



## Reborn Prado taking shape every day

by John F. Schaffner

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Less than three months before the Oct. 12 opening of the Target store, the rebirth of the Prado center on Roswell Road just inside I-285 is happening in dramatic fashion.

Hundreds of workers scurry across the site, constructing buildings, finishing off the four-level parking deck, putting in sidewalks, planting trees and bushes, and sprucing up the only remaining building of the original 35-year-old development as all is made ready for the emergence of a new Sandy Springs shopping and dining mecca just around the corner.

Those who drive past it on Roswell Road now see the transformation taking place daily, where for months they wondered if the promises would ever become reality.

All will not grandly open Oct. 12, but most of the center will open between that day and the end of the year. Home Depot and Circuit City are not expected to begin construction until this fall, said Scott McLane, director of development for The Sembler Co., which put the property under contract in 2005 and began construction in March 2007.

"We are pretty much through with the city in terms of permitting," McLane said. "We have a couple of buildings that are still in for permits and one sign variance – for Target." There was not a quorum for the July meeting of the Board of Zoning Appeal, so they will try again in August.

Responding to a question about the Target complex sitting up higher than originally expected by residential neighbors, he said: "The grade at that end of the site has changed from what was shown in some of the early sessions to the Carriage Gate town homes people. It is not a change in terms of the permitted, approved drawings."

Asked whether the Target sign also will be higher than originally anticipated, he answered: "That's tough, because at the time we zoned the project, I don't know that the architecture and design were anticipated. The element that they are using is relatively new to the Target vocabulary. Not all the stores have that tower."

Sembler recently solved its problems with the Carriage Gate residents regarding the height of a wall and landscaping buffer between that development and the back of the Target, Circuit City and Staples buildings by agreeing to additional tree plantings.

McLane said you now can see construction on the Publix grocery store, which will be similar to the one at Hammond Drive and Peachtree-Dunwoody Road.

There will be an at-grade crosswalk to Publix from the third level of the parking deck. "Originally, three years ago, there was an elevated crosswalk over to Publix," McLane said, "but it has all come back to grade."

The building under construction at the corner of Roswell Road and Lake Placid will have Starbucks and T-Mobile stores in it. RBC bank and Publix are on either side of the Main Street entrance off Roswell Road. To the south of Publix is a retail building with three tenants,

including two restaurants.

Then there is the Target entrance. There are traffic signals there and at Lake Placid, but the Main Street entrance at Roswell Road is right in and right out only and has no signal.

As for the remaining portion of the former development, it will remain the same, with the same tenants and some improvements, such as a new roof, new paint and new lighting. "The biggest transformation ... will be the landscaping and hardscape," McLane said, "everything out front – new sidewalks, some trellises and seating areas. It will look very different and updated."

All of the facades are a combination of brick, glass and stucco, but primarily brick. Sembler is leaving the facade of the old building.

The lower pad at the western part of the development will be just Home Depot. An application has been submitted for the building permit, but McLane does not know when construction will start.

The two-story shop building on Main Street that forms the facade for the parking deck will have a variety of restaurants facing the road on the street level. The upper-level shops will front onto the parking deck at the Publix level.

"Those would be the type of shops you would see typically in a neighborhood shopping center," McLane said.

Parking level 1 is the Home Depot level, P2 is the Main Street level, P3 is the Publix level, and P4 is the Target level.

The topography and rocks on the site were particularly challenging, according to McLane. "There is 115 feet of vertical drop from the southeast corner to the northwest corner. The front third is almost solid granite. On the civil side, it was a very challenging project."

There also were challenges with the existing tenants. The place was pretty much fully leased when Sembler purchased it.

A little more than half of the site was owned by Katzu. Its Kobe restaurant and 5 Seasons Brewing are staying. McLane said, "They are great tenants, and we obviously want them as part of our center."

Dennis Lange, one of the owners of 5 Seasons, is looking forward to construction being over and the new center being open. He thinks it will be fabulous, although there have been some rough times getting through the construction phase. One problem was a lack of parking for patrons of his restaurant, even when Sembler provided free valet parking.

But after the dust settles, he will have it better than the new tenants. He has a lease with options for renewals that sets his rent at about \$17 a square foot. The new tenants across Main Street from him will pay in the range of \$37 per square foot. □

The Prado's tenants

Newcomers

The Home Depot, Target (opening October), Publix, Staples, Circuit City, Starbucks, T-Mobile, Fatburger, Genki, Larry's Giant Subs, Mirko Pasta, Inta Juice, Great Clips, RBC – Royal Bank of Canada, Taco Mac, Carriage Cleaners, Panda Express, Mattress Giant, Nail Talk & Tan,

## Holdovers

Peter Glenn Ski & Sports, Kobe Steaks, Joli Kobe Café & Bakery, 5 Seasons Brewery, International School of Skin and Nails



**Aerial view of the Prado project.**



**Scott McLane, director of development for The Sembler Company, points to some of the construction work going on at the Prado center in Sandy Springs.**