

The Reflector – MSU's online student newspaper

Issue date: 9/12/08

Group plans Mill project

Lawrence Simmons

The landscape of Mississippi State University and the city of Starkville could potentially change with the development of the Cotton Mill Marketplace.

Mark Nicholas of Nicholas Properties LLC said the Cotton Mill Marketplace will be a true mixed-use facility.



"It will encompass 35 acres that will have student housing, restaurants, fine dining and great retail specialty shops, along with national retail shops," he said.

The total project cost is at \$200 million and the marketplace is projected to be ready by the fall of 2010.

"We will start on this development by November or December of this year," he said. "Currently, it's a little under one million square feet of development.

Vice president for finance and administration Mike McGrevey said the Marketplace will serve as a beautiful gateway for the university and the city.

"I see it having a positive impact the development of this caliber right outside our main gate," he said. "We want things around the university to complement it in terms of quality of life and opportunities for students."

Since parking is one of the biggest problems on campus, students will have the convenience of walking to campus, McGrevey said.

"In my opinion, their proximity to the university would make them very competitive in terms of leasing their housing," he said.

According to McGrevey, this could be the anchor project for future development in Starkville.

The historic Cooley Building will become a conference center while having space upstairs, Nichols said.

"This was an opportunity to meet one of our goals with the establishment of a conference center adjacent to the university," he said. "It is an important part in furthering our mission of research, learning and service."

Director of the office of campus and planning Jim Jones and Jeffrey Rupp, community relations coordinator for the MSU crisis action team, are also helping with this project, McGrevey said.

"They are working the nuts and bolts with the developers for this project," he said.

Jones said he and Rupp are working to ensure that the university's best interests are met as well as the legal and administrative procedures following.

Ward 5 Alderman Matt Cox said this development will be a defining moment for Starkville.

"This type of development is what you typically find in a big city," he said. "These types of lifestyle centers are not being built anymore because of the national economy, and yet we have some unique things going on in Starkville."

The Cotton Mill Market Place will also have a significant economic impact since the city's budget is based on sales tax, Cox said.

"It's great from a tax standpoint," he said. "This is what pays for our basic city services."

Starkville city planner Ben Griffith said currently at the site some existing utilities will have to be removed, relocated and replaced.

"The main thing right now for them is to put the backbone in for the utilities," he said. "I think that once they have their ground work done, their next step is the PUD [Planned Unit Development] submittal."

McGrevey said excitement is building because of the project and the opportunities it presents to the university.

"We are extremely pleased that these developers have elected to invest in our community to make it a better place to live, work, learn and play," he said. "We are all committed to Cotton Mill's pleasing addition to the university that clearly fosters economic development by creating jobs, tax base, revenue and the quality of life."