



L.L. Bean is opening a store in the shadow of Cabela's in South Barrington at Route 59 and Higgins Road.  
Bill Zars | Staff Photographer

## South Barrington 'anti-mall' opening soon

Arboretum not just another teen hangout

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South Barrington Village President Frank Munao says he's happy with the atmosphere of his quiet Northwest suburban community.

But at least one corner of the town of 4,300 residents will become perhaps less tranquil when the 600,000-square-foot Arboretum of South Barrington shopping area opens later this month.

More than 30 stores - including Soft Surroundings, Circuit City, Ruth's Chris Steakhouse and Arhaus Furniture - are planned for the open-air center off Higgins Road between Route 59 and Bartlett Road, north of the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway.

"The excitement is very high," Munao said. "We're in a rush to get things done."

A three-day grand opening weekend is set for Friday, Sept. 26, including a free concert by Chris Isaak Saturday, Sept. 27.

But a few shops, including the Midwest's first L.L. Bean store, are set to open this week, on Friday, Sept. 12.

Arboretum officials estimate the center will create 1,000 jobs, said South Barrington Village Administrator David Pierce.

Michael Jaffe, president of the project's developer, Jaffe Cos., calls the project "the anti-mall." He points to fountains imported from Italy and unique Tudor-styled architecture as ways the Arboretum stands out. Though Jaffe said there's something for everyone, this is not just another hang out for teens.

"The Arboretum consumer will tend to have a higher disposable income, will tend to have more years of college, will tend to live in larger homes and spend more," he said. "We're for people who just dread going to the mall. Grown-ups could go on a date here."

Likewise, Woodfield Shopping Center officials aren't concerned with the Arboretum stealing away shoppers. Woodfield General Manager Marc Stritch said no attraction can compete with the Schaumburg mall's regional pull. While the Arboretum could attract shoppers from 30 minutes away, Stritch said buses loaded with passengers traveling from out of state will continue to be drawn to Woodfield.

Stritch anticipates a reaction similar to when similar shopping centers, referred to as open-air lifestyle centers, opened in Algonquin, Deer Park and Geneva.

"Initially, there's a slight dip in our numbers for six months after the opening," he said.

While the Arboretum may offer one-of-a-kind stores like L.L. Bean, opening a retail center in a challenging economy has its risks, said Fran Bolson, president of the Woodfield Chicago Northwest Convention Bureau. Bolson also wonders about the location.

"I'm not sure unless you drive by it if you will even know it's there," she said.

One way the Arboretum is spreading the word is through a marketing campaign that includes partnering with its neighbors in Hoffman Estates' entertainment district across the street. Arboretum ads will appear inside the Sears Centre arena and on its marquee visible off I-90.

Sears Centre Executive Director Jeff Bowen hopes his arena can feed off the Arboretum's energy. Lifestyle centers located near arenas are becoming a national trend, he said.

"It brings additional vitality. It brings excitement to our neck of the woods," Bowen said.

The \$200 million Arboretum broke ground in May 2007 after a series of zoning-related delays that began nine years ago when the 86-acre parcel was first designated for commercial use in 1999. The plot was part of the Klehm tree nursery, hence the Arboretum's name.

Jaffe said the center is about 80 percent leased, and vendors will continue to open through 2010. That includes Roadshow Gold Class Cinemas, which is to open to the public Friday, Oct. 3. The luxury movie chain has plans to charge \$35 per ticket.

That sort of spending could boost South Barrington's tax base. Village officials didn't provide sales tax projections for the center and have not earmarked any money for future projects from the new sales tax revenue, Pierce said. The Arboretum is the village's first shopping center and would provide South Barrington's budget a jolt once the plot is reassessed reflecting the increased property value.

Munao worries that could be offset by this year's 1 percentage point sales tax increase in Cook County, if it prompts shoppers to cross over to Lake County or elsewhere to save money.

"It's just too bad we can't find a level playing field for our retail," he said. "I'm not too happy about it."

Jaffe says sales tax revenues will be comparable to other lifestyle centers, including the Deer Park Town Center. Deer Park Village Administrator Jim Connors said the majority of the \$1.43 million in sales-tax receipts projected for the village next year will come from the Town Center.

The Arboretum also will benefit from an incentive deal with South Barrington. For its first 12 years, Jaffe Cos. will receive half a percentage point of the state's sale tax.

South Barrington has seen past development, most notably the 30-screen AMC South Barrington movie house off Barrington Road and Interstate 90. However, Munao said the Arboretum has a chance to put the village on the map in a much bolder way.