

Clearing the way

Shopping center construction begins on former hotel site

By Heather Tassmer
Special to The Mercury

EXETER — A new 500,000-square-foot shopping center is in the works on the site of the former Dutch Colony Inn.

If all goes according to plan, Exeter Commons will open in the summer of 2009 at the intersection of Business Route 422 and 47th Street.

"I'm excited about it," said Michelle Kircher, vice chairwoman of the Exeter Township Board of Supervisors. "I think it will be a big boom to business in our community that we need. I think we've been lacking new businesses and this will spur interest for more stores to move into the area."

Construction costs for Exeter Commons are planned to exceed \$100 million, according to an April press release from development partners Ironwood Property Group, Conshohocken, and The Goldenberg Group, Blue Bell.

Crews were working to demolish the former Dutch Colony Inn last week to make way for the new shopping center, which will be anchored by Target, Lowe's and Giant, according to the release. Other tenants include Circuit City, PETCO and Wachovia Bank as well as various restaurants such as Red Robin, Chik-Fil-A and Five Guys Burgers and Fries.

Glenn Marvin, principal of Metro Commercial Real Estate, said other stores and restaurants are in negotiations to become tenants and will be announced in the near future.

"Exeter Commons has become a reality largely because of the understanding and support of local, county and state officials," stated Jeremy Fogel, president of Ironwood Property Group, in a press release. "Without such significant and comprehensive support, the project could not have come to fruition."

Peter Farnum, senior partner and director of sales and leasing for the Goldenberg Group, added, "We

have put together an exciting and dynamic mix of national tenants. When complete, this center will be a first-class asset in the township, and a catalyst for additional redevelopment along Exeter's commercial corridor."

Developers expect the project to create at least 1,058 permanent jobs and produce nearly \$7 million a year in state and tax revenue, according to the release.

The Exeter Township supervisors approved night construction for the development during their April 28 meeting.

Kircher noted that the construction would only be done during evenings Monday through Friday to cut down on the amount of time to complete the center and to reduce traffic delays.

The road improvement plans related to the project are available on the Township's Web site, www.co.berks.pa.us/exeter.

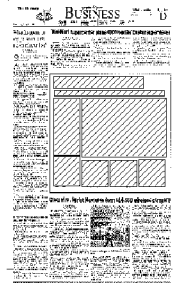




Photo by Harold Hoch

A backhoe clears debris from the partially demolished former Dutch Colony Inn in Exeter. A 500,000-square-foot shopping center, Exeter Commons, will be constructed on the site and is expected to open next spring.