

Workers will give former Caldor site a complete makeover

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by Bob Allen

There used to be an old joke about the worst case scenario of taking your car to the garage to be worked on. The mechanic looks under the hood, shakes his head and tells you, "I think you need to jack it up and put a new one under it."

That's pretty much what's being done with the former Caldor's department store building at 6400 York Road, in the Anneslie Shopping Center, near the city line.

Later this year the refurbished building will be taken over by about 1,000 state and county employees who are being relocated from the problem-plagued Investment Building in Towson.

According to Larry Boltansky, managing member of 6401 York Road Associates LLC, the company that purchased the shopping center earlier this year, the Caldor's building is literally being stripped down to its basic concrete and steel pillars and foundations.

"Basically you're going to have a new building," says Boltansky. "We're taking it down to the basic structure, demolishing it back to its 'skin' and rebuilding it.

Boltansky says that nearly everything, including the roof, walls, elevators, HVAC (heating and air-conditioning system) duct work, plumbing and mechanical equipment will be new. Even the parking lot is being repaved.

The building has both deck parking in back and the shopping center's front lot, which Boltansky says will be adequate for the state and county agencies. He adds that parking demands will hopefully be lessened by a new program initiated by the MTA that allows state employees to ride city buses for free.

The extensive renovation of the retail space that has stood empty for the past two years also includes the installation of 200 new windows.

Boltansky says this is much more easily accomplished by entirely rebuilding the walls rather than trying to retrofit the windows into the existing walls.

The windows, he adds, "were one of the main selling points for the state and county" in the decision to relocate to the old Caldor's site.

Presently, about 25 demolition workers, along with a few carpenters and electricians, are laying waste to the north side of

the building. Jumbled piles of shattered concrete, brick and twisted metal frames from the demolished walls and innards of the structure are being dismantled, bulldozed into huge piles and eventually will be hauled away.

All in all, the old Caldor's looks a bit like a bombsite _ or, you might say, a touch of Bierut in South Baltimore County.

Once the actual rebuilding gets under way Boltansky says about 200 people a day will be working on the site. The renovations of the 165,000 square-foot building, which was built in 1954 and first accommodated a Stewart's department store, will include a 12,000-square-foot addition. This will be in the form of a new third floor on the northern end of the building.

The project is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year. "We'll have them in by the fourth quarter," Boltansky says, referring to the county and state workers who will be the new tenants. A final price tag on the project has not yet been determined, though Boltansky says it will be "significant."

"We're working the budgets every day and bids are still coming in from some of the subcontractors," he adds. "We're actually letting contracts daily right now."

There are still a few vacancies in the adjoining retail space of the mixed use shopping center. But it is currently being advertised, and Boltansky is confident that "we'll get a good response and the retail component will take off" when the 1,000 office workers take occupancy.

"The shopping center across the street is very successful," he adds, referring to York Road Plaza. "We hope to complement that."