

## Atoka's bigger population getting attention from commercial developers of retail space

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The 85,152-square-foot Kimbrough Crossings could be the next big step in Atoka, Tenn.'s retail growth.

The approximately \$10 million center at the southeast corner of U.S. Highway 51 and Kimbrough Drive will have a 58,512-square-foot **Kroger** and 26,640 square feet of shadow retail. It's scheduled to open in late October.

**Commercial Alliance Management LLC** is handling the leasing and property management. Already, **H&R Block** has signed on for a 1,440-square-foot space, and the Mexican restaurant La Huezteca will be filling a 3,500-square-foot space.

"We are seeing interest from local and regional brands," says Commercial Alliance leasing associate **Bentley Pembroke**.

Atoka has all the makings of a solid growth market. Within 10 miles of Kimbrough Crossings, the 2005 estimated population was 55,003, and the city of Atoka is experiencing a 13% annual population growth rate. The city is located between Covington and Millington.

"It's been a market that has been jumped over for a while," Pembroke says. "Kroger coming in will bring a lot of attention to the Atoka retail market."

Pembroke also points to the new Cineplanet 16 movie theater nearby as a draw to this city in south Tipton County.

"They're pulling people from Dyersburg, Ripley and Millington into Atoka to see a movie," he says.

However, the Kroger and attached retail space could be a real addition to the city as well.

"People are used to driving 20 to 30 miles into Memphis and other markets to get common items," Pembroke says. "This provides an alternative, to bring retail elements that aren't there."

Conventional wisdom says that retail follows rooftops, which means that Atoka might have more retail heading its way. Recently, the city approved a 425-lot residential development. The city already has homes ranging in price from \$150,000-\$450,000.

"A lot of the younger families I've talked to who are looking outside the Memphis area have now put Atoka in the mix of places they would want to live," says **Donna West**, Commercial Alliance's senior vice president of management services.

While many residents have been moving to Germantown, Collierville, Oakland or even DeSoto County to get a small-town environment, West says Atoka could be the next "in" place.

"I would say Atoka is as close to Mayberry as you can get," she says.

**Kimbrough Crossings LLC** partners Albert Johnson and **Thomas Johnson** own the 26,640-square-foot retail element. They chose to develop this center in Atoka because of the residential growth and the lack of Class A shopping centers.

"But now the retailers are coming in, following Kroger and following the houses," Thomas Johnson says. "It has lower taxes than you get in Shelby County and it's not that far from Memphis. Atoka is closer to Downtown than Collierville."

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