

Macomb Mall capital investment gains final approval from state

By Maryanne MacLeod, The Macomb Daily

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The city of Roseville got a little bit closer to its dream of a newly vibrant Macomb Mall with final approval, June 24, of an \$8.4 million capital investment opportunity through the state of Michigan.

The project was approved by the Michigan Strategic Fund, located within the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, triggering a local and school tax capture of about \$1.6 million.

In addition to demolition of the former Crowley's Department Store, the money will be applied to site improvement and redevelopment, including the installation of a brand new anchor store, Dick's Sporting Goods, projected for completion Oct. 1.

Once completed, the project is expected to create 295 permanent, full-time equivalent jobs at the 50-year old mall, developed in 1964 by the Schostak Corp. as one of the area's first enclosed shopping centers.

"The Macomb Mall project is a win-win for the city of Roseville and Macomb County," said Roseville Mayor John Chirkun.

"It is an example of a great collaboration of the state, Macomb County and the city of Roseville to help make this important project a reality. Not only will it create jobs here in Roseville but will also help stabilize the tax base for the community and provide several new quality retail establishments to shop at."

State Rep. Harold L. Haugh (D-Roseville) said the project would provide a major spark to the local and regional economy.

"These are jobs for the residents of Roseville and Macomb County with the dollars being spent in the community at local businesses," Haugh said. "I am excited and confident that this project will help anchor the revitalization of the Macomb Mall and Roseville."

The Macomb Mall is currently home to 85 specialty stores and several national anchors including Sears, Kohl's, Old Navy and Babies "R" Us.

Jason Horton, a principal at Lormax Stern Development, the West Bloomfield-based firm that purchased the center this past spring previously told The Macomb Daily that his team was ready to inject new life and energy into the facility, which they described as "old and tired-looking."

Here are some of the highlights of their renovation plans:

- The unsightly truck court between the former National Coney Island and Sears will be replaced by a 12,000-square-foot enclosure for a new tenant
- Rehabilitation of all common areas and four major entryways
- The mall has also acquired the vacant Longhorn Steakhouse along Gratiot, which will be torn down and replaced by a multi-tenant building.
- An interior spruce up with the addition of new ceilings, lights, flooring and restrooms; along with new parking lots, including surfacing, lighting, islands and pedestrian walkways.
- A new theater will be a part of the revised complex.

Karl Zarbo, director of operations, also told The Macomb Daily in a previous interview that renovations will be completed in phases, with all the work scheduled to be completed in 2015.

The plan calls for using a brownfield redevelopment plan to help reimburse the company for \$2.47 million for asbestos removal and plan preparation, according to Michael Connors, Roseville's community development administrator. Brownfield financing plans capture the increase in local and school property taxes from redeveloped properties to pay for improvements.

Don Morandi, deputy director of Macomb County's Department of Planning & Economic Development, said the brownfield approach is ideal for the project.

"It's an anti-urban sprawl tool," he said. "This company could have decided to go out to a greenspace area in the north end of the county, but instead they are redeveloping an older urban site. We feel this project has tremendous potential and we couldn't be any happier."

Sears, Crowley's and Kresge were among the mall's first tenants. New retailers arrived during expansion and renovations in 1985 and 1999 before the mall was sold to Thor Equities in 2004. Thor's financial difficulties threatened the mall's future before Cushman and Wakefield acquired the facility in 2011. Lormax Stern acquired it in early 2013.

The name of the mall—and its signature sign located out front at the corner of Masonic and Gratiot, and owned by Sears, will remain.

"It's an iconic name," Horton said. "We don't want to be like DTE Energy Music Theatre that everyone still calls Pine Knob. This property will always be known as Macomb Mall."

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