

NEW RETAIL DEVELOPMENT 1518 EISENHOWER BLVD. JOHNSTOWN PA. (Next to Town Center)

New Retail Strip

1 Acre
Parcel
Lease/Sale

New Medical
Development

Space for Lease

Bob Varner
ENNSWOOD
COMMERCIAL REALTY, LLC.
814-942-6300

Cinema 10

BED BATH & BEYOND

ROSS
DRESS FOR LESS

TJ-maxx

dressbarn

Visionworks

**five
BELOW**

DOLLAR TREE

Walmart

Panera
BREAD

PETCO

Michaels
THE ARTS AND CRAFTS STORE

**BEST
BUY**

**Aspen
Dental**

SHEETZ

**STARBUCKS
COFFEE**

FIVE GUYS
BURGERS and FRIES

chili's

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University of Pittsburgh
Johnstown

New Sidewalk from UPJ to
Retail Site and Town Center

New Retail Strip

BED BATH &
BEYOND

ROSS
DRESS FOR LESS

TJ-MAXX

FIVE
BELOW

Retail plaza eyed for property in Richland

BY DAVID HURST
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A Johnstown business developer is working to add a retail plaza next door to Richland Town Centre.

With the high-traffic shopping center fully occupied and

the economy on an upswing, national tenants are signing on to the idea. But first, Johnstown Construction Services President Jim Vasilko said he's trying to sort out wetland issues to maximize the four-acre tract of

Please see **PLAZA**, A2

PLAZA

Continued from A1

land's development potential.

The undeveloped property is located along the top of Eisenhower Boulevard across from a rear entrance to Richland Town Centre.

"We already have good interest on the leasing end," he said, noting that national retailers "unique to the area" have indicated they would move into the space.

A restaurant or two would be likely. Other spaces within the linear plaza - envisioned at 2,000 to 5,000 square feet - would also be sized right for a jeweler and several service-oriented businesses, Vasilko said.

He's contracted with real estate broker Bob Varner of Pennswood Commercial Realty to fill the space with tenants.

Varner handles the same task at the Town Centre - the area's newest commercial development.

"That's where most retail wants to be today if they want to come to Johnstown ... and it's 100 percent full," Varner said.

The corridor has become a shopping hub again since the plaza's first tenants opened their doors there a little more than a decade ago.

It's now home to nearly 500,000 square feet of retail space with 33 stores, shops or eateries, including Best Buy, Bed Bath and Beyond and TJ Maxx, as well as Starbucks, Panera Bread and Chili's.

"Jim's property is really the only undeveloped space next to that center, and he's rightfully taking advantage of it," Varner said. "The visibility's good, and it offers direct access off of Eisenhower (Boulevard)."



TODD BERKEY/THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT
Johnstown Construction Services plans to develop this lot along Eisenhower Boulevard in Richland Township.

Vasilko envisions his strip center as a complement to Richland Town Centre.

And it would also serve thousands of local college students, given the fact that an illuminated walking and biking trail is being developed through the same corridor. Tentatively set to be under construction in September, the trail will connect the busy Richland commercial district with the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown and Pennsylvania Highlands Community College.

"That trail is going to do a lot for that area," Vasilko said.

"So we're trying to find uses that will benefit the college and (nearby Richland) high school," Varner agreed.

"That could mean a hair salon or smaller users on the restaurant side - like the higher-end sub shop guy that all of the kids are familiar with," Varner added, noting that local and regional shops would also be targeted. "And I wouldn't rule out traditional retail either."

But the plaza's size is far more settled.

Because Vasilko's property is downhill from adjacent properties, the lowest grades collect run-off, making it a wetland.

He said he is hopeful a design can be worked out that would mitigate the issue.

With the trail project getting underway, the wetland could be shifted and incorporated as a trail-side nature area, he added, noting they can be developed to cultivate colorful plants and wildlife.

He's working with an engineer to find a way to solve the issue - and if he's successful, the plaza could be as much as 20,000 square feet.

That's comparable to the size of the stand-alone strip of retail space at the corner of Richland Town Centre that includes Starbucks, Mattress Warehouse and Five Guys Burgers and Fries.

If the wetland cannot be reworked, the plaza would likely be half the size - enough for three to five new tenants, Varner estimated.

He's hopeful he'll know more by the end of summer, and be in position to begin seeking state and local approvals to develop the site later in the year.

"We think it'll be a win-win for the area," he said.

"It'll bring business, benefit the community and generate taxes for the township and the school district."

David Hurst is a reporter for The Tribune-Democrat. Follow him on Twitter and Instagram @tddavidhurst.