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Ricardo Thomas / The Detroit News

Kendall Willits, 19, of Highland, left, and Kaitlin Warren, 18, of Milford shop for books at the Barnes & Noble at the Green Oak Village Place in Green Oak Township.

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## Mall gets a thumbs-up

Valerie Olander / The Detroit News

Green Oak Village Place has been buzzing with area shoppers excited about having so many clothing and retail options close to home.

Merchants also have been pleased with the response since stores began opening doors about a month ago.

At Ulta, a cosmetic and hair care accessory store with a full-service salon, business is better than expected, said manager Amanda Doyen of Howell. "It's going to be busy for the holidays," she said.

The \$100 million trendy mall at Lee Road and U.S. 23 is expecting another wave of shoppers when a half dozen more stores open Friday.

The ribbon cutting at 9:45 a.m. will mark the opening of Barnes & Noble, Victoria Secret, Pacific Sunwear, Kay Jewelers, Go Gear and Bath & Body Works. The first 500 shoppers will receive \$20 gift cards, said Sean Valentino, assistant retail manager for Southfield-based Redico.

"This has been awhile in the making so I think shoppers are excited," Valentino said.

About 30 national and regional marquee greet shoppers at the "lifestyle center," an open-air, walker-friendly mall. Since mid-September when nearly a dozen stores opened, including DSW Shoes, Dick's Sporting Goods and Coldwater Creek, Village Place has been buzzing.

"It's so nice to have all of these stores so close by and not have to go to Novi," said Karen Lacca of Brighton, who was shopping at

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Ricardo Thomas / The Detroit News

The Green Oak Village Place lifestyle center is designed to be a trendy open-air, walker-friendly mall. [See full image](#)

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Old Navy earlier this week.

Despite growth in Livingston County, shopping typically meant a 15-20 mile drive to Novi, Ann Arbor or Lansing, which is why Redico, along with partners Lormax Stern and Quadrants Development Inc., began building the 65-acre retail center.

The Brighton High School band will perform Friday with more entertainment throughout the weekend featuring clowns, face-painters, balloon artists, stilt-walkers, magicians, jugglers, music and games under a tent.

Phase two, under construction, will have another 120,000 square feet of retail space between Dick's Sporting Goods and mall anchor, JCPenny, which moved up its expected opening to February, Valentino said.

Tenants in phase two are not being announced since many are negotiating leases, he said. When complete, Village Place will have 70 stores and about eight restaurants.

"We've had a lot of interest here so we'll have a nice selection of stores for people," Valentino said.

Construction is moving along so well on the second phase, anchor JCPenny moved up its February 2007 opening, he said.

Panera Bread, Verizon Wireless and Fed-Ex Kinko's Office and Print Store, located south of the main entrance, will open in the spring, he said.

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