

## First transit-oriented development in TN breaks ground



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By **PATRICK HALL**  
The Wilson Post

A one-of-a-kind transit-oriented development broke ground yesterday as developers Jack and Rick Bell celebrated the start of construction of Hamilton Springs, which could house residents this time next year.

Rick Bell said the location of the development off Highway 70, across from Richmond Hills subdivision, was once the site of a mineral springs resort almost 100 years ago, where people would travel from Nashville by train.

"Today, we're brining that spirit back here, with the first transit-oriented development in Tennessee," Bell said.

The mixed-use development is expected to include high-end apartments, businesses, single-family homes and condos. Everything will be centered on the Music City Star commuter train that runs through the development, with a new stop to be constructed in the near future.

"The train stop was approved, but we are responsible for building it," Bell said.

The first building within the site will be the Hamilton Station Apartments, consisting of 396 units across from a "village square" that was designed to mimic Lebanon's own historic center.

The Star station will be located just off the village square, which will be surrounded by mixed-use land that can accommodate retail, restaurants and apartments. Bell said they would like for people to be able to live there and have everything they need.

"This is something Lebanon hasn't seen before," he said. "We'd like for it to be a place for people to do everything."

Mike Wrye, vice president of Lose & Associates, Inc. engineering and architectural firm, said the development will offer residents an "urban-light lifestyle," and residents can access all parts of the development by walking and bike trails.

Bell and Wrye said they had been working on the development for years, with the first plans in 2005. However, when the housing market tumbled, Bell said they had to look in a new direction.

"The housing downturn hit and we needed to have something that set us apart," Bell said.

"What we had done before was not going to be desirable in the new economy," Wrye added.

Whereas before they had focused the development on the frontage of Hwy. 70, Bell said they shifted focus to the commuter rail that was not established until 2006 and has seen its ridership increase to record numbers in the past few years.

"We are pleased to see a developer recognize the value of public transit and create an opportunity for local residents to live, work, and shop within walking distance of the Music City Star. This is a huge win for the Regional Transportation Authority, or RTA, and Wilson County community," said Paul J. Ballard, CEO of the RTA.

Bell said construction crews are currently working to build the main roadway in the development, Hamilton Station Boulevard, as well as the Hamilton Station Apartments. The first units are set to open in a year's time, according to Bell.

"They will have people living here this time next year," he said.

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