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Eight restaurants to open in Kent

Developers plan to break ground soon on downtown revitalization project

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KENT: Eight new restaurants have signed on to be part of the city's \$80 million Downtown Kent Revitalization Project, and leases signed by two corporate tenants are giving developers the commitment they need to finally break ground in the next few weeks.

Fairmount Properties has an L-shaped three-story complex planned for Water and Erie streets.

The two upper floors will be occupied by Davey Tree Expert Co. and AMETEK, who signed 15-year leases on Friday.

"The signing of these two leases should set in motion securing construction financing, completion of construction drawings and the issuance of bids for construction companies to build the project," City Manager Dave Ruller noted in his online blog.

Davey and AMETEK are currently located elsewhere in Kent, but moving employees to the city center will help support new stores and restaurants that are opening as part of the city center's renaissance, city officials said.

The city also announced who will occupy the first-floor retail section of the buildings. They include the following restaurants: Aladdin's Eatery, Bricco, Dave's Cosmic Subs, Einstein Bros. Bagels, Panini's Bar and Grill, Asian Chao, Nature's Table and Rockin' Taco.

Other tenants will include Dino Palmieri Salon and Spa, Shop 42 (a clothing boutique) and the Market Path (home decor).

Economic Development Director Dan Smith said there should be no problem keeping the new restaurants filled.

In addition to the 120 Davey and AMETEK workers, Kent State University plans to build a hotel and conference center on the same block. KSU's 25,000 students and 3,500 employees would be connected to downtown with a scenic esplanade in a couple of years.

And that doesn't include the visitors that downtown Kent could lure after completing a long-awaited face-lift.

"We really do think Kent is going to be a destination spot. It's going to be a lifestyle center," Smith said.

In other related downtown news:

- Davey Tree is keeping its headquarters on North Mantua Street and will move only some employees downtown, but AMETEK is moving all 80 of its employees downtown, vacating its Lake Street facility.

The City Council tonight is expected to approve a plan to buy AMETEK's 15-acre property on Lake for \$106,000, a fraction of its estimated \$2 million value, Smith said.

The proposal calls for the city to deal with cleaning up any contaminants on the site, which has been used for manufacturing for nearly a century.

Smith said the property would go into the city's "usable industrial bank" for attracting new investment to the city.

- Construction is under way for the second phase of Acorn Alley, a collection of shops off Main Street.

The first phase was completed in 2009 and features nearly a dozen retail spaces.

The second phase, being built by private developer Ron Burbick, could be finished and welcoming new tenants by August.

- The city's Planning Commission Tuesday night reviewed plans for Kent State University's proposed hotel and conference center.

The complex would be built by the Pizzuti Companies at Haymaker Parkway and Erie and South Depeyster streets.

The facility will have about 100 guest rooms on three floors above the main floor and conference center.

- Earlier this month, the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority broke ground on its \$26 million Kent Central Gateway Multi-Modal Transit Center downtown.

When it opens in 2012, the facility — supported by a \$20 million federal grant — will feature 10 bus bays, 350 parking spaces, bicycle lockers and racks, and 18,000 square feet of potential retail, restaurant and office space.

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