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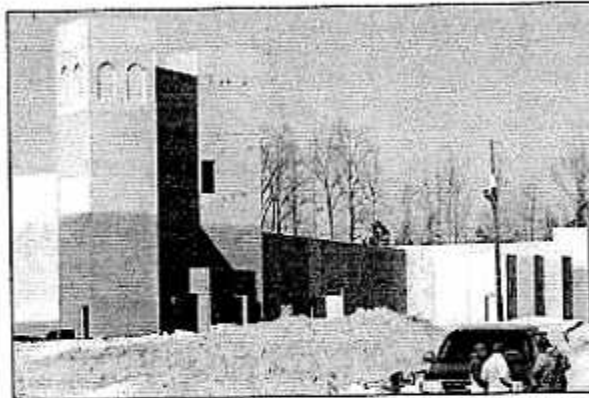
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coming soon – business

BrandsMart USA 'achieves maximum efficiency'

By JAMIE WAIN
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Bill Price, Feb. 8, 2009

A BrandsMart USA is being constructed on Buford Drive not far from the Mall of Georgia.

LAWRENCEVILLE — With the Gwinnett Braves stadium nearing completion, the area around Buford Drive near the facility is changing with it.

Part of the Mall of Georgia Overlay District, the area in and around the new stadium is quickly becoming one of the county's busiest corridors.

These's a 73-acre, live-work-play/mixed-use development in the early planning stages that will supposedly surround the baseball park, and the Board of Commissioners gave the green light for a 10-acre, commercial development located directly across the street from it in the land adjacent to the Habersham Hills subdivision.

Traveling north toward

Interstate 85 and the Mall of Georgia, the other large development well on its way to completion is the 117,016-square-foot BrandsMart USA building.

According to BrandsMart's Vice President of Store Operations Larry Levine, there is something special about this BrandsMart USA building.

"Like all the buildings in our family of stores, this one will be no different in that it achieves maximum efficiency," Levine said. "And it will be the first commercial

LEED-certified structure in all of North Georgia."

LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, and being LEED certified means the building used green building practices that have been adopted as being sustainable.

For a state and county that prides itself on conservation and achieving energy efficiency, this BrandsMart USA location is making progress in the right direction. And while achieving maximum efficiency in its buildings is business as usual for the discount electronics store with those Georgia locations in Doraville, Kennewick and Stockbridge, because it's in North Georgia, this BrandsMart will come with a few unique features.

For starters, Levine said, because of an ongoing statewide drought where water is considered a precious resource, the building

will use not one bit of the county's drinking water supply.

"We'll use water in a unique way," he said. "And we'll do this through using underground systems and reclaimed water."

He said to complement the fact that none of the county's drinking water will be used, the store is also planning to landscape the outside using drought-resistant trees and plants. He said this practice — called "xeriscaping" — will allow the store to not only teach its visiting customers about environmentally friendly landscaping products for metro Atlanta, but will also allow it to hold workshops for visiting schools and students who want to learn more about what they can do to help Mother Earth.

"We just want to show these school children what is possible when you use your imagination," Levine said.

Gwinnett Place CID working to bring cultures together

By JAMIE WAIN
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DULUTH — In April, what was once a Wal-Mart on Pleasant Hill Road will become the largest international food supermarket in the United States.

Since the Asai Duluth Plaza is situated in the heart of the Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District, the opening excites Executive Director Joe

Allen. "One of the goals I have set for the CID this year is to continue working with the leadership of the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce, the Hispanic Chamber and the Korean-American Chapter," Allen said. "The goal is to bring together businesses and cultures seeking success at Gwinnett Place."

Asai Duluth Plaza will be a realization of that goal as the store focuses on international, Asian-themed cuisine.

According to Phillip Ahn, a

project manager with Rhee Brothers Inc. — the company behind Asai — the demand for Asian food nationwide is on the rise.

"Since the population of the Pacific Rim has been growing tremendously during the past few decades in the United States, the demand for Asian food was sought by not only Asians but also mainstream Americans too," Ahn said.

Allen said the 140,000-square-foot former Wal-Mart has been renovated and enlarged to house Asai since

April 2008. Coupled with the M Marketplace scheduled to open in the summer in the Gwinnett Place Mall, two new internationally-themed stores will soon be calling the area home.

"We strongly believe the city of Atlanta is strategically important for us to explore our market shares," Ahn said. "This led us to invest in over 100,000 square feet of warehouse in the city of Lawrenceville to expand wholesale operation as well."

Asai opened its 11th store in the United States in the fall of 2008 just outside Chicago and should open in Duluth in April sometime, Ahn said.

Allen said besides the two stores opening, there are also many other positive improvements coming to the Gwinnett Place area in 2009.

"We're looking forward to the implementation of more sidewalks in the area," Allen said. "We should begin work on a new sidewalk on Old Norcross when the weather

begins to cooperate and we should also implement phase 1 of the Pleasant Hill Road sidewalk and streetscaping project."

In the future, Allen said the CID would like to see part of its area become a tax allocation district. The board will revisit the TAD issue in March.

Allen said after that, one other goal the CID has is one it has had its eye on — the new Pleasant Hill Road Bridge at the Interstate 85 interchange.

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