

# Prairiefire retail development breaks ground in Overland Park

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. - A retail and apartment project, anchored by the American Museum of Natural History, is starting construction in Overland Park.

The Prairiefire groundbreaking was held Thursday afternoon. It came after more than six years of planning and preparations.

The first phase, valued at \$160 million, will have 207,000 sq. ft. for retailers. Fred Merrill, of Merrill Companies is the developer of the project. He said the economy slowed plans for a few years, but now the project is moving full speed ahead.

"What it signifies is, we are starting to come out of the recession; people are starting to think about building, about developing -- about expanding," Merrill said.

The timetable calls for the first retailers REI and a Fresh Market gourmet grocery store to open in October. The remaining retail and the exhibition space is scheduled to open in the spring of 2014.

Merrill expects the second phase of the project, which will include additional retail and offices, to begin by the end of next year.

The total Prairiefire development will cover 60 acres and will cost an estimated \$427 million.

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