

New tenants lined up for Markets at Town Center

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The Markets at Town Center, where several new stores will soon open, has become the younger sibling to the adjacent St. Johns Town Center.

Officials with both shopping centers acknowledge that customers pretty much view it as one shopping area, with most people assuming stores like Best Buy and Toys R Us are part of the St. Johns complex.

But those stores, along with Golf Galaxy, Chipotle Mexican Grill and Mattress Giant, make up the first stores in the Markets at Town Center, taking up about 125,000 square feet.

“It’s partly because the architecture of the two are similar,” said Scott Higley, spokesman for Ben Carter properties, which is operating as a consultant on construction and leasing for the Markets at Town Center owners, Pinehill Markets. “We realize that a lot of people don’t realize that we’re different from St. Johns Town Center, but we’re fine with that because we think St. Johns is a wonderful shopping center.”

The Markets is located west of the St. Johns Town Center on the other side of Big Island Drive.

Ben Carter Properties is also joint venture partners with Simon Property Group at St. Johns Town Center. Simon Property Group manages St. Johns, and has no ownership stake in the Markets at Town Center.

In the spring of 2009, the Markets at Town Center will expand with construction finished on several new buildings. The first new stores will be ready to open in March, Higley said.

Stores expected to come into the complex include Destination Maternity, West Marine and Ulta Cosmetics. Lesser known stores coming in include Bento Cafe, a Japanese restaurant, and Mochii, a rice based yogurt store.

West Marine and Destination Maternity will open in March, Ulta and Mochii will open in May, and Bento Cafe will open in July.

The new stores will take up about 50,000 square feet. About 70,000 more square feet of space will be available by the end of 2009, and has not yet been leased.

They are optimistic that all of the available space will be leased by the end of 2009, Higley said.

“It’s no secret that these have been challenging times,” Higley said, referring to the recession while talking about the units that are still available. “But we’ve had a lot of consumer interest and we’re optimistic that all the space will be filled.”

Tina Musico, spokeswoman for the St. Johns Town Center, said the Markets at Town Center has been beneficial to St. Johns Town Center.

The two complement each other, with many customers going from one to the other while shopping, Musico said.

“The two are complementary more than they are competitive,” she said.