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## T.J. Maxx, Books-A-Million lease space at Hammond Square

By Joan Davis

Hammond Square has signed leases with retailers T.J. Maxx and Books-A-Million to open stores in 2009.

T.J. Maxx is leasing a 26,000-square-foot store next to Best Buy and will open about same time as Best Buy and Target in July, said landlord/Palace Properties Owner Jimmy Maurin.



GOING UP — Workers install walls for the 127,380-square-foot Target store at Hammond Square on Wednesday. Photo by Joan Davis

Ron Gladney of Atlanta, manager of development for TJX Companies, the parent company, said T.J. Maxx will open the store in late July or early August. The company changed the prototype about nine months ago, and the Hammond location will be the upgraded store.

“It's got upgraded dressing rooms and rest rooms and other upgrades on the sales floor,” Gladney said.

The store will have all the departments that the Mandeville store does, including accessories, jewelry, apparel for men, women and children; footwear, bedding, furniture and giftware.

The stores typically employ between 20 and 30 employees, and Gladney said T.J. Maxx definitely hires locally, typically renting a room in a hotel where interviews will take place prior to opening.

The book retailer, which has a 9,000-square-foot store in Town and Country Shopping Center in Hammond, will move to a new state-of-the-art 15,000-square-foot store on Main Street, Maurin said. That tenant will open when Main Street's lifestyle shops open, no later than September.

On Wednesday, Target contractor S.M. Wilson Co. of St. Louis, mobilized a large crane to begin the erection of approximately 55,000-pound per section tilt-up concrete walls, the project expected to be complete on Friday. The slab for the 127,380-square-foot store has been poured.

“Rather than build block walls or lay blocks, they're pouring very large slabs of concrete on top of the slab,” Maurin said. “They let them set up and then raise them when they're cured and tie them together.”

Once the walls are up, brick or stucco veneer will be applied to cover the cement.

Also in the works is the signing of leases for four or five stores of the first 12 to 15 tenants that will open along with Books-A-Million on Main Street, the area between Sears and Dillard's from Hwy. 51 to the AMC Theatre, Maurin said.

The large banner and fence across the front of the mall currently blocks view of the yet-to-be-paved Main Street, the location of the “lifestyle” section of the hybrid “power/lifestyle center.” The “power” represents the large stores on the outside of the mall, including Best Buy, Dillard's, Sears and Penney's, which will have entrances both from the power and lifestyle sides.

All utilities are in, and construction is set to begin on the middle section of 50 retail tenants. Hoar Construction, of Birmingham, Ala., is building the Main Street stores, along with the typical “hardscapes” like sidewalks, lighting and landscaping; as well as Verizon, T.J. Maxx, Best Buy, the restaurants and the rest of the buildings at the mall.

Hammond Square has signed deals

with six of the seven restaurants that will locate at the mall: two along Hwy. 51, one against the interstate, and a building with four restaurants sandwiched between the AMC Palace Theatre and J.C. Penney.