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Retail plan breaks ground

By Amy Zalar, Herald-Standard
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Edward Vlosky, Cedarwood Development's executive vice president, explains details of the project. Ed Cope/Herald-Standard

The entire \$46 million development, including the new \$18 million Wal-Mart Super Center, will have 430,000 square feet of retail space.

Plans are to close the Wal-Mart at Cherry Tree Plaza and

Groundbreaking for a massive retail project that will eventually mean 1,700 jobs was held Friday, as officials heralded the construction of the Fayette Crossing Shopping Center that will include a Wal-Mart Super Center and Chili's restaurant in the Fayette County Business Park.

Randall J. Hake, director of development for Cedarwood Development Inc., said the project in South Union Township came to fruition in "record time" and could not have been done without the cooperation of local officials.

"I've worked on projects that took six years before a groundbreaking took place. Here we hired engineers, did our due diligence and we're ready to rock and roll," Hake said.

"In 15 months, you will see a new Wal-Mart Super Center and Chili's Restaurant and many other national, regional and local stores," Hake added.

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transfer all 200 employees to the new Wal-Mart Super Center when it opens in late 2007 or early 2008, according to Frank A. Licata, director of site acquisitions/major tenant leasing for Cedarwood.

Licata said the new 203,622-square-foot building will encompass five acres and include a tire lube express, grocery store, garden center and full-line department store. The new Chili's restaurant will front Route 40. An additional line of between 12 and 15 shops will also include 20,000 square feet of retail space. Licata said Phase II may include additional "junior anchors and potentially another (major) anchor" and will include between 175,000 and 200,000 square feet.

Officials from Wal-Mart, Cedarwood Development Inc., the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority, Bank of America, South Union Township, and county and state government attended the ceremony at the Fayette County Business Park.

Andrew French, executive director of the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority, said it's hard to believe the 270-acre business park property was conveyed to the authority from the county a mere five years ago.

"What we've done so far is minor compared to what we're doing in the future," French said. "You ain't seen nothing yet."

French said the Matthew Drive extension project should soon be under way and "a lot of dirt will be flying in the next few years."

State Sen. Richard Kasunic, D-Dunbar, called the project "one hell of an investment in Fayette County."

Fayette County Commissioner Vincent A. Vicites gave a bit of a history lesson on the site, pointing out that for 100 years, the former county home property was not on the tax rolls, which changed in 2001. Vicites said the development will be the anchor of the entire concept envisioned at the commercial retail site. He said the project is really going to help the economy of Fayette County in the future.

South Union Township Supervisor Bob Schiffbauer said when the project began, the site was zoned industrial, but it was just a natural progression for it to house retail stores.

Schiffbauer said infrastructure is crucial, adding that the Matthew Drive extension project is vital to the development. He said a few months ago difficulties arose with the state Department of Environmental Protection and the Army Corps of Engineers regarding the proposed route of the road because of wetlands in the pathway.

Schiffbauer said after speaking with Timothy S. Mahoney, the Democratic nominee for state representative of the 51st District, Mahoney set up a meeting with Gov. Ed Rendell and things began to move more quickly.

Schiffbauer said he is anticipating the permit will be approved soon regarding the road route and wetlands mitigation.

The Fayette County Redevelopment Authority is charged with developing and filling the business park, and to date, a motel, engineering firm, the CareerLink office, the Fayette County Mental Health/Mental Retardation agency and doctors'

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offices are located there. Plans are underway for more doctors' offices, a restaurant and other retail stores, in addition to the Fayette Crossing development.

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