

Fresh Thyme may open at winter's start

By WILL BUSS
News-Democrat

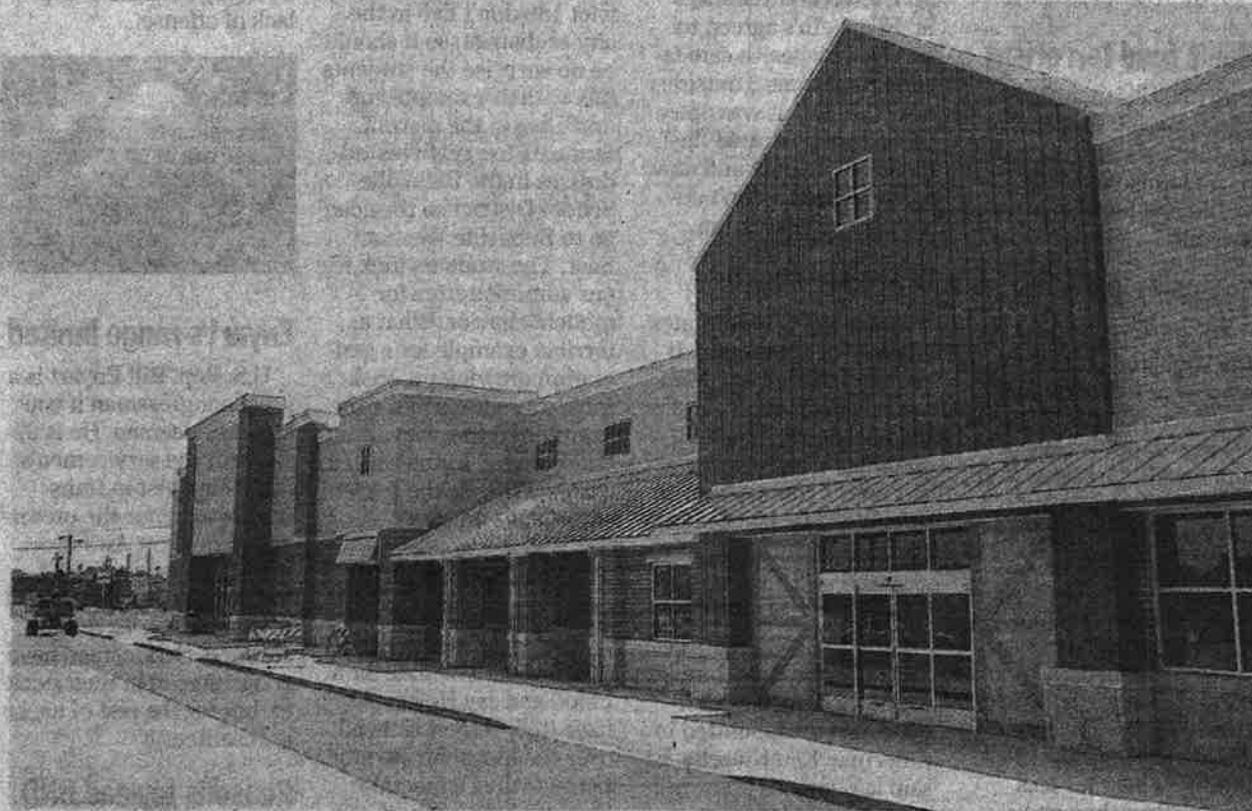
Local consumers may not have to wait till spring to shop at an organic grocery store.

Fresh Thyme Farmers Market may open its doors in Fairview Heights by January or December. The 28,000-square-foot grocery store, which is part of Fairview City Centre at Illinois 159 and Lincoln Trail in Fairview Heights, is ahead of schedule.

Fresh Thyme Farmers Market President and Chief Executive Officer Chris Sherrell said he initially envisioned the grocery store opening by spring. But Fairview City Centre owner Kimco Realty Corp. said the retail redevelopment has progressed faster than anticipated.

"Kimco came back and said that they're ahead of schedule, so we are trying to speed up the process," said Sherrell, whose company is based in Phoenix and will soon relocate to Downers Grove, outside Chicago. "We have 10 stores that we're opening this year, so trying to put in another is tough, but right now, we may open it as soon as Dec. 10."

Next door, home decor and furniture retailer Home Goods is advertising a grand opening for Oct. 26. The shopping center has also been redeveloped for a new Sports Authority sporting goods store and office supply chain Office Max, both of which have relocated to Fairview City Centre earlier this year.



DERIK HOLTSMANN/News-Democrat

The Fairview City Centre in Fairview Heights is ahead of schedule. Home Goods home furnishings is expected to open by the end of October and Fresh Thyme Farmers Market could open in December.

Pet goods retailer Petco was part of the former shopping center and is a tenant of the new one and has remained open throughout the redevelopment.

The pre-existing shopping center was demolished last year. That retail plaza was built in 1970 and had initially housed Venture and then Kmart.

Dan Gibson, Vice President of Kimco Realty Corp. in Dayton, Ohio, could not be reached for comment.

Fairview Heights Economic Development Director Mike Malloy said a sixth and final tenant has

been signed and will occupy the last space in the retail redevelopment. He said the business will be announced later. He also said he anticipates the new shopping center will be at full capacity by next spring.

"Fairview City Centre is coming along, to say the least," Malloy said. "We had anticipated that we were going to be opening sometime in mid-2015 and

that the full occupancy would occur by then. But we may be a little ahead of that timeline, which is great. We only started on this project three-and-a-half years ago. Things are starting to pay off."

Sherrell said the organic grocery store will open no later than mid-January and the chain plans to build several more stores throughout the Midwest in the next few years. Two

stores are scheduled to open next year across the river in Kirkwood, Mo. and Ballwin, Mo.

"We're sure excited to get it open," Sherrell said. "Home Goods will be opening soon and we love to see the shopping center filled out with a good vibe and good energy."

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