

New Target store is another piece in Richmond's revitalization puzzle

By Katherine Tam - West County Times

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Employee Kaprisha Dearman (left) and her mom Natalie Samm look at children's clothes during a...

Richmond's long-awaited Target store opens today, one piece of a larger redevelopment plan that city officials hope will return foot traffic to the Macdonald Avenue corridor.

The 146,000-square-foot store is projected to generate \$600,000 in sales tax revenue a year, said Steve Duran, the city's community and economic development director.

The store at the east end of Macdonald Avenue near Interstate 80 opened its doors for a preview Tuesday night, when the City Council and public milled around inside. Employees in red shirts lined up by the cash registers to greet customers. Shiny white floors and neatly stocked shelves with "New store special" signs beckoned.

"It is an economic opportunity for the city, a strong tax base," Councilman Nat Bates said. "More importantly, it's provided employment for some 300 people, and they're looking at the possibility of expanding it beyond 300. I hope it's the first of several more commercial developments we can successfully attract."

Two other Targets — one in Albany and one in Pinole — are within about five miles. The retail giant closed the El Cerrito store Tuesday because the smaller location no longer meets customers' needs, the company said. Some employees from that store will work in Richmond.

The Richmond store opens at 8 this morning. The formal grand opening is Sunday.

City officials hope the new store will spur more development. Macdonald Avenue was once "Main Street" where Montgomery Ward, JC Penney and many other stores flourished. But the business corridor experienced a gradual decline over the years that quickened after Hilltop Mall was built in the 1970s.

Target anchors a retail center with about 30,000 more square feet of space. About 70 percent of that is leased to merchants that include Wells Fargo Bank and Panda Express, developer Peter Meier said. They expect to open in early November. Negotiations continue with other businesses for the rest of the space.

Officials are spending millions of dollars to try to revive the area. New street lights, benches, trees, trash containers and wider sidewalks were added to the east end of Macdonald Avenue. The same work is underway from Harbour Way to 19th Street.

Plans for an 800-space parking garage at the multitransit station are expected to be out to bid next year. Building the garage will free up the parking lot on the east end of the station, where at least 100 new housing units will rise as part of a planned "transit village."

Civic Center is undergoing \$101 million worth of upgrades. Nevin Park at Sixth Street is in the midst of a \$2.8 million reconstruction. The city is partnering with private developers to build 237 condominiums with more than 24,000 square feet of retail space at 11th Street, and the 66-unit Macdonald Place Senior Housing at Third Street.

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