

# Kentucky 54 Forecast: More

**Developer: Things are moving fast**

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A new movie theater, a hotel, an office park and several major national retailers and restaurants that aren't already in Owensboro are among companies looking for land on Kentucky 54 these days.

Contracts haven't been signed yet. So Brad Anderson has to speak in generalities.

But the managing partner in the group developing Woodlands Plaza at Kentucky 54 and Fairview Drive and the newer B&K Development project on Kentucky 54 just outside the beltline says things are moving fast.

What you see when you drive by Woodlands Plaza today is a 20,000-square-foot strip center, he said.

Plans call for the finished project to have more than 200,000 square feet of retail space, Anderson said.

The development will stretch all the way to Ralph Avenue when it's finished.

One major retailer is expected to take 70,000 square feet for its first Owensboro store, Anderson said. And a national pharmacy chain is also looking at the property.

"Some people who said 'no' to us two years ago when we started working on Woodlands Plaza are talking to us now," he said.

What's changed in two years is the opening of Kentucky's largest Wal-Mart supercenter diagonally across Kentucky 54 -- and several businesses that have rushed to be near Wal-Mart.

Some say that Wal-Mart has speeded up the development of the area by at least 10 years. And it's created the biggest land rush Daviess County has seen since "South Frederica" began booming in the 1980s.

Ground will be broken this summer on the old Atmos Energy property on Fairview Drive across from Kenergy for a 100,000-square-foot office complex, Anderson said.

It's about half a mile from Kentucky 54.

"What's different about this project," he said, "is that people can own their own office condos -- or they can lease."

The first units could open by the end of the year, Anderson said.

The old Pennyrile Mobile Home Park along the Wendell H. Ford Expressway and Kentucky 54 will become a combination retail and residential complex, he said.

"It's exciting," Anderson said. "We're talking to a movie theater chain -- not Malco -- and a hotel chain that isn't in Owensboro."

Part of the property could be turned into an apartment complex, he said. "There aren't a lot of apartments on Kentucky 54."

Anderson said several big-box retailers -- stand-alone stores -- are looking at Kentucky 54 for their first Owensboro locations.

"They're very familiar with Owensboro and they like Owensboro," he said. "When this happens, it will solidify Kentucky 54 as a retail-restaurant corridor."

The hotel chain, Anderson said, has all the figures on Owensboro's festivals and tournaments. And it's aware of the county's plans for a soccer complex on Fairview Drive.

"Things are popping up everywhere," he said. "It's really exciting. We'll make room for everybody we can."

Mayor Tom Watson, Anderson said, "has been very instrumental in trying to bring new business to Owensboro -- retail and restaurants as well as industry."

Two years ago, when Woodlands Plaza started, development was so slow that Anderson continued to work for his family's insurance agency.

But about a year ago, he said, things started moving faster. And he became a full-time developer.