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### Proud Livingston shows off start of town center

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Visitors can have a bite to eat, check out the new shops and enjoy some free entertainment as the first phase of the Livingston Town Center opens this weekend, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony Saturday morning followed by an afternoon street fair.

Though the whole center won't be completed for another year, township and business leaders are ready to show it off after two years of construction at the intersection of Livingston and Mount Pleasant avenues.

The \$70 million center has 50,000 square feet of ground-level stores, 20,000 square feet of office space and a 228-space parking garage. Inside the center are luxury apartments and townhouses, a parking deck, and the outside border features new single-family homes.

"A lot of people are curious, some people have been coming in," said Peter Schofel, one of the principal developers of the complex. "The site looks phenomenal."

Schofel said this weekend's events are to show off the 14 retail stores and one restaurant that already have opened at the center. The ceremony also includes rededicating Lions Park in front of the Town Center flagpole and unveiling a new street sign in honor of Seymour Schram, longtime owner of Seymour's Luncheonette.

Schofel said the ribbon-cutting will start at 8:45 a.m. Saturday and last until around 10 a.m., then the activities will take a break so residents can participate in other township events scheduled for the Memorial Day weekend. At 2 p.m., the street fair will begin at the center, with live bluegrass and folk music and jugglers, and merchants showing off their wares on outdoor tables.

Though additional shops will open in the future, Schofel, of Eastman Cos., said 90 percent of the ground-floor retail space has been leased, along with several second-floor spaces.

Debbie Cleary, director of sales for the town center, said the walkway from the retail area leads to the sales center, where visitors can inquire about the 66 four-story brick townhouses and the 21 apartments, which feature doorman service and a rooftop pool. Tenants will start moving into the apartments at the end of May and into the townhouses in June, she said.

"It's beyond what we imagined," she said of the project. "It's coming to life ... Next year at this time it will be finished."

For years, township leaders struggled over what to do with the site, a retail area that had become dilapidated. In 2000, the idea for the new town center emerged, and in 2002, the township council approved the plan, which is being built by a trio of developers.

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