



Retail sites in Exeter draw praise

2 projects on Perkiomen Avenue in the township are expected to provide an economic boost



READING EAGLE: TIM LEEDY

The Exeter Commons shopping center at Perkiomen Avenue and 47th Street in Exeter Township will be anchored by Target, Lowe's and Giant stores.

BY ERIN NEGLEY
READING EAGLE

Recession aside, an economic boom is taking shape in a 2-mile stretch of Exeter Township.

Stores in the Exeter Commons shopping center along Perkiomen Avenue are scheduled to begin opening in July, and just down the road, Wal-Mart is nearly doubling its size to become one of the chain's supercenters.

The two retail sites are expected to bring 800 to 920 jobs to the area.

Exeter officials say the new retail centers could attract even more commercial development.

"We're very excited about it," said Troy S. Bingaman, township manager. "I think our residents are going to see a huge benefit."

Exeter Commons is under construction on 44 acres off Perkiomen Avenue (Route 422) at 47th Street. Target, Lowe's and Giant stores will anchor the center, which will have 10 other businesses.

[See Exeter >>> B2]

Job opportunities

Target

Features: Expanded food area with a deli, produce, bakery and Pizza Hut Express.

Opens: July 26.

Jobs: 150 to 250.

Hiring starts: Mid to late May.

To apply: See hiring signs on site, help-wanted ads, some posted on target.com/careers.

Lowe's

Feature: 117,000 sq. ft. retail sales space.

Opens: Before Oct. 31.

Jobs: Up to 175.

Hiring starts: When store nears completion.

To apply: Online at www.lowes.com/careers.

Red Robin

Feature: Gourmet burgers, a full bar.

Opens: July 27.

Jobs: 110 to 120 (44 to 48 full-time).

Hiring starts: June 1.

To apply: Red Robin trailer on site or www.rrobin-pa.com.

Sonic

Feature: Outdoor patio tables and 24 drive-in parking spaces where customers can order food.

Opens: August.

Jobs: Approximately 100 (unknown full-time).

To apply: E-mail jobs@simpletie.com, call 610-251-2575 or get an application at the site.

Chick-fil-A

Feature: 136-seat restaurant will be the area's third Chick-fil-A.

Opens: July 30.

Jobs: 75 (20 to 25 full-time).

Hiring starts: End of May.

To apply: Hiring trailer on site or apply at any Chick-fil-A.

Giant

Feature: Replaces Giant in Exeter Promenade Plaza. Larger produce, meat, seafood, dairy and bakery departments; and natural and organic foods, interac-

tive shopping kiosks, Wi-Fi cafe and gas pumps.

Opens: Late summer.

Jobs: 50 to 60 additional jobs for a total of 275.

Hiring starts: Soon.

To apply: At Exeter Giant.

Five Guys Burgers and Fries

Feature: Made-to-order burgers, fries and hot dogs.

Opens: August.

Jobs: 20 (unknown full-time).

Hiring starts: July.

To apply: At www.fiveguys.com and click on "careers."

Five Below

Feature: Five-and-dime store for the iPod generation. Everything is \$1 to \$5.

Opens: Late August.

Jobs: 3 to 4 managers, 6 to 8 associates (2 to 3 full-time).

Hiring starts: Mid-May for managers, early July for others.

To apply: At www.fivebelow.com.

Famous Footwear

Feature: 6,600 square feet.

Opens: Late July.

Jobs: 6 to 9 (most full-time).

Hiring starts: Unknown.

To apply: At www.brownshoe.com/careers.

Staples

Feature: Replaces Reading Mall store. Office supplies, copy center and computer tech service.

Opens: Late 2009.

Jobs: Unknown. Existing associates will move to the new store.

To apply: At www.staples.com.

According to developers, other Exeter Commons tenants will be Sleepy's, Wachovia bank and Petco. A Wachovia spokesman would say only that the bank is interested in the site. Representatives of Sleepy's and Petco were unavailable for comment. Source: Individual companies

Exeter seen as right spot for more retail

[From B1 >>>]

The center required \$15 million in road improvements, which should be completed before Memorial Day, Bingaman said.

Just over a mile east on Perkiomen Avenue, Wal-Mart is expanding from 114,513 square feet to nearly 215,000. The supercenter will have groceries, a garden center and a tire and auto center.

A Weis grocery store was razed to make room for the expanded Wal-Mart. Company officials have said the building will be ready in July and that the expansion would add up to 200 workers.

Pat J. Adamczyk, administrator at CareerLink Berks County, said it's a plus for Berks to have stores that are opening and hiring.

The retail, banking and restaurant jobs present a good opportunity to learn customer service skills, Adamczyk said.

"They are fine jobs for some parts of the populations who need to work part time," she said. "Retail jobs offer a career ladder."

Exeter Commons is ahead of schedule with 97 percent of the space leased, said Jeremy P. Fogel, president of Ironwood Property Group Inc.

The center's developer



READING EAGLE TIM LEEDEY

The expanded Wal-Mart on Perkiomen Avenue in Exeter Township is expected to reopen in July.

is Exeter JV Associates, a partnership of Ironwood and The Goldenberg Group, both based in Montgomery County.

Target is expected to open in late July; the other tenants will soon follow, Fogel said.

Circuit City had signed a lease for Exeter Commons, but developers terminated that agreement about the time the electronics retailer filed for bankruptcy.

No other tenants have dropped out.

In a down market, other projects are struggling, but Exeter Commons is in a great location, Fogel said.

"It's the hole in the doughnut. The demand stays strong," he said. "We're very excited about this project."

James M. Mitich, vice president of operations for Lehigh Valley Restaurant Group, Allentown, also stressed the

importance of the center's location. The franchise group, which owns 16 Red Robin restaurants in Pennsylvania, searched the Reading area for about six years looking for the right spot for a Red Robin.

"I think Exeter is a great opportunity," he said. "It's a growing area even in this dismal economy."

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