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Buford Village prepares for April opening

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Staff Photos: Jason Braverman Robert Lusk, of STH Electrical Contractors, works on the installation of a light on Wednesday at Buford Village, the first mixed-use project developed in the area at U.S. Highway 23 and Hamilton Mill Road.



The finishing touches are being made to the center, which is scheduled to open in April and will include offices, residences, shops and restaurants.

The intersection's transformation began in 2005 when Buford constructed a new City Hall building and moved from the 66-year-old former post office downtown.

"We tried to keep it downtown, but there just wasn't the land," Beard said.

Plenty of raw pastureland was available at the intersection of U.S. 23 and Hamilton Mill Road and city officials targeted the area for new development.

"We envisioned the intersection as being a new activity center to expand Main Street and provide economic activity," said City Manager Bryan Kerlin.

BUFORD - In 2004, Buford's City Commissioners launched a master plan that will guide the town's development for decades. Buford's planners envisioned a pedestrian/bicycle-friendly town where home, work, entertainment and recreation would be connected by sidewalks to residents' homes.

That vision is taking shape across from City Hall.

Buford Village, the first mixed-use project developed under those guidelines, recently announced five anchor tenants for its 10-acre project at the intersection of U.S. Highway 23 and Hamilton Mill Road.

Buford Village stands on the former Bona Allen livestock farm, said Phillip Beard, city commission chairman.

When Buford Village opens in April, residents can stroll to three restaurants, a wine shop and a hair salon. The project is being developed by Atlanta-based Brand Properties.

Bela Vita will feature Italian dining. It's the creation of Laurie Attaway, owner of Aqua Terra, 37 Main and Third Coast Grille, all in Buford.

"It's the biggest thing that's happened in Buford and we want to be part of that," Attaway said. "It will be high-end Italian food, and Brand is a good group of people to work with."

The Flying Biscuit Cafe will offer breakfast, plus lunch, dinner and desserts.

Three Dollar Cafe will celebrate its 25th anniversary with the opening of its newest restaurant in Buford Village.

Bin 33 will stock affordable, quality wines while Seven & Co., a member of the Aveda company, will bring another full-service hair salon to Buford.

Buford Village's historical Southern-style architecture is in keeping with the architectural and landscape regulations governed by the master plan that blend the old and new Buford. Plans show 55,000 square feet of retail space, 30,000 square feet of office space and 23 townhomes. One outparcel holds the newest branch of the Brand Banking Company.

"This is our first endeavor into the mixed-use plan," Beard said. "The ARC advocates it. The federal government wants people out of automobiles. Atlanta's had a clean air problem for two decades. The livable center is one of many solutions to get people where they can work, recreate, sleep, shop, and they don't have to get in the car every time they want a Coca-Cola and drive 15 minutes."

The Tenants

Bela Vita - Italian dining

Flying Biscuit Cafe

Three Dollar Cafe

Bin 33 - Wine store

Seven & Co. - Hair salon

Since development began in September 2006, Buford has granted special-use permits for two larger projects, one on Ga. Highway 20 and another on South Lee Street, Kerlin said.

"Both have residential components, office space and retail. One has retirement living," Kerlin said.

Beard expects to develop a park in the area.

"This is a seed that is the start of bigger things," Beard said.

Mike Stamey, however, is not enchanted with Buford Village rising near his home.

"I don't care for it and I don't like it," Stamey said. "Big fat cats and that's who it's for."

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