

## Victorville retail plows ahead

BROOKE EDWARDS STAFF WRITER  
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VICTORVILLE — Despite the lagging economy, several major retail projects in Victorville continue to move forward — though some at a slower pace.

“Many of the national big box stores are reevaluating their ground-breaking dates,” said Joseph Brady, High Desert director of the commercial real estate group Colliers International Bradco.

Brady said he doesn’t expect companies such as Lowes and Wal-Mart to pull out of local projects. But he said those who have signed deals are likely keeping close tabs on the market, just as potential homebuyers are, and may delay their plans.

Site work is underway for the planned Victorville Marketplace on Highway 395 and Mojave Drive, to be anchored by Lowes’ Home Improvement. Though the project has slowed down a bit, both the developer and tenants remain committed to the project.

“Lowes is absolutely committed to building a store on that site,” said Maureen Rich, spokesperson for Lowes’ corporate offices.

Rich said that Lowes is currently working on wrapping up permitting through the city, while the developer continues to work on site development.

City spokesperson Yvonne Hester said plans for the project were returned to the developer in February for corrections and they have not yet been returned to the city.

Jim Roachelle, vice president of the site’s developer ReLo Development, said they hope to have all permits in place within the next 30 days and site work completed by the end of this year. He said Lowes is slated to start building in January, with a projected opening of Oct. 3, 2009. Other stores in the complex — which will include CVS Pharmacy, Sonic Burger and Dollar Tree, among others — will follow soon after that.

The economy has not slowed the development of three Wal-Mart Supercenters planned for Victorville according to Stanley Rothbart, president of Los Angeles-based Rothbart Development Corp., which has helped build several Wal-Mart stores.

“We remain bullish on Victorville,” Rothbart said.

The Supercenter in the Dunia Plaza shopping center on Bear Valley Road, just south of the mall, is scheduled to come before the Planning Commission on June 11. Barring any appeals

the Supercenter, which is combined with a Sam's Club, could be open as early as next summer according to Wal-Mart spokesman John Mendez.

The other two Wal-Mart Supercenters planned for Victorville are currently on hold, city officials said, though significant progress has been made in the planning stages for the store near the corner of Palmdale Road and Highway 395. The city expects to have the results from the site's environmental review soon.

Rothbart said the site is slated for hearings during the third or fourth quarter of this year and he expects construction to begin in the first quarter of 2009.

The city said it had no further information on the third Supercenter, which would be on Tamarisk Road near Spring Valley Lake, beyond that it is in environmental reviews. Rothbart said they are hoping for approvals in 2009, to start construction toward the end of next year.

Construction is wrapping up on the Sportsman's Warehouse in the old Costco building, on Valley Center Drive. The outdoor-enthusiast's store is slated for a soft opening on June 19, with a grand opening celebration planned for June 21.

Opening day will include drawings, contests, samples and demonstrations from the store's many vendors.

"The Dutch Oven Society will be giving out samples and doing demonstrations on how to cook with a Dutch oven," said the store's manager, Doug Patch. "People will be learning how to shoot bows in our archery range. Kids can try casting fishing poles... The list goes on and on."

Patch said the store has already put 85 local people to work.

**Brooke Edwards may be reached at 955-5358 or at [bedwards@vvdailynews.com](mailto:bedwards@vvdailynews.com).**