

JOHN C. STEVENSON / Staff

Members of the community gather Thursday across the street from the site of the planned Easley Town Center, near U.S. 123 and Prince Perry Road, for a construction celebration marking the continuation of work at the site.

Retail project will add hundreds of jobs

8-10 leases in hand for spring 2011 opening

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EASLEY — Nineteen months after ground was broken on Easley Town Center, the project that officials say will ultimately bring hundreds of jobs to Pickens County received an official restart Thursday.

Community leaders, state and local officials, developers and others held what they called a construction kickoff barbecue for the new center at the former Saco Lowell site along U.S. 123 in Easley.

The event was designed as a way to make people in the region aware that "this project is viable and moving forward," said David Scarnati, director of development for Cedarwood Development Inc., the group creating the shopping center.

"We just wanted to get out here and let everybody know that Easley Town Center is happening with the kickoff of some of the infrastructure work, and we look forward to getting this thing done and open," Scarnati said.

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> Easley Administrator Fox Simons

Developers have announced Wal-Mart as one of the tenants for Easley Town Center, and Scarnati said Thursday that Bed Bath & Beyond has also signed on in addition to some other unnamed small retailers.

He said they have eight to 10 leases in hand and said the center will have about 20-25 stores.

Easley Administrator Fox Simons said the project's impact on the area can be seen in the 900 permanent jobs it will ultimately bring to Pickens County.

"It's more of a celebration of years of perseverance and hard work by a lot of people to see this thing through," Simons said of the kickoff. "To finally get to the point where it's actually going to happen is very exciting."

Groundbreaking for the center was held in March 2008, but work later slowed due to the economic recession.

"We just think it's exciting that in a market that's not doing a lot of these projects that we're able to get the needed infrastructure portion of this project kicked off and our own development portion of this project kicked off," Scarnati said.

The first retail shops are expected to open by the spring of 2011, according to Jennifer Novotny, manager of marketing for retail development for Cedarwood Development.