

UIS Campus Town

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SPRINGFIELD - The University of Illinois at Springfield has big plans to grow and bring in new business.

The board of trustees gave the campus the final approval yesterday afternoon.

For two years UIS Chancellor Richard Ringeisen has been pushing expansion. Now the university has given the ok to turn these cornfields into a bustling campus town.

"We'll be looking to partner with developers and maybe put a little grocery or pharmacy or a coffee shop things we all like to have near campus," said Ringeisen.

UIS owns more than 700 acres of land, but only about 250 is being used right now. The university knows it will be hard to find investors with the tough economy. Leaders have had interest in the past, but businesses pulled out because students were not on campus.

"There's not a whole lot to do. You have to get creative sometimes," said UIS student Chris Rajcic.

Now thanks to two new resident halls about a-thousand students like Rajcic live on campus and an additional 2,000 commute.

"I think the closest restaurants are on Toronto Road and if you don't have a vehicle it's kind of hard to get to," said student Kelsey Wernsing.

With no developers lined up and only a master plan the university knows it'll have to be patient. "Optimistically hopefully we'll have something happen in a year," said Ringeisen.

The campus also plans to add a new baseball field, public safety building and daycare as part of the master plan.