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Building boom underway at Liberty Center, but there's room for more

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Members of the development team for Liberty Center, the \$350 million lifestyle center under construction in Liberty Township, showed off progress of the massive project on Thursday.

With seven general contractors working on six different portions of the development and dozens of subcontractors on site, the 65-acre first phase of Liberty Center was bustling with activity. The site was so busy with concrete mixing trucks

and front loaders that my guide, **Steiner + Associates** senior development executive [Justin Leyda](#), got stuck a couple of times in traffic. No paved roads, but enough dump trucks to cause a back up.

"This is the most complex project Steiner has ever worked on," Leyda told me as we drove around the development in a big, blue Ford F-150.

There were at least a dozen cranes working on the site on Thursday morning.

The initial phase of Liberty Center will include a total of 1.2 million square feet of space. The development will be anchored by a 200,000-square-foot Dillards, an 80,000-square-foot, two-level Dick's Sporting Goods, and a 16-screen Cinebistro. There will be 240 high-end apartments, with the average rental rate at about \$1.60 per square foot. [The region's first AC Hotels by Marriott](#) will have about 130 rooms. [An office building offering 25,000-square-foot floor plates](#) is well underway. Restaurants already announced include Cheesecake Factory, Brio Tuscan Grill, new-to-the-region Kona Grill, and Pies and Pints.

But Leyda explained that Steiner + Associates CEO [Yaromir Steiner](#) took a different approach to planning Liberty Center. Instead of thinking about what the site could hold when it opened, the team envisioned what it would hold 30 years from now.

With that future planning in place, Liberty Center has plenty of room to expand before it looks at tapping into another 35 acres west of the initial phase.

There's room for a second department store southeast of the hotel. South of one of the residential buildings, there's room for another parking garage. There's space for an entryway retail building. There are multiple spots to the north that could be used for additional residential or office buildings. And the northwest and southeast corners of the first phase have room for more development.

Leyda said the team is not actively shopping these spaces just yet, but they have been getting a lot more calls since steel started going up at the site along Liberty Way.

The developers can build a total of 2.8 million square feet of space between the 65 acres and the remaining 35 acres. Leyda said demand and the market will determine if they expand in phase one first or if they need to move over to the future development portion of the site.

[Beau Arnason](#), executive vice president with Steiner, said the project is on schedule for its Oct. 8, 2015 opening date.

"We'll deliver what we think will exceed everyone's expectations," Arnason said.

Liberty Center, located at Interstate 75 and Liberty Way in Butler County, is being developed by Steiner and Bucksbaum Retail Properties. The office developer for Liberty Center is **Daimler Group Inc.**, based in Columbus. The hotel developer is Raymond Group, one of the Midwest's premier hospitality real estate development and management companies.



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The Cinebistro will have a second-floor balcony that overlooks one of two outdoor gathering spaces at Liberty Center.

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