

Tigerweekly May 2, 2007

JTS Interests' Spinosa talks Perkins Rowe

JT S Interests president and CEO Tommy Spinosa said the Perkins Rowe development is on schedule with the grand opening coming sometime in October this year, as the weather cools.

Spinosa said he believes Perkins Rowe could play a major role in the further development of Baton Rouge's downtown area.

Spinosa also hinted at his company's current involvement in Baton Rouge's growing media industry.

"We have been working on the project [Perkins Rowe] since 2003," said Spinosa. "Our expectations have not changed much since its original inception. I believe the Baton Rouge community will be very pleased with what is delivered and will strongly embrace Perkins Rowe."

Perkins Rowe's current construction phase was funded by both JTS Interests and a \$170 million loan secured last September. Spinosa expects it to be completed on or about August 15 this year.

He and his company are not new to major developments in Baton Rouge. The company was responsible for such developments as the Citiplace development as well as the Market Center development.

The Perkins Rowe development is described as being a 54-acre "virtual living room." And it will host such locales as a Barnes & Noble, a Cinemark Theater, The Fresh Market and a Bally Total Fitness.

But as Perkins Rowe nears its grand opening, the Perkins Road widening project is just really beginning.

James construction Group is the contractor responsible for the roadway project, which stretches three miles from Essen Lane to Siegen Lane and will expand the roadway to five lanes with curbs, gutters and sidewalks.

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development has put the completion date for the \$27 million roadway project sometime in January of 2010.

But, Spinosa said the roadway project hasn't caused him any concern for the Perkins Rowe development and he and his company have been working with James Construction Group to make the transition process as smooth as possible.

"We don't see the expansion of Perkins Road driving anyone away," said Spinosa. "We see the expansion, along with the new Picardy extension, allowing greater ingress or egress to Perkins Rowe and a general improvement in the movement of traffic in the surrounding area."

A peculiarity with the Perkins Rowe development is the McDonald's on Perkins Road at the edge of the development.

"Although the current design is not consistent with the compact, high-density design of Perkins Rowe, hopefully McDonald's will, over time, incorporate some of Perkins Rowe features," said Spinosa. "McDonald's has been great a neighbor

throughout the construction period of Perkins Rowe.”

Spinosa said the shopping, dining, entertainment, office and residential options Perkins Rowe offers are an obvious draw for people to come to the development, but hinted there was more to come.

As Perkins Rowe comes to life, it could have a parasitic impact on Baton Rouge’s downtown development plans. Perkins Rowe basically promises to be everything Baton Rouge’s downtown is trying to be and could draw people away from the downtown area.

Downtown Development District executive director Davis Rhorer said he has no control over other developments and he and his team can only work to make the downtown are the best it can be.

Spinosa said he and his company have not been active in the downtown area, but are strong proponents of the further development of downtown Baton Rouge.

To the contrary of Perkins Rowe drawing people away from the downtown area, Spinosa said he believes Perkins Rowe can play a major role in helping the downtown area further develop.

“Many people still do not embrace an urban lifestyle. Perkins Rowe’s compact, high-density design will show this to be a lifestyle option,” said Spinosa. “Perkins Rowe’s success could help spur additional development in and around Downtown Baton Rouge.”

Spinosa said the local media industry appears to be making major strides.

Baton Rouge will soon see a 50,000 square foot sound stage. Such a sound stage could possibly be the largest in the world.

And the sound stage, which is just one of 18 sound stages ranging from 18,000 to 50,000 square feet, is just part of a \$1.6 billion mixed-use development, which includes a \$955 million movie studio, according to the Advocate.

Spinosa said he and his company are involved in the development of some components of the local media industry. Specifically, he said JTS Interests has its hand in media, entertainment and video projects.

And he said the extent of JTS Interests’ involvement would be forthcoming soon.

“Anything that further develops our culture [i.e., the arts] is the right direction and I strongly support it,” says Spinosa.

Spinosa established JTS Interests back in 1978 and the company is headquartered in Baton Rouge.

He also serves as a board member for the Tiger Athletic Foundation and was willing to make a prediction on next seasons game against the Nick Saban led Crimson Tide.

“The pounding that Alabama will take will be tremendous,” said Spinosa. “We are already preparing for the after party at Perkins Rowe. Hope to see you there.”