

MID-IOWA NEWS

11/04/2008

Local business: Plans proceed for 'Streets of North Grand' renovation

By Bob Zientara , Staff Writer

When flames consumed the old Okoboji Grill near North Grand Mall last month, it marked an important step in a process that will eventually bring a whole new look to the 38-year-old retail shopping facility.

The planned burn by the Ames Fire Department removed the restaurant building from a site, which by fall of 2009, will be occupied by a new Walgreens Pharmacy.

GK Development, of Barrington, Ill., which owns the mall, also plans to:

- * Expand the mall itself by 150,000 square feet.
- * Convert the structure to a "lifestyle center," where stores face outward instead of into the enclosed portion of the building.
- * Make over the enclosed part of the building.
- * Re-align the parking lot, a project separate from the mall conversion process.

Walgreens plans move forward

According to Tiffani Bruce, of corporate public relations office at Walgreens, the new building will increase the store size from 12,408 square feet (which it now occupies in the mall proper) to 14,820 in a free-standing building.

"That's the standard footprint size for our stores," Bruce said.

Marianne Fasano, spokesperson for GK Development, said Walgreens will be just under 24 percent bigger in its new building than it is now.

Walgreens' Manager Philip Berg said the store now employs 12 full-time and eight part-time workers. He said with the addition of a new drive-through pharmacy area, there may be some additional hiring when the store opens.

Lifestyle design takes shape



Image courtesy of GK Development, Barrington, Ill.

An artist's rendering of the new Walgreens store at North Grand Mall shows how the building will be positioned in relation to the main building. The drawing also shows the exterior renovations that will convert the main building into a "lifestyle center" architectural design.

An artist's rendering of the Walgreens shows the store against a backdrop of a remodeled mall, part of a process that Fasano said will convert the building to "an open-air lifestyle (center), the Streets of North Grand."

When complete, the process will add 150,000 square feet of space to the 340,000-square-foot regional mall, including merchants that currently don't have a presence in Ames, she added.

"The existing, enclosed portion of the mall will undergo an extensive makeover that will give the shopping center a completely new look," Fasano said.

Younkers co-anchors center

A major member of the tenant group at North Grand Mall is the Younkers department store, which co-anchors the mall along with JC Penney Co., Inc.

Managed by Scott Gire, the Younkers store includes a beauty salon, cosmetics and fragrances, men's women's and children's apparel, accessories, jewelry and shoes, among others.

Younkers reportedly has renewed its lease at North Grand Mall, although Fasano said GK Development could not comment on specifics.

"Younkers has been a valued tenant at the mall since the store opened in 1971," she said.

Parking plans

The mall recently finished a re-platting process with the city of Ames, including arrangements for the mall parking lot.

Fasano said the parking issue "is not part of the renovation of the mall or the new Streets of North Grand," but said the re-platting "redistributed the number of parking spaces on each tax parcel" connected with the property.

"The overall number of parking (stalls) at the mall is 2,200, which far exceeds city requirements," she said.

Bob Zientara can be reached at (515) 663-6961 or rzientara@amestrib.com.

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