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## 7 new stores

Shopping center commits to Conover

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Aan Rogers | Hickory Daily Record

Conover Mayor Bruce Eckard (left) greets developer John Shell at the future site of the Shoppes at Conover shopping center near Wal-Mart on N.C. 16. Cornelius-based Centurion Partners has already begun grading for the new 10,000-square-foot retail space.

By **John Dayberry** | Hickory Daily Record  
 Published: April 14, 2009

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**CONOVER** - It was just a ground breaking for a small shopping center, but a Monday morning ceremony had participants talking about faith, hope and the return of prosperity.

"To have any kind of ground breaking right now is good news," said Danny Hearn, president of the Catawba County Chamber of Commerce.

Chamber officials joined representatives of the city of Conover in welcoming developers of Shoppes at Conover, a \$1.9 million project planned in front of the Wal-Mart Supercenter on N.C. 16 North.

The shopping center, on approximately 3 acres, will include a 10,000-square-foot retail building that is expected to house five tenants.

Flanking that building are two out parcels that could house a restaurant and a bank.

John R. Shell Jr., chief operating officer of Cornelius-based Centurion Partners LLC, said the company expects to have Shoppes at Conover fully leased by summer.

Shell said tenants of the 10,000-square-foot building might include a hair and nail salon, a wireless carrier, a gaming/hobby shop and a vitamin store.

"All will be what I would call convenience services that match well with Wal-Mart," said Shell, whose company develops such properties throughout the Southeast, primarily in North Carolina and South Carolina.

Given the U.S. recession, Centurion Partners went the extra mile to make sure Shoppes at Conover would be a success, he said.

The company's representatives attended Chamber of Commerce-sponsored leads groups and other events, talking with Chamber members about the types of stores and services that are most needed within a 5-mile radius of the Conover Wal-Mart. "In good economic times, you can just put up a sign and people will come to you," Shell said. "This is not the best of times, and we needed people's input. Going to the leads groups was valuable."

Hearn said the approach is highly unusual, but should pay off.

"It's an effective way to find out exactly what's needed here," he said.

Shell said Centurion Partners is confident Shoppes at Conover will prosper.

"This is a good, strong community," he said. "e have a lot of faith in it."

Conover Mayor Bruce Eckard wished the developers success with the project.

"In these tough economic times, it's a positive sign when anyone is willing to invest in Conover," Eckard said.

"This is a really positive sign."

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