

## OUR VIEWS

# Retail rising

## Optimism good for Novi and beyond

By several indications, the business climate in Novi and beyond appears to be improving.

For example, it wasn't that long ago that the Novi Town Center seemed to have more vacancies than tenants. But that's changing with the soon-to-open Super Walmart bringing a new lease on life for the shopping center.

When rumors of the mega retailer coming to Novi began circulating, there were plenty of naysayers predicting it would be the demise of local business. But now it seems the opposite may be truer.

According to Jim Clear, general manager of the complex, landing the anchor tenant "saved the center." Next year he says it may even be "pretty full."

When Mervyn's, Borders and Old Navy closed it didn't look good for Novi Town Center. But now there are nearly a dozen new tenants on their way, and Clear said major renovations were also a key part of the

upswing.

Just east of the center, at Walsh College, a new economic survey on economic, business and household conditions for our state and nation shows optimism is on the rise. It may be slight, but right now we'll take it.

According to the survey: The outlook regarding business conditions is relatively positive for the country, with 31 percent of survey participants expecting an improved business environment during the next 12 months. In contrast, 30 percent expect "continuously good" or "mostly good" times for Michigan during the same period.

Retail is Novi's bread and butter; there's little debate about that. Yes, Novi is a safe community with a phenomenal school district, beautiful homes and a few crown jewels like Providence Hospital and The Suburban Collection Showplace. But venture outside this city of 55,000 plus and one quickly realizes that Novi is known primarily for one thing: shopping.

And, according to the Michigan Retailers Association's latest retail index, the level of optimism of retailers is "solid" going into the first half of summer ... with 61 percent of retailers expecting sales during May-July to increase over the same period last year.

That all makes sense when Clear states, "We are seeing a lot of people on the sidewalks we haven't seen in a while."

