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## 2 malls moving forward in Richmond

By Cassandra Kirby

Retail chains including Meijer and JCPenney will anchor an interstate shopping center in Richmond that developers hope will steal shoppers from Pavilion.

Local authorities will vote on the plan later this month along with a second development that, although smaller, includes the city's first Home Depot store that will boast more than 50 shops and restaurants.

The centers' tenants join a growing list of major retailers intent on tapping shoppers in counties surrounding Lexington. Recently, Cracker Barrel and Sam's Club expressed interest in locating stores in fast-growing Jessamine County.

Britt Goodson, a partner in Carolina Holdings, which is developing the Shops at Richmond Centre, the larger of the two Madison County developments, visited several markets around Lexington before deciding that the greatest opportunity was in Richmond. He noted that the county, which has added a population of 10,000 in the last year, is growing faster than the national average.

"It became obvious to us that Richmond had been underserved with regard to retail for quite some time," Goodson said.

And once you leave Hamburg going south, he said, there are no major regional retail offerings until you reach Knoxville.

If things go as planned, work is set to begin this summer on the Richmond Centre, with a target date of October 2008 for opening, Goodson said. The center will cover more than 800,000 square feet of retail space.

Although Richmond Centre won't be as large as the greater Hamburg area, which has more than 2 million square feet of retail space, Carolina Holdings said it will attract some of the customers who drive to Hamburg from Irvine, Berea, Mount Vernon and other communities south and east of Richmond.

The 120-acre site is directly off Interstate 75's Exit 87 and borders Barnes Mill Road on the south.

Plans for the Meijer, which will anchor the western end of the center, call for a building of roughly 207,000 square feet. Meijer also has a store at the site.

The JCPenney store, set to be about 85,000 square feet, will be near Meijer. The city already has a JCPenney in the Richmond Mall; city officials plan to close and relocate. Officials with JCPenney did not return phone calls this week.

Besides Meijer and JCPenney, the designs for Richmond Centre include two more anchor stores and a number of out-parcels for other businesses, including a screen movie theater.

A second shopping center, which will be much smaller than the Richmond Centre, is also in the works.

The 27-acre Woodlawn Crossing development at the corner of U.S. 25 (Big Hill Avenue) and the Eastern Bypass will be anchored by Home Depot.

Four other lots will be available in the development, said Mike Roberts, director of planning and zoning for the city. The city has not yet announced which businesses will anchor the lots.

At just over 100,000 square feet, Home Depot would be the largest store that Holrob Investments of Knoxville has planned for Woodlawn Crossing.

Like Richmond Centre, work will begin on Woodlawn Crossing this summer, with hopes of opening by October 2008.

The developers of both centers have been working closely with Richmond officials for about a year on the projects, Roberts said. Preliminary plans for the centers are still being developed, he said.

Planning and zoning officials and developers met last night to discuss final details on the two centers. Roberts said those involved plan to make changes to ease traffic congestion, which was the largest concern from the public, at both sites.

He expects that the final plans for both centers will be voted on at the Planning and Zoning Commission's next meeting, March 28.

"This is huge for Richmond," Roberts said. "Not only for the convenience factor in shopping, but also for the economic growth that comes along with development. Any new development, especially this scale, is not an everyday thing for a community of our size."