

## **SCRIBNER PLACE: Construction nearly 60 percent completed**

By **ERIC SCOTT CAMPBELL**

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— Members of the Caesars Foundation of Floyd County's Board of Directors toured Scribner Place construction Friday afternoon. They seemed confident of getting their money's worth.

Project Manager Les Smith estimated the YMCA fitness center and aquatic center is 60 percent complete.

The foundation is funding the large majority of the \$18 million construction bill.

"They're really coming along," observed County Commissioner Mark Seabrook.

Construction Manager Mark Shireman said progress is on schedule.

"We want to be done for Harvest Homecoming, and we're on target for that," Shireman said, referring to the New Albany festival held downtown each October. "We're in pretty good shape."

Foundation board members and officials joined the site's co-owners — New Albany government and the YMCA of Southern Indiana — in examining the 80,000-square-foot interior. Work continued on all three floors and in the basement while they did.

Some landmark pieces are in place, as are the skeletons to others.

First-floor walls are mostly metal frames. The majority of floors have been poured, though not for the second-floor walking track, whose curved frame has been erected. Piles of gravel sit where the six-lane lap pool will be. The three-floor gap for a climbing wall is becoming apparent as things take shape around it.

Though there have been "routine" changes in design, no components have been added or subtracted since groundbreaking, Smith said.

Local leaders are counting on Scribner Place to be the keystone of a downtown revitalization. Since construction began in October 2006, a variety of new businesses have opened. Some have succeeded while others folded, a pattern Mayor James Garner predicts will continue in the months ahead.

"I think we'll see more of the same until it opens, and then over six to nine months, you'll get more interest," Garner said.

Sixty to 100 workers are on site each day, Smith said, and extreme weather "took its toll" on them this year.

"Last year was wet and this summer was hot and dry," Smith said. "We never quit working, but it was hard on the men. Ten-hour days, six days a week."

The "somewhat confined" downtown setting has made for little elbow room, but local merchants were supportive of the "dirt and noise" produced, Smith said.

He expects the entire roof to be in place in the next few weeks, targeting the end of January for full enclosure of the building.

Enclosure should improve site security. A thief broke open a pipe and stole copper wire sometime in the summer, requiring \$2,500 in repairs, and graffiti was sprayed in the basement during the spring.

However, vandals "have pretty much left us alone," Smith said.

YMCA Executive Director Joe LaRocca pointed out to his fellow tourists that the glass-enclosed lobby's design allows visitors to see multiple activities upon entrance.

"That's kind of the way Y's are being built these days," said LaRocca, whose organization has raised \$6.8 million of the \$8 million it pledged toward the project.

Melissa Wilson, LaRocca's assistant, has recently accompanied tours every week and said she notices newly completed features each time.

A proposed second phase of Scribner Place, a hotel and convention center development, remains in the planning stages, Garner said.

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Photos



Scribner Place project manager Les Smith, second from left, described construction techniques outside the project Friday afternoon during a guided tour. Staff photo by Kevin McGloshen



Members of the tour stand inside a cavernous room that will eventually house a six lane, 25 yard swimming pool at Scribner Place. Staff photo by Kevin McGloshen