

Plaza's 'rebirth' excites officials

Lakeland Plaza to see big changes

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The three-decade old Lakeland Plaza has been sold and the new owners have big plans for the shopping center in downtown Fox Lake.

Jim Minick, vice president of sales and marketing for Ardmir Properties Management of Tinley Park, announced that his firm has acquired the plaza. The Rollins Road and Grand Avenue site will be named Fox Lake Town Center.

"We have owned it since last week. We will be going through major property renovations and revamping the parking lot and are talking with vendors about outlots. New marquis will be going up by the end of the year," Minick said. "We want to make Fox Lake like Lake Geneva."

"I think of it as a rebirth. The new owners bring an excellent reputation to town and great enthusiasm. The village looks forward to working with them. The board is pretty flexible and its

ordinance. It looks good and it is rented out," Koske said.

Initial expansion plans involve Fox Lake Theater to nine screens and Something's Fishy, which will grow to 7,000 square feet.

Plans are in the talking stages for the other half of the former Sears building at one end of the property, while the theater will take the back end.

"There is a lot of upside to it because of the vacancies. There won't be a big box, but a convenience center for the community," Minick said.

The new owners are working with Claude LeMere, community development director for Fox Lake, on renovation plans.

Dwight Yackley had owned the plaza, which was once a lake, for several years, and a holding company before that.

"When we started, there was 30,000 vacant square feet. Now due to expansion, there is 14,000," he said.

"I am sure it would be good if he puts some money into it," said Trustee Cindy Irwin. "High-Low grocery was the best

thing to happen to this town since Pik Wik left."

One issue that Irwin said she would raise at a finance committee will be if current service agreements the village worked out with Yackley will continue. "I don't think that they should," she said.

Lakeland Plaza has been a commercial center for at least 30 years, residents said. Before that, it was known as Silver Dollar Lake.

LeMere said that the turning point for the property might have taken place when the village encouraged Yackley to spruce it up.

"The shape that it was in a couple of years ago, no one would have been interested. Sprucing it up bought a buyer to the table," LeMere said.

"I have enjoyed working with the people in the village of Fox Lake. It is a great town with a lot of development potential. Claude and the Mayor (Koske) are taking the right steps to revitalize the downtown," Yackley said.