

Construction begins on main artery for Odenton Town Center

Amanda Yeager **Contact Reporter** ayeager@capgaznews.com

Construction is underway on a major new artery for Odenton town center

Officials on Thursday launched construction of a stretch of road that will serve as a main connector for the rapidly developing Odenton Town Center.

The new portion of Town Center Boulevard will extend nearly a mile from Hale Street near Route 175 to Seven Oaks, passing under the Route 32 overpass to Blue Water Boulevard, and will be accompanied by a sidewalk and a trail for hikers and bicyclists.

It's the latest groundbreaking for Odenton, a west Anne Arundel County community near Fort George G. Meade that has recently seen an influx of new businesses and housing options.

"Today is another example of progress, bricks and mortar progress, here in Odenton," said County Executive Steve Schuh, who spoke at an event marking the start of work on the new road. "Odenton Town Center Boulevard is a crucial artery connecting residential and commercial areas throughout the area and bringing this community closer together as we build for the future."

The \$15 million project is a public/private partnership between Anne Arundel County and Halle Development, which is also building two 150,000-square-foot office buildings and a parking garage in the center. The Silver Spring-based developer signed an agreement with the county in 2010 committing to build the boulevard, while Anne Arundel government pledged to contribute impact fee credits to help fund the road's construction. The county has already provided \$16 million for water and sewer upgrades in the area.



Shovels are lined up for the ceremonial groundbreaking on what will become Town Center Boulevard in Odenton. (By Joshua McKerrow / Capital Gazette)

The new stretch of boulevard will be four lanes wide, with a median, and will be flanked by a 5-foot-wide sidewalk. It will pass through an undeveloped wooded area.

Halle Development also plans to build a 10-foot-wide multi-use trail on the eastern side of the road, as well as a bridge and 16-foot arch culvert crossing over an existing flood plain.

The project is expected to be complete in about a year, the developer said.

Representatives from local community and business groups that have advocated for development in Odenton said the new road is a harbinger of accelerated change in the area. This spring, the County Council approved a new master plan that outlines goals for development in Odenton.

"Positive steps have been made over the years, but it has been, I think we would all agree, slow," said Linda Schuett, economic development chair for the Odenton NOW coalition of the West County Chamber of Commerce.

The boulevard will "create connectivity" within the town center, linking it to the neighboring Seven Oaks community, and improve local traffic flow by siphoning cars off of Route 175, she said.



A map of the planned Town Center Boulevard in Odenton. (By Joshua McKerrow / Capital Gazette)

"This step is big, and we've been waiting for it for a very long time... The creation of this road will allow for additional responsible development in Odenton, and that's what most of Odenton has pushed for for many years."

West County Chamber CEO Claire Louder said the new Town Center Boulevard will spur development in downtown Odenton.

"Combined with a much-improved master plan and a county executive who understands the pivotal importance of our area, we see great opportunity in Odenton," she said.

The area has seen multiple new businesses open in the past year, including an All American Steakhouse, High's gas station and convenience store on Route 175, and a Giant supermarket in the Odenton Shopping Center. Two apartment complexes, Broadstone 32 West and Novus at Odenton Town Center, are also open and accepting new residents.

More major development is in the pipeline. Louder said the county is in the process of finalizing a transit-oriented development agreement that will open the door to new growth around the MARC train station. Those projects will be supported by tax-increment financing, in which gains in tax revenue generated by new development are used to pay for enhanced infrastructure necessitated by the growth.



County executive Steve Schuh puts on a hard hat at the ceremonial groundbreaking for Town Center Boulevard in Odenton. (By Joshua McKerrow / Capital Gazette)

Councilman Andrew Pruski, a Gambrills Democrat who represents Odenton, said there's "a lot of opportunity" in the west county town.

"You have to move forward at a snail's pace, but once you get going, things start to move," he said.

Copyright © 2016, The Baltimore Sun