


## Department store anchors are sought for Norman retail district

Developers of the University North Park Addition in Norman said they are actively seeking major department stores to anchor a village town center planned for the retail district.

BY JANE GLENN CANNON [jcannon@opubco.com](mailto:jcannon@opubco.com)  4  
Published: October 20, 2011

**NORMAN** — Developers of the University North Park Addition said they are actively seeking major department stores to anchor a village town center planned for the northside retail district.

The village town center would be on the east side of 24th Avenue NW, north of Robinson Street and across from the proposed Legacy Park.

The village town center needs one to three department stores to support high-end retail shops that would then be built around them, said Bob Stearns, with Sooner Investments.

The concept for the high-end retail area is to build one-story buildings with “a two-story feel” to them and to position them in a row to create the atmosphere of a village, architect Frank A. Goppold said.

The town village concept for shopping centers has proved successful in other areas of the country, Goppold said.

Goppold and Stearns talked about plans for the continued development of the University North Park Addition on Tuesday at a city council study session.

Several things have to happen before the village center can get started, Stearns said.

The center needs to attract a quality grocery store and some hotels that are smaller than Embassy Suites, he said.

“But the reality is, it's all about the anchors. We have to land them first. It's all about landing one or two or three department store anchors,” Stearns said.

So far, it hasn't happened, but big chain stores continue to look “with interest” at the developing retail district, he said.

The west side of 24th Avenue NW continues to be the “convenience center” of the

development, designed to provide support services and shops such as Target, Academy Sports and Kohl's, which generate traffic and a revenue stream that eventually will attract the high-end retailers needed for the village town center, he said.

City council members expressed concern that the retail district, which is a tax-increment financing district, is not developing as originally envisioned.

Stearns said the square footage of the high-end district has been reduced somewhat, and plans for a theater have been dropped.

“But I think we remain true to the original vision,” he said.

The village town center will feature a main thoroughfare with a 25- to 40-foot median, planted with a double row of trees. The median will have parklike areas, so shoppers can take a break or let children play or rest.

The village town center will be directly across 24th Avenue NW from Legacy Park, which will feature a lake, an amphitheater, parkland and a cluster of cafes and restaurants.

Councilwoman Carol Dillingham said she believes the park should be built sooner rather than later “to attract the kind of retail development we want.”

Stearns agreed that the park would be an asset that would entice retailers to locate in Norman, but no financing agreement for the park has been reached.



**Show / Hide Comments**

Ads by Yahoo!

**Upscale Corporate Travel**  
Luxury Hotels, Dining, Events, More  
VisitOKC.com

**APEX M&A Business Brokers**  
Oklahoma Business Brokers Buy or Sell a  
Business through APEX M&A  
www.apexma.com