

Developers: What to do with 600 acres?

So you want a Trader Joe's in Springfield? How about Cheesecake Factory or Costco?

Now is your chance to make a plea to these national retail and restaurant chains.

The Web site for a much-anticipated development at the juncture of highways 60 and 65 launched last week, and organizers are asking for community input.

At www.6065project.com, developers are seeking ideas for how they could use 200 acres of green space as well as which restaurants, retailers and experiences Springfieldians want most. They're even taking name suggestions.

In all, the project comprises 600 acres, set aside for development of a mixed-use lifestyle center.

I interviewed Rob Murray III during Springfield Business Journal's December 12 People You Need To Know breakfast event, largely about his role in this sprawling project. At the time, Murray said such hot-commodity tenants weren't budgeting due to economic constraints, and really, who can blame them? But when they are ready to start plunking down new stores, these developers want

to be in on the action.

Murray of R.B. Murray Co. is leading the effort to lure national names. One of the group's objectives is to know the community's desires and operate from that understanding. The Web site is the means to that knowledge.

Users have started populating the site with their choices of names, outdoor uses, retailers and restaurants. And yes, I did my part in this democratic process.

The top three retailers sought so far, according to the site, are Costco, Menards and Whole Foods Market. My four votes went to Trader Joe's, Container Store, Whole Foods, and Crate and Barrel, in that order.

Desired restaurants? The Cheesecake Factory, Ruth's Chris Steak House and P.F. Chang's China Bistro top the current voting. I chose P.F.

Chang's, Cheesecake Factory, Buca di Beppo and The Melting Pot.

The top three greenspace ideas: a co-op garden, a kayak park and a skate park. Users get one write-in suggestion. My idea: an indoor/outdoor rock-climbing wall.

Eyes & Ears



Eric Olson

As to the development's name, it currently has the preferred title of River Banks Center, followed by The Crossroads at 60/65 and EdgeWater Commons. I went with The Crossroads. I like to keep things simple, and I think this title implies the weight of this development, while also signifying the importance of the mega-highway construction project ongoing at the interchange of U.S. Highway 65 and Highway 60/James River Freeway.

The landowners at the northeast corner of the interchange are known collectively as 60/65 Partnership LLC, a group that includes Rogersville businessman Larry Childress, Killian Group of Cos. owner Bill Killian and Robert Hawkins. Murray represents the owners, and Miller-O'Reilly Co., Foster Hospitality Group Inc., Doran Communities LLC and ICP Inc. have signed letters of intent for parts of the multidimensional project.

I think these developers are on to something, collecting ammunition before mounting their attacks on tenant prospects that will put up a good fight. Now, let's see if they can pull it off in the next couple of years. It could be a game-changer for Springfield.

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» The top vote-getting retailers are **Costco, Menards and Whole Foods Market.**