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StarNews

MONDAY, AUGUST 24, 2026 | STARNEWSONLINE.COM

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TENANTS ANNOUNCED

Contractors work to finish the exterior of the new Publix supermarket coming to Leland on Aug. 19.

SAVANNA TENENOFF/STARNEWS

Developer names restaurants, shops coming to new Leland center

Savanna Tenenoff
Wilmington StarNews
USA TODAY NETWORK

Developers behind the Publix supermarket-anchored shopping center in Leland have announced several new businesses to the project with some making their Brunswick County debut.

With more than 10 newly signed tenants, the shopping center is officially 93% leased, according to a Branch Properties news release.

Branch Properties is the Atlanta-based real estate investment and development firm building the Leland Village shopping center, formerly called Savannah Branch Town Center. The property is located off U.S. 17 in front of Brunswick Forest on a nearly 17-acre property.

The retail center will house a Publix, Marshalls, Ulta Beauty, Heartland Dental, EmergeOrtho and a nail salon, with additional inline shops, restaurant space and outparcels. A new traffic signal is also being constructed along U.S. 17, ac-

cording to previous reporting.

Branch Properties recently announced who else will be filling the empty spaces.

New tenants joining Leland Village include Chase Bank, Mattress Firm, Sport Clips, Domino's Pizza, First Watch, Wingstop, Qdoba, Handel's Ice Cream and Glo MedSpa, according to the news release. Pet specialty retailer Hollywood Feed and boutique fitness

See TENANTS, Page 2A

Pender schools are facing growing pains

Data shows seven of 16 campuses over capacity

Charlie Kingree
Wilmington StarNews
USA TODAY NETWORK

Seven of Pender County's 16 public schools are over capacity going into the 2026-27 school year. While relief is on the way in the form of two new schools opening, data shows that it won't be long before growth is again straining the county school system.

The new J.H. Lea Elementary and Middle Schools are expected to open next year with a maximum capacity of 2,312 students, taking some of the burden from neighboring schools. But looking to the future, the county is expected to add over 4,000 new students in K-8 alone by 2035, according to data from N.C. State's Institute for Transportation Research and Education.

Meanwhile, the county's largest school, Topsail High, is projected to enroll 500 more students than its stated capacity, which won't be helped by a new K-8 facility.

The school district is in the early stages of identifying priorities and solutions to manage the growth that looms. With new development weighing heavily on the county's eastern side, Pender County Schools is looking at how redistricting might lessen the pressure.

Limited resources

Capacity isn't just a problem for the

See SCHOOLS, Page 2A

Spike in school supply costs is hitting parents

Brands cite higher prices from gas, import duties

Christopher Cann, Clayton Park and Erick Trevino
USA TODAY NETWORK

Brandi McGrath usually buys quality, long-lasting school supplies for her 9-year-old son and his teachers. But sharp increases in the cost of folders, pencils and other products have forced her to cut back and search for cheaper alternatives.

"It's insane how expensive things have gotten," said McGrath, 48, of Salt Lake City. "I'm looking for every sale I can."

In Daytona Beach, Florida, Karin Kaiser was similarly struck by the cost of back-to-school shopping this year.

"It is crazy," she said, estimating that she and her husband spent over \$100 on just notebooks and loose-leaf paper for their two daughters. "That's not counting what we had to pay for back-to-school clothes, shoes, haircuts."

The cost of a typical school supply list – including notebooks, paper, pencils and glue sticks – is nearly \$175, almost 8% higher than in 2025, according to an analysis by the Groundwork Collaborative and The Century Foundation, two progressive think tanks.

Some essential items such as lunch boxes, notebooks and tissues cost 20% or more than they did a year ago, the analysis found, pointing in part to the effects of President Donald Trump's tariff agenda, which the Federal Reserve said raised the cost of many products

See SUPPLIES, Page 8A

Major school supply brands have increased their prices in recent months, citing inflation, rising gas prices and tariffs. TYLER ORSBURN/PANAMA CITY NEWS HERALD

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Volume 159 | No. 284
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