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Shopping center on former K-Mart property still on schedule for fall opening

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A rear view of one of the anchor tenant spaces going up in the East Bend shopping center in Rome.

Doug Walker

An unusually wet winter has not impeded progress on the R.H. Ledbetter Properties' East Bend shopping center off Turner McCall Boulevard at Hicks Drive.

Much of that success is attributed to Andy Gates, the company's vice president for construction management, and the construction company, CEO Bob Ledbetter Jr. said.

"Andy Gates and Spriggs Construction have worked extremely hard to stay on schedule," Ledbetter said. "So far we've met all of our milestone dates as far as delivery of our building pads."

The rain has caused some struggles as far as site work goes, but they're making up time when they can.

“We’re where we want to be — and we still feel like we’ll be able to get where we need to be when October comes around,” he said.

The developers have had a goal since they first pitched the project to city leaders: turn the property over to tenants around the first of October so they could take advantage of the 2020 Christmas shopping season. That still looks viable, Ledbetter said.

The impact of the COVID-19 health emergency is an unknown factor at this time.

“Because of the virus delay I believe there may be some tenants that won’t be ready to open by Oct. 1, but there probably will be some ready to open,” Ledbetter said.

“Obviously all of that is subject to change, depending on where things are in the near future. We’re in it just like everybody else and trying to do our part to be careful and be a team player.”

At this point approximately 90% of the buildings planned for the shopping center have been leased.

“The last I heard, we probably have somewhere under 10,000 square feet remaining,” Ledbetter said. “It could be closer to 7,000. We’re making good strides.”

The East Bend development sits on a tract of just under 20 acres. It was home to the old East Rome High School close to 30 years ago and, more recently, a Kmart superstore.

The complex is expected to include approximately 110,000 square feet of retail space and the anchor tenant will be a Kohl’s department store.

Discount Tire and Five Below also are confirmed tenants along with several restaurants — McAlister’s Deli, Panda Express, Texas Roadhouse, Fazoli’s and Chipotle.

Ledbetter Properties received Tax Allocation District financial assistance for the project, a tax rebate of \$1.96 million over 15 years. Overall, the new shopping center is expected to generate close to 400 jobs and result in an influx of between \$800,000 and \$1 million a year in sales tax revenue.

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