



Louisiana Avenue development

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A freeze might be on the way, but things are heating up at the Louisiana Avenue and I-10 interchange in north Lafayette. Ground was broken Thursday on a new shopping center that will feature Super Target and JC Penney as anchor stores.



City leaders and property developers say the economic impact will be huge. Turning vacant land into a state of the art shopping center will cost a pretty penny.

"Target will be building their own building. Penney's is building their own building. Over fifty million dollars will be spent on this site," said Chip Songy of Stirling Properties.



That's money well spent according to folks who study economic trends. The impact of a shopping center here will be huge.

"The annual impact is over 100 million dollars a year. The tax impact is significant, and the job impact is over 600 jobs," said Gregg Gotreaux of Lafayette Economic Development Authority.

That's just for "this" phase of the project. City leaders say the two "anchor" stores will attract other retailers to the area.



"When they see a target and a JC Penney located out here; chains, smaller and many others are gonna take notice," said Joey Durel.

Right now, workers are clearing the land and getting ready to build more than 400,000 square feet of shopping area. Target should open in March of 2008, and other businesses will follow suit.

"Capitol one has committed to put a bank branch out here, and we're talking to a number of restaurants and operators to go up front," said Songy.

Officials aren't naming any other businesses that will locate here just yet, but they will soon.

City leaders tell me it's simple, the shopping center brings the city together. Louisiana Avenue turns into Johnston Street, one of the busiest roads for retail in Lafayette.

You've got the mall of Acadiana on one end, and on this end a super target and JC Penney. Along the way there's downtown, the oil center, UL Lafayette. City leaders say all these compliment each other.

Additionally, it'll bring the north side's economy more in line with the south sides.

"Let there no longer be a north and south side. Let there just be one inclusive community, and we welcome this construction and we're looking forward to all the things that might happen to this great community," said Gilbert Williams, Southwest Black Chamber of Commerce.



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