

Tim Landis: UIS campus town idea grows again

By

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When a University of Illinois at Springfield master plan goes to the board of trustees in November, it will include a proposal for commercial development on 80 acres at the west edge of campus.

Otherwise known as "**CAMPUS TOWN.**"

The idea of a shopping, dining and recreation district within walking distance of the Springfield campus has been around for decades, going back to the old Sangamon State University. It was six years ago this month, in fact, when supporters of a similar idea were disappointed by zero response to a call for proposals from local developers.

Now, UIS Chancellor Richard Ringeisen says a series of factors — more than 1,000 students living on campus, a work force of 700 to 800 and commercial development, including a Wal-Mart supercenter, spreading south — could make the time right.

"When I dream a little bit about what I'd like to see, I think in terms of a bank, maybe a pharmacy, a coffee shop, the kind of things students can walk to easily and enjoy, maybe a cafe and an ice cream store," Ringeisen said.

"Right now, we're reaching a confluence of things that makes this look not only possible, but probable," he added.

The university master plan, required by the U of I board of trustees, was last revised in 2000.

The newly opened Wal-Mart supercenter just two miles north of campus is expected to attract a variety of retail and commercial development in the next few years.

An 11th Street extension that would open a new road from Stevenson Drive to UIS also is within 1,000 feet of completion, though the city continues to negotiate for right of way to finish the road.

"We've all dreamed about that forever, but that might actually occur within a short while," said Ringeisen, who pointed out the campus already has an entrance from the south end of 11th Street.

When a request for proposals went out in 2002, word came back from developers that there weren't enough "rooftops" in surrounding neighborhoods or students living on campus. Total fall enrollment is expected to be near 5,000 when final figures come out.

A number of residential subdivisions also have developed since 2002, or as Ringeisen described it, "there's just a lot more here."

There have been informal discussions with the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission on the possibility of commercial, or even residential development, on undeveloped university land.

One of the other ideas that will go into the master plan is for an "active senior-living" development, including condominiums on the north or northeast side of the campus. Ringeisen said the developments have proved popular at other universities.

There also have been some preliminary discussions with developers on the 80-acre tract, though Ringeisen said the board of trustees must approve the master plan before specific projects could begin.

"I might be a little optimistic, but I wouldn't be surprised if something happens in the next year," he said.

Gyrations in world crude oil markets had nothing on **SPRINGFIELD GASOLINE PRICES** this past week. Some stations raised prices 20 to 30 cents per gallon just before noon Thursday, to \$3.90 per gallon.

By Friday morning, most were back to \$3.79. A couple were back below \$3.70.

Most of the work is complete, but **M.J. KELLNER CO.**

of Springfield plans to formally cut the ribbon Sept. 21 on a \$9.3 million distribution center and warehouse on Interstate 72 at the west edge of the city.

The company broke ground last fall for the new facility, which will combine operations now in two separate buildings on the south side of Springfield.

The family owned food-service company has been in business nearly 90 years and has a local work force of 80.

M.J. Kellner distributes food products primarily within a 100-mile radius of Springfield.

Two local developers, Dave Ridenour and Roger Schmitz, have opened the **RIPPON-KINSELLA HOME** bed-and-breakfast at 1317 N. Third St. According to a history of the home, Springfield industrialist John Rippon constructed the Italianate-style mansion in 1871. Richard "Dick" Kinsella, who was prominent in local business, sports and politics, purchased the home in 1899 and remodeled it in 1905.

In addition to a bed-and-breakfast, the home is available for weddings, receptions and small parties. The phone number is 241-3367 and the Web site is www.ripponkinsella.com.

The construction race between **WALGREEN** and **CVS**

continues in Springfield. The city's newest Walgreens is open at 2500 Koke Mill Road. CVS, meanwhile, has demolished the former Hardee's restaurant at Sixth Street and South Grand Avenue for construction of a pharmacy and convenience store expected to open in the spring of 2009.

The dirt work in the Prairie Crossing development at Veterans Parkway and Interstate 72 is for **GANDER MOUNTAIN**. The sporting-goods chain also plans to open in the spring of 2009.

The **SERENDIPITY**

gift shop closeout is all but complete. Owner Justin Kane announced last month the business is closing after 10 years in downtown Springfield, including six at the current location, 221 S. Sixth St.

Kane — and his gift shop business — are relocating to Chicago, a move he called a "personal decision."

SONAL'S BEAUTY, which specializes in "threading," has opened on the upper-level Sears wing of White Oaks Mall. Mall representatives said the practice of using cotton thread to shape eyebrows and other facial hair is common to India and the Middle East, but only recently has begun to gain popularity in the Midwest.

Mall hours are from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday.

Must be an election year when there's a place-the-blame debate on the rising cost of food. **FOODPRICETRUTH.ORG**, an ethanol-support organization that has accused major food companies of running a smear campaign against the corn-based fuel, fired off a Labor Day press release accusing companies such as Kraft, Kellogg and General Mills of raising costs way beyond the actual cost of raw products.

"Labor Day cookouts are costing Americans an arm and a leg this year," said the release. On that much, consumers probably can agree.

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