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February 20, 2007

Green Oak Township

Penney to boost traffic at mall

Department store's pending opening bolsters Green Oak Village Place's retail hopes, manager says.

Candice Williams / The Detroit News

GREEN OAK TOWNSHIP -- The opening next month of the county's first J.C. Penney at Green Oak Village Place is already generating a new round of optimism for the megamall that opened last fall. The 104,000-square-foot department store will open March 4 amid expectations of an increase in shoppers at the retail lifestyle center, said Sean Valentino, manager of the \$100 million site.

J.C. Penney will be the first of two stores opening next month. Dress Barn is expected to open March 18.

"Although the economy has been a little slow in Michigan, we knew the market was going to be very strong" at Village Place, Valentino said.

He said business has been better than expected since the mall opened in October, with many tenants reporting higher sales at Village Place compared with other locations in the state.

"Sales have been very good out there. With the stores doing as well as they are with only 40 out of 70 stores open, things are only going to get better for us," Valentino said.

About 12 million visitors are expected this year to the 65-acre outdoor mall at Lee Road and U.S. 23, south of Brighton. Developers had speculated it would be a success as the county continues to be the fastest growing in the state. Since 2000, population has grown 20 percent, according to statistics from the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments.

Valentino said he expects most of the 30 remaining store sites to be occupied by the end of the summer. Portrait Innovations, Aveda Spa and Salon and Cingular Wireless are scheduled to open this spring.

J.C. Penney store manager Dave Perriard and his crew have been stocking shelves in preparation for the opening. Perriard said people have come by the store to find out when it will open.

"People are coming up every day," he said. "They see our cars in the parking lot. They're counting down the days, just like we are."

The free-standing store will offer the same merchandise as its indoor mall counterparts minus the optical and furniture departments. The Green Oak Township location will be one of two in the state to offer fragrance and cosmetics store Sephora, Perriard said.

Olga Palushaj, co-owner of Little Archie's Restaurant, said she is happy to see J.C. Penney in the mall. Employees have already stopped in to dine at the restaurant and Palushaj hopes business will increase.

"It's going to draw different people here," she said.

"It's going to be good for the whole mall."

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