

Glassboro, Rowan redevelopment kicks off

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

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GLASSBORO Officials broke ground on the main corridor of Rowan Boulevard Monday, calling the project a national model for a college town.

"At a meeting I attended last week, President Obama talked about his strategy for the nation's economy, and that strategy is already at work in Glassboro," said U.S. Rep. Rob Andrews, D-1st Dist., of Haddon Heights. "This project made possible through public, private and university funding will create 400 short-term construction jobs and 300 to 400 permanent jobs. We call this project 'stimulus plus' because it is farsighted and visionary, and it creates an even more vibrant Rowan University and Glassboro."

The \$3.1 million Rowan Boulevard is sited at the center of the borough's 26-acre downtown revitalization project. The new 100-foot wide corridor will stretch one third of a mile from the eastern edge of Rowan University's campus to the center of Glassboro's aging downtown business district. The boulevard is planned to feature broad sidewalks lined with stores, restaurants, mixed-use buildings, a hotel-conference center, public piazzas and a new town square.

Borough Administrator Joe Brigandi Jr. thanked Andrews for helping the borough secure approximately \$1 million in federal funding for the roadway as well as other local legislators who facilitated \$2.4 million in grants.

"It seems like only yesterday, though it was 10 years ago, that a bunch of us got together and came up with this idea for redevelopment, and now we're breaking ground on a project that will create hundreds of jobs," said Brigandi. "Without our partnership with Rowan, none of this would be possible. We're in the process of creating something important in these hard economic times."

When completed, the Rowan Boulevard district will include student housing, a new hotel and conference center, retail stores and restaurants as well as office and residential space. Construction has already begun on a four-story, apartment-style campus residence building that will accommodate 884 Rowan students.

Construction start for a 107-room Holiday Inn Express & Suites is planned for fall, while a 36,000-square-foot Barnes & Noble bookstore has received site-plan approval. The B&N is planned as an anchor store for the boulevard community.

"This is the kind of project that can only happen with a constancy of vision," said Rowan University President Dr. Donald Farish. "The project itself is really a mosaic, and all the pieces are necessary. For the university, there are 1500 additional student beds coming within the next three years, and those students will have the opportunity to work at local businesses to help pay their way through school."

"We're positive this project will unite 'town and gown' into a seamless whole," Farish said.