



THIS IS THE PLACE: Wisconsin Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce ambassadors decorate the future home of Wal-Mart with a banner at Rapids Mall this morning. Participating in the ceremony were (from left) Chamber President

Bill McLaughlin, Ambassador Robert McIlvain of J.C. Penney's, Mall Manager Laura Oltesvig and Mayor Carl Greenway. (Tribune Photo by Mark Sewell)

Future home of Wal-Mart

Rapids Mall banner welcomes discount chain

By MARK SCARBOROUGH
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WIS. RAPIDS — Lit by the glare of television lights, Wal-Mart's future Rapids Mall home was decorated with a banner this morning by Wisconsin Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce ambassadors.

Mall Manager Laura Oltesvig and Mayor Carl Greenway also participated.

What will the store's arrival mean?

"It means the saving of our downtown," Greenway said. "It means jobs. It means a \$750,000 economic development fund to be used for future economic development. It means we give our consumers an option."

Wal-Mart will provide Rapids Mall with a

special attraction for both customers and merchants, Ms. Oltesvig predicted.

Since the Bentonville, Ark., discount-store chain is unique here, customers will be attracted from throughout central Wisconsin, she said.

"Everybody's really happy here," Ms. Oltesvig said about merchants who now rent Rapids Mall space. "It's going to be great to have a third anchor on Rapids Mall again. I plan to have this place leased up tomorrow or the next day."

J.R. Siewert, broker and manager at Coldwell Banker/Siewert Realtors, who arranged the sale of the empty Woolco building attached to the mall for the Wal-Mart store, is certain the sale will close Friday.

"I'll be hanging the sold sign then," he said.