

# NAPLES BIG CYPRESS MARKET PLACE



Tradesman Joe Soliz spreads mortar on the second floor of the food arena at the Naples Big Cypress Market Place on Sept. 7. The 87,000-square-foot shopping and entertainment center on U.S. 41 East in East Naples is scheduled to open in November. *David Albers/Staff (2)*

## TAKING SHAPE

*87,000-square-foot marketplace will include flea market, winery, entertainment area*

By **KATY BISHOP**

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A massive marketplace is rising in southeast Collier County, and developers plan to open it in time for the Christmas shopping season.

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The Naples Big Cypress Market Place on U.S. 41 East is 87,000 square feet — a little smaller than a traditional Wal-Mart — and will include an indoor flea market, winery, entertainment area and

convention center.

"It's just going to be one unbelievable place," said Jean Cromley, who has rented six booths and four



Construction continues at the Naples Big Cypress Market Place. A little smaller than a Wal-Mart, the shopping and entertainment center will include an indoor flea market, winery, entertainment area and convention center.

# Market

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tables for her wig business in the flea market area. "I'm so excited about it I just can't stand it."

Ninety merchants have rented about 70 percent of the 300 booths that make up the "upscale flea market," said Clare Ulik, spokeswoman for the developer, Basik Development.

Cromley's business, Panache Total Image Wigs and Hairpieces, will offer wigs and hairpieces in about 500 styles, she said, and she and her team will thin, cut and style the wigs on site. She's been in the Flamingo Island Flea Market in Bonita Springs for nine years.

Panache is "high class" or "putting a feather in your hat, so we tell people after they've got their wigs that they've been panached," she said, with a laugh.

The planned market has been popular with entrepreneurs of all types, especially people who are looking to start or expand a business with lower overhead costs than a stand-alone storefront, developer Keith Basik said.

Booth prices in the flea market area range from \$340 per month for an aisle table to \$620 per month for an 11-foot by 11-foot booth space, said Ulik, the Basik Development spokeswoman.

Julie Griffin, who owns a retail clothing store on Fifth Avenue South in Naples called Julie's of Naples, has reserved two booths in the marketplace and is excited to move in, she said.

She will be selling accessories, jewelry and a few clothing items.

"Being on Fifth is great," she said, "but I think everybody knows it's been a rough year in particular and a rough few years. Fifth ... doesn't always get the locals or the people who have a misconception ... that everything is expensive."

Griffin, who has been in business for 11 years, hopes her marketplace booth will reach out to a customer who might not go shopping on Naples' main street.

"(It will give) you a chance to see a lot of different things without walking in some gigantic mall," Griffin said. "... I think it's going to be a really fun atmosphere and the overhead isn't anywhere near what I pay on Fifth."

Visiting the flea market will be like shopping at about 120 stores, Ulik said. Other merchants will be selling everything from furniture and real estate to Amish foods and beauty products.

## Entertainment, food and wine

The building's shell is

nearly complete, and recently a crane sat in the center of the six-sided arena as it lifted 2,000- to 8,000-pound pieces of concrete up to create the second floor.

Sunlight and blue sky was visible through the frame of the roof, which is 50 feet high.

Food vendors will circle the first floor of the hexagon-shaped arena and the second floor will provide a seating area that overlooks the first floor. Food vendors will include Subway, Five Brothers Pizza, Taco Ardiente and Boston Street Cafe.

"This is going to be a different type of marketplace," said Joe Candito, Subway's Southwest Florida developing agent, when asked why the franchise decided to open a location there. "I just thought it was going to be a unique experience for the public and we wanted to be a part of it."

The arena — which is 7,500 square feet on the first floor and another 3,000 on the second floor — will have a stage area for comedy and musical acts, and other types of entertainment, including possibly parlor slot machines.

Nearby, a retail winery area will focus on educating people about the wine-making process.

Grape juice will be imported from California, Washington, Italy, Argentina and

Chile to be fermented and aged on site, and will be sold in bottles with labels that can be personalized for corporate gifts, events or presents, Ulik said.

Just outside the winery area is a small demonstration vineyard.

Nearby, produce vendors will occupy an open-air gazebo and will be selling fruits and vegetables including lettuce, tomatoes, carrots, strawberries and more. About 70 percent of the produce will come from Immokalee, Ulik said.

## Convention center

The complex also has a 14,000-square-foot expo space, where the operators hope to host trade shows, sporting and other events, Ulik said.

The Naples, Marco Island, Everglades Convention and Visitor's Bureau has spoken with the developers about locating some sporting events there, said Jack Wert, executive director of the tourism bureau.

"They're probably the only place in the area that has that kind of contiguous space ... available as one single room," Wert said. "... It really is too early to tell (what kind of impact it will have) but we really hope that the space itself will be useful."