

## 2006 TERRAPIN FOOTBALL PREVIEW

What do the Terps need to do  
this season to get to a bowl?



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# THE DIAMONDBACK

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**“...The area is waking up. We built our buildings when almost nothing was on East-West Highway. Now things are happening.”**

**-Herschel Blumberg, Developer of the University Town Center**



## UNIVERSAL APPEAL

BY BEN BLOCK  
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### Students, officials predict new town center could be major draw for students

Hyattsville's new student-housing apartments will be located in a neighborhood complete with high-end shopping options, delectable restaurants and a behemoth cineplex.

With its proximity to a prime entertainment town center, Hyattsville officials hope the new University Town Center will draw university students away from College Park and into Hyattsville.

While this might shift spending dollars away from College Park, The Towers apartment complex may also birth a new trend in student housing, creating a melting pot of college students.

University Town Center is developer Herschel Blumberg's dream come true after a lifetime of revitalizing Hyattsville. The tan brick walls of The Towers — a 910-student apartment complex with residents from nine area colleges and universities that opened in August — stands like a giant pyramid looming over Hyattsville's dusty construction lots. The Towers features a game room lined with leather couches and flat screen

televisions, a state-of-the-art gym, tanning booths, a roof pool and spacious apartments fit for royalty — at least in the eyes of the average college student.

“It's weird that I live here. I wouldn't expect to live like this; it's too nice,” said Stephanie Enaje, a sophomore criminal justice major. “It's cool — the movie theaters and restaurants — because of jobs. I can just walk across the street.”

By May 2007, the complex owners vow to feature a variety of student-friendly attractions, such as a 14-screen movie theater, a Safeway grocery store, fancy restaurants and spacious condominiums.

Blumberg waited to build University Town Center until the area was poised to succeed economically. Prince George's County's per capita income grew 4 percent from 2000 to 2004, the greatest increase of any Washington suburb in Maryland.

The growth has allowed the county to clear about 8.69 million square feet for commercial construction since

2004 — again the leading county, according to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.

“The potential here is as great as anywhere else,” said Blumberg, who owns the property for Prince George's Plaza and several nearby office buildings. “The area is waking up. We built our buildings when almost nothing was on East-West Highway. Now things are happening.”

But down Route 1 in College Park, several university students see Hyattsville's improvements as a much-needed alternative to the College Park area, which claims Rugged Warehouse and Chipotle as its crowning jewels and is devoid of diverse shopping and restaurant options.

“Once the construction gets done, you'll have everything here,” said Matt Burch, a junior economics major who moved to The Towers because it was only slightly more expensive than the Knox Box apartments, but much better quality. “If they put a Santa Fe here, there will be no reason to set a foot onto Route 1.”

Even though College Park intends to improve its college town atmosphere, similar attractions may be hard to draw.

While Blumberg owns enough land to create a large commercial project from scratch, College Park lacks open space and forces developers to buy out pre-existing businesses and redevelop them. The reliance on university students has also prevented investors from taking a chance on similar large projects in College Park, said Terry Schum, College Park planning director.

“Developers say we need more population with higher income rather than a student-dominated economy to attract different retail and better restaurants,” Schum said. “They are creating that density [in Hyattsville] by adding apartments and condominiums in addition to the student housing.”

Until the town center's luxurious entertainment options open their doors, Maryland students could find themselves mingling with a new crowd — both in their Towers apartments and on the streets of College Park, since students from nearby schools like Howard University are also residing there.

“You get used to a certain community, Maryland-type people. ... I'm not particularly enthusiastic about it,” said Eric Strong, a senior accounting major. “They're very loud. ... I'm not particularly happy, but I like the idea because it prepares you for [post-graduation] next year.”

Others welcomed the inter-university fraternizing.

During the last days of summer, Howard students and Towers roommates Allison Valle and Trish Williams roamed downtown College Park in search of happening bar scenes, cheap liquor stores and University of Maryland students who know how to party.

“We're trying to make friends with University of Maryland people and go to their parties,” Valle said. “We love our school, but this is a nice change of environment.”

“We will be on Maryland's campus f'real,” Williams added. “There's a big gap between Howard and Maryland, but we're too close for that.”