



Major retailers pause developments in The Domain

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By Joseph M. de Leon Wednesday, 24 November 2010

Select projects move forward even through weak economy

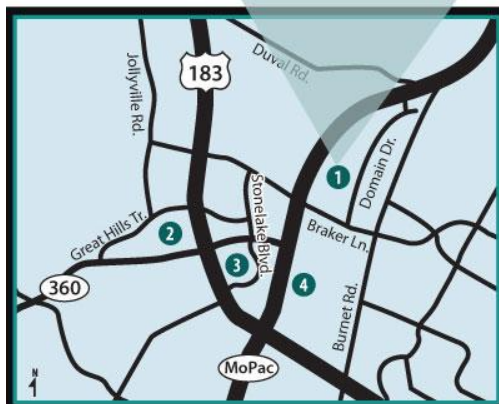
NORTHWEST AUSTIN — For years, the buzz surrounding retail developments in Northwest Austin held that national upscale retailers Saks Fifth Avenue and Nordstrom would move into The Domain. While these projects are on hold, other Domain projects, including Whole Foods Market, a 9-acre park, a Fiat dealership and many smaller retailers, continue to progress despite difficult market conditions.



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Chad Marsh, managing principal for Endeavor Real Estate Group, said Nordstrom and Saks Fifth Avenue representatives had agreed in 2006 to open stores at The Domain under Endeavor management. When the economy dipped, all parties jointly decided to put the agreement on hold pending a stronger marketplace.

“I don’t see that developing in the foreseeable future—we’ve pressed the pause button on that but have not pressed play again yet,” Marsh said. “We stay in touch with them and hope to eventually bring them to The Domain, but at this time, there are no concrete plans.”



The uncertain economy also delayed plans for Whole Foods Market to move from its current location in the Gateway Center to The Domain, Marsh said. A smaller version of the Austin-

based upscale market is being planned, but he said the store will not be ready for shoppers for at least three more years.

Whole Foods representatives announced plans earlier this year for three new Austin stores: at Hill Country Galleria, The Shops at Arbor Trails and its move into The Domain.

Plans originally called for a more than 100,000-square-foot space for Whole Foods at The Domain and a 250,000-square-foot, 10-story office building above the store, but the sour economy put an end to the office project, Marsh said.

Whole Foods plans to move into a 55,000-square-foot space at The Domain. Design and permitting work is under way to prepare for construction, which is planned to start in the fourth quarter of 2011, for a projected opening date in spring 2013. The building will include an approximately 115-car parking area underneath the market.

The project will take about 20 months to build with about eight months of that time devoted to meeting Whole Foods' strict building specifications.

"Each Whole Foods store is unique, as opposed to a Walmart that just stamps them out," Marsh said. "This will be a uniquely crafted and complicated project, but it will be a very nice space when it's all said and done."

Residences, park in development

Endeavor plans to open a 9-acre park at the same time it opens its first multifamily development at The Domain.

Marsh said the 300-unit project is in the conceptual phase and plans call for ground to break before the end of 2011, but no completion date has been set.

Marsh expects to complete a roughly mile-long hike-and-bike trail before spring 2013 that will allow pedestrians and cyclists a more leisurely pace than is available on surrounding public roads.

Plans call for arrows and shared bike lanes to be painted on The Domain's largest collector street, Alterra Parkway, which is partially completed and scheduled to open with the completion of the Whole Foods Market construction.

Dealership to open

Nyle Maxwell Family of Dealerships was awarded rights Oct. 21 to become among the first new U.S. Fiat dealers. The former Round Rock mayor and owner of the auto group said the recent economic slowdown presents an opportunity to expand, hire and take chances.

The 6,000-square-foot showroom is planned to open in February 2011 and is expected to employ about 25 workers. Maxwell hopes to earn an Alfa Romero franchise in 2012.

"I think it's a good bet that Fiat is going to do well here in Central Texas and the Austin market," Maxwell said. "Nationwide, we may be coming out of a recession, and certainly some local families have felt the tight economy, but in general, Central Texas hasn't felt the pain of the recession like the rest of the country."

For the first two years, the dealership will offer a single model, the Fiat 500, but it will be available in 14 colors and will include dozens of options, Maxwell said.

“The Domain gives us the right advantages for demographics, visibility and a wonderful centralized location,” Maxwell said. “It’s really an exciting time for us to be able to offer this state-of-the-art, very fashionable lifestyle automobile in Austin.”

Northwest Austin’s most prominent shopping centers

Endeavor and Simon Property Group staffs continue recruiting new stores and assessing the best options for tenants to improve the shopping experience at The Domain and Simon’s Arboretum at Great Hills, Gateway Shopping Center and the Shops at Arbor Walk properties.

Nearly 20 new stores have opened this year in the area’s four most prominent shopping destinations, and several major developments are planned at The Domain, including a 9-acre park and a Fiat dealership.

1. The Domain

The mixed-use development built on 304 acres of former IBM property is located at 11410 Century Oaks Terrace.

Latest openings:

Silver Dagger
Papaya
The Corner Market
MetroDog

Future projects:

Fiat dealership (February 2011)
Whole Foods Market (spring 2013)
Park and trails (spring 2013)

2. Arboretum at Great Hills

The mall that opened in 1985 offers traditional retail, classic apparel, home furnishings and several dining options.

Latest openings:

Connections Dating
Knotting Hill Photography
Ray’s Watch and Jewelry Repair

Future projects:

Two unnamed restaurants expected to move into the former T.G.I. Friday’s and former Serrano’s spaces sometime in 2011.

3. Gateway Center

With anchor stores that include Whole Foods Market, REI and Old Navy, Gateway is made up of national and niche local retailers.

Latest openings:

TD Ameritrade
Texas Running Company
Gateway Nails & Spa
Urban Mattress

Future projects:

No other future plans have been announced

4. The Shops at Arbor Walk

Located at 10515 N. MoPac, the center opened in 2006 and offers guests national big-box retailers The Home Depot and Marshalls.

Latest openings:

Aspire Salon and Spa

Plato's Closet

Vitamin Cottage Natural Grocer

Sam Moon Trading Co.

Future projects:

Two remaining pad sites have been leased, and plans call for the construction to start in 2011.

Two restaurants are expected to open in 2011, but Simon representatives declined to provide names.

One service retailer is expected to move in sometime in 2011.

Courtesy of JB Goodwin