

Westcor readies to break ground on Estrella Falls mall

by **Elias C. Arnold** - Jan. 26, 2009 07:28 AM
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After much anticipation, developer Westcor is on track to break ground on its outdoor regional mall in Goodyear within a couple of months, company officials said.

The Estrella Falls mall will cluster similar stores and incorporate storefront parking, making the shopping experience as easy as possible.

Sheila Hunter, a senior property manager for Westcor, said Estrella Falls' design distinguishes it from older malls that were laid out to get shoppers to walk by every store.

"It's just not convenient for the shopper," Hunter said during a recent Southwest Valley Chamber of Commerce luncheon.

Westcor's presentation comes as Goodyear reviews the plans for Estrella Falls before Westcor can secure a building permit.

Early last year, Phoenix-based Westcor decided to postpone the mall's opening to fall 2010, a 14-month delay, largely because of the weak economy.

Asked about the reliability of Westcor's financing in light of the recession, Hunter said, "We would not move forward unless we had the financing."

The 107-acre mall will include about 974,000 square feet of retail space. Macy's, Dillard's, Coach and Industrial Rideshop have already signed on.

Estrella Falls will resemble SanTan Village, the Gilbert property that Hunter manages for Westcor. Both have storefront parking and open-air streets between the buildings.

Estrella Falls also will group together stores that target the same clientele, she said. Children's stores, for example, would be centered on the kids' play area.

The mall is part of a 330-acre mixed-use project that will be developed over 10 to 15 years.

The project could reflect nearly \$1 billion in infrastructure, retailer and developer investment over that period, said Garrett Newland, vice president of development for Westcor.

The first phase of the project, a power center called Market at Estrella Falls, opened in September. Retailers include Petco, Staples and Bashas'.

"I'd say they're doing pretty well considering the market dynamics right now," Newland said of the center.