

Rowan Boulevard a win-win situation Development to benefit Glassboro and university

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GLASSBORO

With the next phase of the Rowan Boulevard project set to break ground this summer, officials are counting the ways the project will benefit both Rowan University and the borough.

The \$300 million redevelopment project is so named for the new roadway, lined with housing, restaurants and retail stores, that will connect Glassboro's downtown to Rowan students with expendable income.

"We found out that students were not spending their discretionary funds in downtown Glassboro," said Mayor Leo McCabe. He added the project will not only boost quality of life for students, but also for long-standing residents of Glassboro.

"It's going to be a dynamic place to be."

Officials are trying to remake the borough into what they are calling "The Quintessential College Town," highlighting the relationship between the university and the borough.

McCabe said his favorite way to describe the relationship between the institution and the community that surrounds it, "As Glassboro goes, so goes Rowan, and as Rowan goes, so goes Glassboro."

McCabe said one of the greatest sources of frustration for the 20,000 residents of Glassboro was the lack of taxes paid by the seasonal residents of Glassboro. That was solved with apartment-style student housing, built on the former site of 96 properties — including a school, church and dozens of homes. Those proper-

ties were acquired for about \$5 million by the principal redevelopment partner, SORA Holdings LLC, in 2008. The housing is built and owned by SORA, which leases it to the university.

Tax revenue from the first phase of housing — which is See **PROJECT**, Page 13A home to more than 800 students — has helped buffer a budget shortfall this year, generating more than \$500,000 for the borough. That same land brought in only \$74,000 in prior years. But officials still are contemplating four furlough days for borough employees this year.

The second set of student apartments — which will house 324 students — will be completed this August. A two-story Barnes & Noble, with a Starbucks Coffee, is expected to be finished by November.

The developer plans to break ground on a Marriott Courtyard Hotel and Conference Center and two mixed-use retail buildings in early September, completing the projects by winter 2011.

The hotel will provide 100 rooms and a total of 2,654 square feet of meeting space, as well as a 6,000-square-foot restaurant. The mixed-use space will have street-level retail and housing for honors students on the upper floors of one building, and a 1,218-space parking garage on the other.

Business Administrator Joe Brigandi said a study

was done showing only 18 percent of discretionary spending by Rowan students was done in Glassboro's downtown. He said with Rowan Boulevard providing safe passage between the university and the downtown — along with fresh retail — he expects more of those dollars to stay in town.

Incoming accounting junior Nicole Zuchowicz, 20, who is transferring from Gloucester County College, said she was excited about the developments, especially the Barnes & Noble and Starbucks.

"I think it's awesome and it's going to be exciting," said Zuchowicz, who grew up in Glassboro. "It's not what it used to be. This makes me want to hang out here."

Graduating senior Desiree Macey, 23, of Pemberton Township, said she wishes she was going to be around for the developments.

"It looks like a totally new campus," said the education and mathematics double major. "I think if this was around, I would've been on campus more."

Rowan spokesman Joe Cardona said the biggest impact of the project is on recruitment, with the proposed retail and restaurants viewed as both entertainment and job sources for future students.

"It's a selling point," Cardona said.

Last fall, the university enrolled its largest fresh-



man class of about 1,700 students and 1,022 transfer students. Thomas Gallia, vice president for university relations, said applications for this fall's enrollment went up by 18 percent from last year, to about 8,600 applications for 1,500 spots.

"Part of that can be attributed to Rowan Boulevard," he added.

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AVI STEINHARDT/Courier-Post

Tom Fore of SORA Holdings shows an artist's rendering of what Rowan Boulevard will look like. The development is expected to benefit Glassboro and Rowan University.



AVI STEINHARDT/Courier-Post

A two-story Barnes & Noble bookstore is under construction on Rowan Boulevard in Glassboro. The bookstore is set to open in November.



AVI STEINHARDT/Courier-Post

An artist's rendering shows the commercial and residential developments planned for Rowan Boulevard in Glassboro.