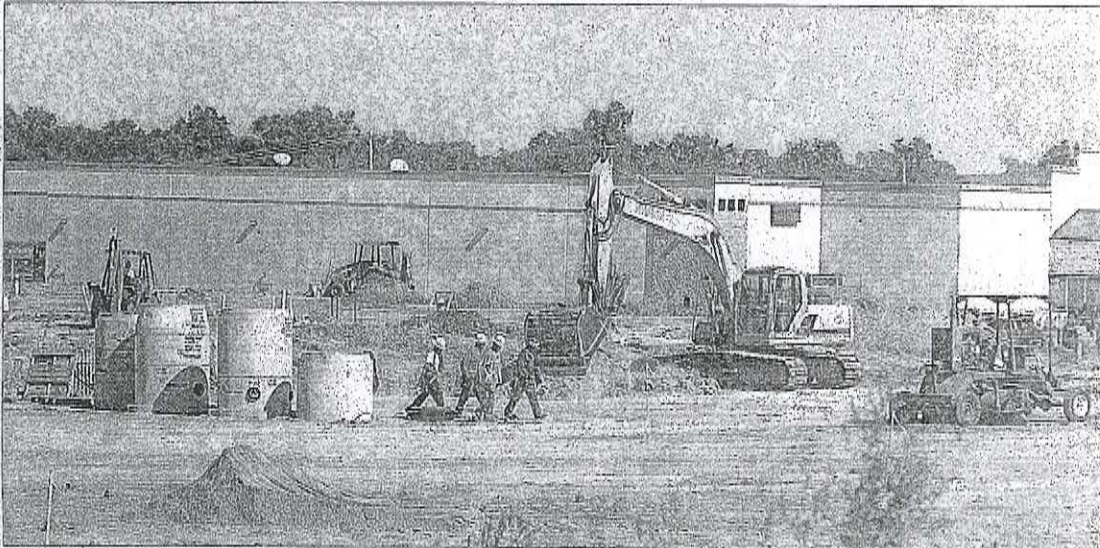


Business

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Under construction



Eagle photo/Dave McDermond

Land has been cleared west of Home Depot near University Drive in College Station for two new businesses: PetSmart and Linens 'n Things.

Home decor, pet stores coming to CS

By APRIL AVISON
Eagle Staff Writer

A home decor retail shop and a pet store offering equine products and veterinary services are under construction on University Drive in College Station, with mid-April set as the anticipated opening date.

The new businesses — PetSmart and Linens 'n Things — will continue a trend of diversity in products and services offered along one of the city's main business corridors, according to Mark Dotzour, chief economist for the Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University.

"I gave a speech to a group of business owners along University

Drive about five years ago, and back then, it looked like University was going to become the retail hub for consumers older than 22," Dotzour said. "That's what we're seeing now. I think you're seeing a maturing of the market here in College Station. You're seeing retailers who are selling products to the non-college population."

Work began earlier this month on the two new businesses, according to Dennis Carter, who is overseeing the project for Warwick Construction of Houston. His company has built several PetSmart, Linens 'n Things, Old Navy, Auto Zone and Family Dollar stores across Texas.

Dotzour said College Station resi-

dents can expect to see continued development activity on University Drive.

"Over the last 10 years or so, a second node has grown up on University on the east side of [Earl Rudder Freeway]," he said. "What you're seeing here is that any roadway that connects these major areas of activity will continue to increase in value from a real-estate perspective."

The PetSmart and Linens 'n Things planned for University Drive, west of Home Depot, will be a combined 50,000 square foot, Carter said. Shells of the buildings should be up within a few months, said Lance Simms, College Station's assistant director of plan-

COMING SOON

Work began earlier this month on a retail development that will occupy a combined 50,000 square feet west of Home Depot behind restaurant row off University Drive in College Station.

Shells of buildings that will be occupied by PetSmart and Linens 'n Things should be up within a few months, said Lance Simms, College Station's assistant director of planning and development.

Shana Costarella, a spokeswoman for Phoenix-based PetSmart, said the local store will feature a line of about 20,000 equine

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products. Veterinary services from Banfield, The Pet Hospital also will be offered, and pet training and grooming classes will be conducted at the store.

PetSmart will partner with local agencies to offer regular pet adoption events, Costarella said. About 40 full- and part-time employees will be hired, ranging from store associates to pet groomers. A grand opening event is planned for April 19.

The Linens 'n Things store will be about 28,000 square feet and will feature home textiles, housewares and accessories. Officials from the store's corporate headquarters in Clifton, N.J., could not be reached for comment.

On the other side of Home Depot, just north of the Olive Garden restaurant on Earl Rudder Freeway, dirt is being moved in anticipation of more business construction, but Simms said a rezoning application for the property is on

planned for the area, or if one will be approved to locate there.

A development permit was issued to Mitchell and Morgan Engineers and Constructors, and a rezoning application was filed by Bryan businessman Don LaMar, but College Station's Planning and Zoning Commission tabled the application earlier this month and won't hear it again until Nov. 3.

"All we know is they want to rezone it from residential to commercial," Simms said. "To date, we have not received a site plan or building plan submitted for the property."

LaMar could not be reached for comment.

The rezoning request was tabled due to concerns about a flood zone, Simms said.

"It backs up to a creek, and [commissioners] had some concerns about what the fill might do to adjacent properties with respect to flooding," he said.

If approval is recommended by the Planning and Zoning Commission, the rezoning application still is subject to approval by the City Council before construction can begin.