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Longhorn Steakhouse

Final retail construction at 1890 Ranch - Longhorn Steakhouse By SCOTT W. COLEMAN Correspondent Hill Country News

The last plot at Cedar Park's 1890 Ranch shopping center is now under construction. Just this year, Logan's Roadhouse and Mighty Fine Burgers joined the growing number of restaurants in 1890 Ranch. Now, the last retail plot is being built out for a new 6200-square-foot Longhorn Steakhouse.

The 575,000-square-foot shopping center, which is Cedar Park's largest major retail center, first opened in 2007. Construction has been nearly constant since then and the center now boasts better than 90-percent occupancy and a wide range of tenants that are among the most productive in the Austin metro area.

Orlando, Fla.-based Darden Restaurants, owner of the Longhorn Steakhouse brand, is on an aggressive expansion push. The company, which now has more than 360 restaurants open for business across the country, is known for developing locations near highly trafficked, upscale shopping centers.

The Cedar Park location will be the company's second in the Austin area. A location at Round Rock's La Frontera center is scheduled to open the first week of December. The 1890 Ranch location should open by the end of January 2012.

When open, the restaurant will seat around 240 guests and employ about 85 people from the local area.

While 1890 Ranch has experienced tremendous growth over the past four years, the economy and ongoing road construction have taken a toll, and the center has occasionally struggled to keep long-term tenants - particularly in the back of the facility near the Cinemark Cedar Park theater. However, Cedar Park economic development officials say

that despite those issues, 1890 Ranch has been a bright spot on the retail landscape during the recession.

In 2009, when sales tax figures started to slow due to the economic recession, sales at 1890 Ranch made up about 7 percent of Cedar Park's sales tax revenue. Today, the shops at 1890 Ranch generate about 14-percent of the city's sales tax revenue.

And while, ongoing road construction near the complex has been a hindrance to retail traffic, developers say that in the long run, ease of access for residents in Cedar Park, Leander and beyond could make 1890 Ranch one of the most successful shopping centers in the Austin metro area.

A key driver for any retail development's success is ease of access to the buying public. More than 137,000 people live within five miles of the 1431/183A intersection. The nearest comparable shopping area for many of the area's residents is eight miles to the east at 1431 and I-35. Lakeline Mall is five miles to the south.

"This is a great location for a development like this," said Phil Brewer, Cedar Park's economic development director. "There's nothing else like it nearby. 1890 Ranch filled a void. We didn't have the shopping or entertainment options here, so people were going down to Austin or over to Round Rock."