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SearStone construction to begin soon

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Construction is expected to begin as early as February on the first of two planned developments on adjacent corners of the High House Road and Davis Drive intersection.

Last month, Sears Farm, LLC, locked in a deal to sell 14 acres of land at the intersection of Charlotte-based Atlantic Ave., LLC, a commercial development group. Atlantic Ave. is expected to begin construction soon on the retail component of SearStone, a mixed-use continuing-care retirement community that will also feature a medical office building, an upscale hotel and a botanical conservatory, among other things.

Bill Sears, who has led the SearStone effort, last week said CVS Pharmacy would be the first of several retailers expected to open stores in the development. Sears said several financial institutions might also open new branches in SearStone. The Sears family lived on the site for generations.

Construction of the residential portion of the development should begin sometime in the fall. Laura Lowe, director of sales and marketing for SearStone, said the N.C. Department of Insurance requires developers to



SearStone development entrance.
Rendering courtesy of S&A Cherokee
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pre-sell 70 percent of the housing units within a retirement community like SearStone before building starts.

SearStone will feature 409 continuing-care units for people 62 and older. There will also be so-called "active adult living units" for residents ages 55 and up.

"This is not a typical retirement community," Sears said. "This is an active adult community for older adults, whether they're retired or not."

Sears said he originally envisioned and designed the project as a community where his parents could live. But when he finished the initial design, Sears said he thought the project had far greater potential.

"When I finished the concept, I realized that this is a place where my wife and I would also like to live," he said. "And I found out it's a place where a lot of our friends would like to be."

"It's more all-encompassing than anything I ever could have imagined," Sears continued. "This project began as a snowball and kept growing and growing. This community is going to turn into a pattern for lifestyles of the future."

Meanwhile, a second mixed-use development proposed by Charlotte-based Crosland LLC for the northeast quadrant of the intersection of High House Road and Davis Drive remains in the early stages of development.

Jeff Ulma, the Town of Cary's planning director, said Crosland won approval last summer of an initial site plan for the Bradford development, which the firm initially planned to call Cornerstone.

According to a plan submitted by Crosland in the second quarter of 2008, Bradford is expected to contain 370 apartments, 20 townhomes and a combined 140,000 square feet of commercial and office space.

Ulma said his staff met with developers from Crosland before Christmas, at which time they discussed some adjustments to the site plan. He said he would not be surprised if

changes were made before a final site plan is approved.

Officials at Crosland could not be reached last week for comment on the project.

"Like many other developers, Crosland is dealing with the present economic situation with financing and investors and tenants," Ulma said. "But they're still continuing to work on it."

Both SearStone and the Crosland development aroused controversy when the projects were first proposed in 2007. Residents living near the intersection expressed concerns about growth and the amount of traffic they feared would be generated by new development.

Opposition to the projects led a group of residents to rally against the developments. The group created a Web site, [davisandhigh house.org](http://davisandhighhouse.org), and turned out in force during the October 2007 mayoral election to boost then-challenger Harold Weinbrecht to an easy win over incumbent Ernie McAlister, who had voted to approve both projects.

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