

For Immediate Release

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Bowie Town Center's Main Street Design at Forefront of Current Shopping Center Trend

Bowie, Maryland, September 24, 2001 – It's a sunny day and you're strolling down the sidewalk, ducking into the different stores, doing a little window-shopping, meeting with friends at an outdoor café. Sound like the old days when everyone would "go downtown" to shop? Guess again! It's the new Bowie Town Center and when it opens in October 2001, you can get that Main Street feeling every day of the week.

Bowie Town Center's main street design is at the forefront of the current trend in shopping venues. According to Rod Vosper, regional vice president of new development for Simon Property Group who owns and operates Bowie Town Center, "The new opportunities to shop online, by mail, and so forth, have not been the threat that many people had predicted. In fact, people have responded by wanting to make shopping even more of a social activity than in the past. It's a trend we're seeing around the country."

One of the few main-street style shopping centers in the Mid-Atlantic region, the 760,000-square-foot Bowie Town Center is the only one that includes two free-standing department stores (Hecht's and Sears) as anchors. Between the two anchors run Emerald Way and Bowie Town Center Boulevard, main streets lined on both sides with a series of shops. The shops have different façades, giving the main promenade an appearance that it evolved over time. Traditional colors and materials such as brick, masonry, and wood also evoke a sense of timelessness.

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The mall's design goes beyond highlighting merchandise to bring in features of the community. Bowie's history, including its railroad and horseracing traditions, is detailed in sculptural friezes on buildings, murals, and other environmental graphic elements.

This design also makes the Bowie Town Center very pedestrian-friendly. The open layout allows easy access to the stores and also invites browsing and mingling. The sidewalks themselves are designed combining pavers and architectural concrete with an abundance of benches, ornamental planters and period lighting in a walker-friendly pattern. Surface parking for 3,100 vehicles is available in front of the shops and organized around a continuation of the street grid located behind the shopping district. In addition, the center's location is linked to the city's many hiker/biker trails and to the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

The center's main entrance off MD Rt. 197 will be marked by a historic-style water tower. The entrance boulevard will feed into a traffic roundabout accentuated by a feature fountain in the center. Adjacent to the roundabout will be an eight-vendor food pavilion reminiscent of an 1800-style train station. The all-brick building with large arched windows features exposed arched steel trusses and large murals with scenes from Bowie's history. Indoor seating for 500 spills out onto a small outdoor park with dining for 100 and a children's play area with a train theme. Additional restaurants are free standing outside the main shopping promenade.

In addition to the architectural trend of the "Main Street" design, Bowie Town Center also is following the lifestyle trend of malls today. A recent International Council of Shopping Centers report states that "by combining the convenience of strip center shopping with the well-known specialty tenants found in regional malls, today's centers are designed to appeal to discriminating customers who lack immediate access to, or don't particularly enjoy, traditional mall shopping."

Today's shopper spends an average of 45 minutes per enclosed mall shopping trip and visits only an average of 1.6 stores per visit. Time conscious shoppers are demanding edited shopping venues, easy access to specific stores, and an exciting mix of shops.

"Our goal was to build a shopping center to match the personalities and lifestyles of the greater Bowie community," said Rod Vosper, regional vice president of new development for Simon Property Group who owns and operates Bowie Town Center. "We want to bring the community together in a new venue that would be more cost effective for the retailer, more customer-friendly for the shopper, all in an environment that evokes the history of the community."

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The national trend has moved toward open-air centers with a national and local tenant mix. The baby boomer is aging, becoming more discriminating, and time to them is of the essence. With two income families being in the majority in America, shoppers from all income brackets have become time-efficient. "We felt they wanted a return to main street shopping where they can walk, shop and browse in an environment they find aesthetically pleasing," expressed Vosper. "However, equally as important as tenant mix, and a pleasing environment, is the convenience to home or work, and ease of access for a timely shopping trip."

RTKL, an international architecture, planning, and engineering firm is the design architect on the project. Their work includes architectural design through design development, landscape architecture, environmental graphics and signage. DPPI, a division of Simon Property Group, Inc. serves as architect of record, structural and MEP engineers, and general contractor for the project. Other member of the project team include: Loiderman & Associates of Lanham, MD, civil engineering ; Schirmer Engineering Corporation of Arlington, VA, code consultant; and The Lighting Practice of Philadelphia, PA, lighting design.

Bowie Town Center is owned and operated by Simon Property Group, Inc., the largest publicly traded retail real estate company in North America. Simon Property Group, headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana, owns or has an interest in 250 shopping centers in 36 states and six assets in Europe and Canada.

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