

Promenade rising in Casa Grande hopes to lure shoppers from area

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A shopping center in Casa Grande plans to open by fall with developers hoping to draw shoppers not only from Pinal County, but from travelers heading along Interstate 10 from the East Valley, Tucson and Mexico.

The Promenade at Casa Grande, a regional outdoor shopping center, has named the first tenants scheduled to open at the 1-million-square-foot retail project.

They include Best Buy, JC Penney, Kohl's, Staples, Target, and Harkins Theatres, which plans to open a 14-screen multiplex, said retail developers of the center, which include Phoenix-based WDP Partners, The Pederson Group and Westcor.

The project, which broke ground in 2006, will open phases one and two by this fall. A third phase is projected to open by spring 2008.

The Promenade sits on 130

acres on the northeast corner of Interstate 10 and Florence Boulevard in Casa Grande.

It's being built as a "regional lifestyle center," which blends shops, restaurants and entertainment venues with designs meant to resemble downtown streetscapes or villages with walkways and open-air plazas.

The Promenade also will feature an interactive "town center," designed to promote a sense of community, said Todd Chester, principal of WDP Partners.

Though a few grocery stores and other retailers have opened recently, the Promenade is considered the first major retail project to operate in Casa Grande, a growing city with about 34,000 residents.

Project developers say the center will draw shoppers from western and central Pinal County including Coolidge, Florence, Eloy, Arizona City and Sacaton.

Those towns are part of an area expected to exceed a

half-million residents by 2016, Westcor estimates.

"We're going to bring the type of retail here that residents want," Chester said. "People in Pinal County don't have to shop outside of their community anymore. They won't have to drive to Phoenix or Tucson."

Though more than 200,000 residents in greater Pinal County now shop in Casa Grande, most people tend to drive to the Valley for stores not found in the area.

"We've always suffered from a retail bleed-off," said Casa Grande Mayor Charles T. Walton Sr.

"Anyone in business will tell you they lose sales to the Valley. It's been happening since the day we were born," he said.

The city estimates that the Promenade will bring \$4 million annually in local city sales tax, a 35 percent increase in the city's tax base, said Larry Rains, finance director for the Casa Grande.

