

# Construction will top \$1 billion

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## Several major projects on tap in Daviess

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If all the projects on local drawing boards come together, Daviess County will see more than \$1 billion worth of construction over the next six years.

And that's just the big projects.

How significant is that?

The past seven years have seen a total of \$244.85 million in nonresidential construction -- not counting roads.

The biggest project being planned for Daviess County is a new hospital -- expected to cost \$500 million -- on 145 acres between Pleasant Valley Road and Daniels Lane.

Construction is expected to start next spring, with the hospital to open on Nov. 11, 2011.

Jeff Barber, president of Owensboro Medical Health System, said he doesn't know yet how many construction workers the project will need over the three-year-plus period.

But labor leaders are expecting construction crews to average 175 a day with a peak of between 300 and 400 on site at one time.

When it's completed, the hospital will employ more than 3,000 people.

Gateway Commons, the Gulfstream Enterprises mixed-use development between Kentucky 54 and Pleasant Valley Road -- within sight of the new hospital -- is expected to cost \$391 million and employ 1,000 construction workers.

The project, which still faces several hurdles before being finalized, is expected to be completed in 2013.

Plans include a 135,000-square-foot convention center, 6,000-seat arena, a national chain hotel with about 250 rooms, an entertainment zone including a multiplex theater, 150 apartments, 150 condos, 150,000 square feet of medical/professional offices and 630,000 square feet of restaurants and retail outlets.

The hotel is scheduled for completion in September 2010, the arena in February 2012, the retail complex in July 2012, the convention center in October 2012, the apartments in January 2013, the outlots in April 2013 and the professional offices in June 2013.

### **Riverfront work in May**

Rebuilding Owensboro's riverfront from the Executive Inn Rivermont to the RiverPark Center is scheduled to begin in mid-May and be completed sometime in 2011.

Construction is expected to cost somewhere in the \$45 million range.

The state is expected to start building a new section of the U.S. 60/U.S. 231 bypass from Kentucky 54 to U.S. 60 East near Hawesway Truck Plaza sometime in 2008 and have it finished by the time the new hospital and Gateway Commons open in late 2011. The cost is estimated at \$36.15 million.

Indiana is also expecting to complete the four-laning of U.S. 231 from the William H. Natcher Bridge near Rockport to I-64 at Dale in 2011.

That will create a four-lane connection between I-64 at Dale and I-65 at Bowling Green by way of the new bypass extension and the Natcher Parkway.

Owensboro Public Schools is planning a new two-story gymnasium and an art wing at Owensboro High School.

Cost is estimated in the neighborhood of \$22 million. Construction could start next spring and be finished in 2010.

Southtown Boulevard is scheduled to be widened to five lanes soon.

Construction costs are estimated at \$10 million.

The city hopes work will begin in the fall of 2008 and be completed in the fall of 2010.

And the city has been talking with the state about building a new Kentucky National Guard Armory at Owensboro-Daviess County Regional Airport.

Early estimates said construction could start in 2011 and cost approximately \$10 million.

And the city plans to build a new \$6 million ice arena near the Sportscenter. Plans call for it to be completed next year.

In 2005, the U.S. Department of Labor listed 2,287 construction workers in Daviess County and 12,753 in the labor market area.

The average construction worker in Daviess County was making \$600 a week that year, the report said.

### **Workers count as tourists**

While unions are hoping to keep as much work as possible for local people, with that many projects, hundreds of construction workers from outside the area are expected to be coming here to work during the next six years.

And that's good news for the local hospitality industry.

"It's all tourism," said Burley Phelan, executive director of the Owensboro-Daviess County Tourist Commission. "Construction really does have a positive impact on hotels and restaurants."

Construction workers from outside the area usually book rooms for weeks -- sometimes months -- in advance.

"It's good news for the tourism industry," Phelan said. "Usually several of them bring their families with them, so it helps retail and other parts of the economy."

Daviess County hotels have struggled with low occupancy rates for the past decade.

The last time occupancy topped the 50 percent mark here was in 1998 when the Natcher Bridge, the AK Steel plant and several industries in MidAmerica Airpark were under construction.

The occupancy rate that year was 52.73 percent.

And local tourism could get another boost in 2011 -- the centennial of the birth of Bill Monroe, the "father of bluegrass music," in Rosine.