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Phase One of Madison Properties' 400,000 s/f Worcester Crossing retail complex opens

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Worcester Crossing, a new shopping center featuring the largest Walmart Supercenter in New England with 220,000 s/f of space, opens in May along Rte. 146 near the Mass Pike.

As the first of two phases in a fully approved 400,000 s/f retail complex on a 43-acre site, the store will be the first Walmart in New England with wind turbines to generate electricity.

The second phase of Worcester Crossing, a project of Madison Properties of Boston, includes a 136,000 s/f Sam's Club membership value store and an Olive Garden restaurant. It will also have about 30,000 s/f of additional retail, with seven or eight smaller shops. The second phase is scheduled to open in late fall 2011.

"Worcester Crossing will be a great addition to Worcester's retail marketplace," said Worcester city manager Michael O'Brien. "It will not only serve the city of Worcester but also draw residents from the Blackstone Valley and central Massachusetts into the city."

Madison Properties and its president, Denis Dowdle, acquired the former industrial property in 2004. Part of Worcester's rich industrial history, it was known as Southworks and employed about 10,000 people as a wing of a U.S. Steel manufacturing facility there.

"The Worcester Crossing project has not only revitalized a blighted area and committed to job creation but also has taken a step further by investing in innovation that will support clean and efficient energy for the city of Worcester," said Massachusetts Lt. Gov. Timothy Murray, a former Worcester mayor.

Madison worked with the City of Worcester to rezone the elongated brownfield site, adjacent to the Blackstone River running along its west side, for general business use. The reinvigorated Blackstone corridor will accommodate a bicycle path, eventually linking to historic former industrial sites along the river in Rhode Island and connecting Worcester and Providence for cyclists.

The 12 wind microturbines, placed within a 1,500-car parking area, will provide a large portion of the electricity needed to light the exterior and will signal the project's energy efficiency. Inside, skylights will help save electricity by "daylight harvesting," in coordination with a sensor-controlled lighting system.

The Walmart Supercenter, which includes a large grocery store, and Sam's Club and other stores scheduled to open next year, will add considerably to the shopping options of the 175,000 people who live in Worcester, as well as hundreds of thousands more who will find Worcester Crossing easily accessible.

"We are delighted to be bringing these exciting new shopping opportunities to Worcester and the eastern and central Massachusetts region, and it has been rewarding working with the forward-looking representatives of the city and the neighborhood," said Dowdle.

The site is served by ramps from Rte. 146 at both north and south ends. The Rte. 146 exit from

nearby I-90, the Mass Pike, opened in the 1990s, and the section of 146 into central Worcester was upgraded in 2007. Worcester Crossing is about 45 minutes' drive from Boston. The new shopping center is also accessible by two bus lines on the WRTA system, the 4 and 11 buses.

City manager O'Brien said that the city and development team worked closely to make sure Worcester Crossing "is a hallmark of thoughtful design - from aesthetics to transportation alternatives to environmentally friendly energy components."

"I look forward to the opening and to the growth that this project's success will inspire," he said.

The sprawling manufacturing plant known as the Southworks, in the Worcester neighborhood of Quinsigamond Village, was one of three complexes that produced steel wire in the city and were operated by American Steel and Wire, which became American Steel.

U.S. Steel closed its operations at the Southworks site in the early 1980s. The buildings had since been occupied by a number of tenants and used for light industrial purposes and storage.

Construction manager on the Worcester Crossing project was Gilbane, Inc. of Boston, which started work in the summer of 2008. Civil engineering was done by Bohler Engineering of Southborough.

Landscaping along the Blackstone River and elsewhere on the site was done by Keating Enterprises of Worcester. Leasing is by Atlantic Retail Leasing. The project was financed by Bank of New England.

Madison Properties, a real estate development company, has several other projects. Madison has approvals from the City of Boston for a 500-room hotel on Congress St. on the South Boston Waterfront, near the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center.