

# BUSINESS

## Oconee Co. project to add

Casto planning to build \$30M commercial project with retail,

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A planned \$30 million Oconee County commercial project, to be built on land once owned by NewSpring Church, will bring at least 300 jobs, the county's economic development director says.

However, tenants for the development won't be announced until about September, said Richard Blackwell, executive director of the Oconee Economic

Alliance.

In 2013, NewSpring Church bought the property, roughly 62 acres, from Pa-colet Milliken, Blackwell said. The church kept 17 acres and sold 45 acres near Lake Hartwell and Clemson University to Casto, a privately held real estate services firm based in Ohio, he said.

Casto plans to build 300,000 to 350,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space, including a movie theater and other anchor tenants, Blackwell said. The project will encompass new road im-

provements and "at the end of the day, it's going to bring somewhere between 300 and 400 jobs," he said.

Neither Casto nor NewSpring officials could be reached for comment.

"It's a slam dunk as far as a commercial development," Blackwell said. "These aren't high-paying jobs, but these are jobs that we in Oconee County need."

Oconee County's unemployment rate rose to 6.3 percent in May from 5.7 percent in April, according to the South Carolina Department of Employment and

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## 300 jobs

restaurant space

Workforce. DEW officials said 2,226 people in the county were unemployed in May, the latest month for which figures are available. The state's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate rose slightly to 6.8 percent in May from 6.7 percent a month earlier. Greenville County's jobless rate was 5.6 percent.

Local government officials offered property tax abatement to the developer to offset the cost of infrastructure improvements, including water and sewer work, Blackwell said.