Stirling Covington Center** to the south to reach Louisiana 21, while missing the traffic tie-ups common one mile west at the Louisiana 21 exit.

The state Department of Transportation and Development has given its tentative approval that the interchange is ready to open, but officials are awaiting written permission before taking that step, said Tom Beale, a parish spokesman. With that permission coming any day now, the exit should be ready to go no later than Halloween, he said.

Colonial Properties Trust, which is building the shopping center, constructed the six-lane Pinnacle Parkway from I-12 to Louisiana 21, just across from Ochsner Boulevard. East Brewster Road, a new four-lane street, will lead to Brewster Road, meeting near the entrances to the Target and Belk stores.

St. Tammany Parish spent \$9.9 million to build the interchange, converting a closed rest area that straddled I-12 west of the Tchefuncte River. Richard Price Contracting Co. LLC of Denham Springs won the contract to do the work.

About 3,000 to 5,000 vehicles per day are expected to use the interchange, with the numbers increasing fivefold when the completed center opens, Beale said.

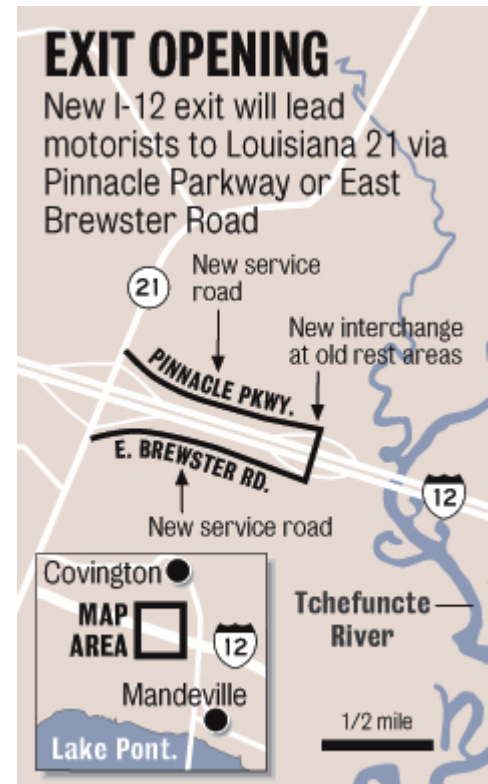
Representatives with Colonial Properties said this week that the first phase of the 1 million-square-foot project should open in October 2010, though the opening date has been pushed back several times over the course of the project because of the downturn in the national economy.

The new interchange, coupled with work to widen Louisiana 21 above I-12, should eliminate backups on the interstate at the Louisiana 21 exit during peak hours, studies have shown.

Further, when the shopping center opens, the studies show that more than 25 percent of the vehicles going to and from the center will use the new interchange and avoid Louisiana 21 altogether.

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