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Brooklyn Park moves dirt for major retail hub

By By Brian Johnson, F&C Construction Writer
January 24, 2006

The Highway 610 and Zane Avenue area in Brooklyn Park is shaping up as a major retail hub for the city.

Brooklyn Park officials and a local developer broke ground this month on the first phase of the Park Place Promenade development — a project that eventually will bring more than 400,000 square feet of new retail space to the 56-acre site.

Solomon Real Estate Group is the project's developer. Wayzata-based H.J. Development, which will lease and manage 62,000 square feet of retail space within the development, expects the first store to be open in mid-summer.

"This is a major development," said Bob Schreier, Brooklyn Park community development director. "This is something Brooklyn Park has been wanting to do for a number of years, and it has taken about five years to get a retail developer in place. This will complement what will be going on farther to the west as Target and their partners master plan and build out that area."

Additional construction activity in the area includes a 69,000-square-foot Cub Foods store, currently under construction, and a major expansion by Target Corp. Target plans to develop the area over the next 10 to 15 years with offices, retail and housing.

H.J. Development owns and manages 1 million square feet of retail space in the Twin Cities.

Village Plaza performs well, developer says

When the Village Plaza mixed-use complex was under construction last spring in Circle Pines, the project's developer — Shakopee-based Uppal Enterprises — predicted the concrete complex would use significantly less energy than conventional wood structures.

With heating costs rising, lower energy consumption has taken on added importance, and Uppal says Village Plaza is performing every bit as well as expected.

Heating bills in all of the Uppal facilities — including a concrete apartment complex in Shakopee — are "30 percent to 40 percent less than most buildings," Uppal says.

"In fact," he added, "we haven't even turned the heat on in many areas, which is unheard of."

The lower energy costs stem from the building's insulated concrete-form construction, according to Uppal. He says concrete is superior to wood construction because it's stronger, better insulated, and more resistant to sound, wind and water.

Village Plaza will eventually include 56 senior rental units, 26 market-rate condos, 16 townhomes and 13,000 square feet of retail space.

The rental units were completed last November, and the condos and townhomes are just now being finished.

The rental units are about 60 percent occupied, and there's been strong interest in the for-sale units, according to Uppal.

SmithGroup to work on Mayo Auditorium design

The University of Minnesota has selected SmithGroup to provide architectural design services for the Mayo Auditorium renovation.

The \$4 million project involves exterior and interior renovations, including upgrades to the main auditorium and two lecture halls. New interior finishes and furnishings, mechanical and electrical system upgrades, code updates and technology improvements are also planned.

The office of former Minnesota State Architect Clarence Johnson designed the Mayo Auditorium, which was built in 1951. It has been the site of "many of the university's most renowned medical lectures," according to

SmithGroup.

The project is under way and is expected to be completed by January 2007, SmithGroup added. Funding sources include a state appropriation in 2005 and the University of Minnesota.

SmithGroup is an architecture, engineering and planning firm with 800 employees. The firm has offices in Minnesota, Michigan, Illinois, California, Wisconsin, Arizona and Washington, D.C.

New bids to be accepted for fire station

Rosemount officials are preparing to accept new bids for a fire station project that attracted higher-than-anticipated bids last fall.

The city's budget for the project was \$2.75 million, but bids came in at about \$3.15 million last September. City officials said the higher bids stemmed from the rising cost of building materials and the effects of Hurricane Katrina.

New bids for the project are tentatively scheduled to begin Jan. 26, and construction could begin this spring. Site work has already been completed at the project site near Highway 3 and Connemara Trail.

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