

# Setting the scene for a new moviehouse

By Tara Marion

Online ticketing, stadium seating, high-back rocking chair seats, digital sound systems, soundproof auditoriums and wall-to-wall screens are just some of the perks the new **Celebration Cinema** in Gaines Township will offer when it opens in November.

Construction began mid-January for the 16-screen, 2,600 seat moviehouse.

“The presentation at this theater will be as good as any place in the world,” said Ron Van Timmeren, the vice president of marketing for the theater.

The state-of-the art movie theater will be located at State Route 6 and Kalamazoo Avenue.

“The new M-6 Interchange to Kalamazoo offers what we like in terms of easy-in/easy-out accessibility,” Van Timmeren explained. “It’s a dynamic site.”

The 70,000-square-foot facility will be built in an area of southeastern Grand Rapids that has been without a theater for a couple years.

The theater will be set up as an entertainment area with shops and restaurants similar to the other Celebration Cinema in Grand Rapids at Knapp and East Beltline. The nature and number of those retailers are still undisclosed.

“It’ll probably be several months before that shakes out,” said Todd Dosting, vice president of the project’s builder, **CD Barnes Associates Inc.** in Grand Rapids. “Right now they’re concepts.”

The builder also said the theater itself will have an architectural feature unique to Celebration Cinemas – a beacon.

“It kind of looks like a lighthouse, and it draws attention to the building and sets it apart from an office building or a shopping mall because it’s not that,” he explained. “It’s an entertainment complex, and it’s really kind of cool.”

The beacon will be made of heavy structural steel and translucent spando glass, which is only used for decorative purposes.

Other aspects of the site plan, such as landscaping and parking, have yet to be finalized.

CD Barnes Associates is working with the architect, **Post Associates** in Grand Rapids, to develop the drawings. The team has worked together on the Celebration Cinemas in Mt. Pleasant, Lansing, Grand Rapids and Portage.

Crossroads Cinema in Portage is currently undergoing a long overdue remodel. Formerly known as UA Crossroads, Van Timmeren said the Crossroads Cinema will offer residents a more updated movie-going experience.

“We’re about halfway there in Portage, and what a difference,” Van Timmeren said. “That theater hadn’t been touched in 20-plus years, so it’s a remarkable change.”

CD Barnes has retrofitted eight traditional slope-style auditoriums in Portage to stadium-style seating with high-back rocking chair seats.

By summer of this year, the company will add the beacon, add seven more auditoriums for a total of 15 at this location and reopen under the name Celebration Cinema. Renovations are also planned for the lobby, concessions, bathrooms and other areas.