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Three new retail stores coming to Meridian

Nation's largest sporting goods chain is among retailers attracted by traffic, nearby homes at Eagle & Ustick.

Dick's Sporting Goods Inc., which has more than 400 stores in 43 states, will open its first store in Idaho in the spring in CentrePoint Marketplace.

At about the same time, Pristine Pools and Spas LLC will open a 24,000-square foot showroom, retail and design center across the street about 30 feet north of Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse.

And on Feb. 1, Hobby Lobby, which specializes in arts and craft supplies, will hold the grand opening for its first Idaho store, a new 55,000-square-foot, \$5.5 million building also located in CentrePoint Marketplace. It announced its plans to enter the Idaho market in August.

Retailers are moving to the area because more than 180,000 people live within five miles of Ustick and Eagle, and 380,000 within 10 miles, Meridian Mayor Tammy deWeerd said.

"The available population is noteworthy for businesses looking for a location," DeWeerd said. "And we're certainly hopeful that these are signs that our economy is turning around."

The companies also are being drawn to that area by the estimated 60,000 vehicles that pass through the intersection daily, making it one of the most heavily traveled areas in the Treasure Valley, said Winston H. Moore, developer of CentrePoint Marketplace and founder of W.H. Moore Co.

Idaho's outdoor lifestyle and relatively young population also are driving retailers to look at the Meridian market, Boise economist John Church said.

"The right attitude is that the economy is bad, but it's going to recover," Church said. "And Meridian is poised to attract more retail. The economy has slowed it down, but the population growth you've seen means it's going to happen."

Dick's is setting up shop in the store vacated when Joe's Sports, Outdoors and More filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy liquidation last year. Renovations on the 52,000-square-foot building are expected to start in the next month.

It was not immediately clear how many employees the store would hire. But if this store is successful, plans call for additional stores in Southeast Boise, Nampa and a third undetermined location over the next two years, Moore said. "Dick's Sporting Goods is a very prestigious company," he said. "It's a real coup to get them here."

The Meridian store is part of the company's push into the Pacific Northwest market. Another six Dick's Sporting Goods Stores are planned for Washington state, and seven more for Oregon - all in former Joe's locations.

All three projects have provided some badly needed construction work. About 50 workers were needed to put up the Hobby Lobby building, while about 40 workers will be needed to renovate the old Joe's building, at a cost of \$3 million, said Steve Vlassek, marketing director for W.H. Moore.

Pristine Pools and Spas owner TJ Brown, who estimates construction costs on his new building at about \$3 million, said it will require more than 100 construction workers. Brown said Pristine Pools and Spas wants to take advantage of the same lower construction costs that have caused Walmart, the world's largest retailer, to claim that for every two stores they build, they get one for free. "The market is not going to be down forever," Brown said. "Now is the perfect time to build."

Official groundbreaking ceremonies have been scheduled for Jan. 12. "Pristine Pools is a great addition to our community," de Weerd said. "This facility and showroom will be the first of its kind in Idaho and brings the possibilities to life in a virtual outdoor showroom.

Its new facility will consist of a 21,000-square-foot lower floor that will feature showroom, retail and a design center, as well as 7,500-square feet of warehouse and storage space. A 3,000-square foot partial mezzanine will house office and administrative space.