

New stores at Fashion Outlets

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The mall even gained several new retail outlets during the pandemic. Recently, it has seen the opening of a new, 2,700-square-foot Tory Burch store (located near COACH), as well as a new, 9,748-square-foot Adidas store, located near Express Factory Store. Other new additions include TaiChi Bubble Tea, Uomo Da Milano Menswear, and Express Jewelers. Two new eateries, Ding Hao and India Grill, also recently opened in the food court.

Doran says that, while it was still too premature to name names publicly, the mall also has a signed lease with “another major player retailer” scheduled to kick-in between June or July.

“Retailers are starting to see that there is a place for brick-and-mortar in their future, and we’re speaking with our retailers and potential merchants every day,” Doran says. “When some people see a dark space, they think it’s a vacancy. We see opportunity.”

It’s also worth mentioning that, when Disney recently announced it will close at least 20% of physical Disney Stores, the Fashion Outlet location was spared.

Doran credits the mall’s recent, albeit tentative, stability mainly to shoppers coming from the local and regional market, as well as those from drivable destinations throughout the northeastern U.S. He also credits the sales figures on a somewhat behavioral shift in shoppers, as many of the mall’s stores are reporting higher conversion rates and higher per-person expenditures.

“It used to be that you could have a couple hundred people that are window shopping; getting ideas for the next holiday season. We’re finding that the shoppers who are here, they’re here for one reason: They’re here to buy something,” Doran says.

These days, the mall is looking for ways to show their appreciation to these loyal shoppers for their patronage. Staffers recently began giving out what they call “Surprise and Delight bags” to random shoppers. Each nylon tote bag contains a gift card to one of the mall’s stores, coupons, and a visitor savings pass that nets deep discounts at several popular outlets. The complimentary bags also come with assorted everyday items like hand sanitizer, chapstick, touch-free door openers, and nail files.

“We really appreciate the people that have left their home and have visited us; spent their hard-earned money here and invested in our stores,” Doran says. “So we wanted to come up with



something to thank them and encourage them to come shop here again.”

There’s similar giveaways specifically for mall-walkers featuring ever-popular gift cards for coffee. Doran says giveaways occur primarily on the weekends, but sometimes during the week as well.

But a designated customer base and budding retail environment isn’t the only thing the mall is looking forward to this year. The Mercado Place Food Hall – a 16,000-square-foot stretch of property along Military Road – is anticipating an opening around late spring/early summer according to Director of PR & Government Affairs Kristy Mazurek.

Tesla 1900 – Beers, Wines, Spirits – named after the inventions of Nikola Tesla in the Niagara Region – is said to be the anchor tenant of Mercado Place Food Hall. The bar will feature craft beers, small-batch whiskey, bourbon, gin and vodka, along with a menu of local flavors.

Other slated vendors include 8020 Grill, Babz BBQ, Bella Fresca, Broke & Hungry, Cantina 62, Dreamy Creams Ice Cream, Lettuce Pray, Marshall’s Coffee House/Andy’s Healing Waters, Simply Pierogi, Poke’ Point, Ridiculous Carvery, Roma Napoli and Wicked Chicken.

In addition to fine dining, Mazurek says the Mercado Place Food Hall will also be an area in the space dedicated to live entertainment, cooking classes and wine tastings.

The mall is also exploring the possibility of implementing a medical health campus along a 100,000-square-foot portion of exterior outlets. The proposal has become somewhat of a trend for malls in the U.S. looking to in-

crease their viability and usage.

“We’re excited to announce the commencement of our Fashion Outlets health campus development,” Doran says. “This development strategy will be an important part of making our center a ‘Town Center’ and bringing in complementary uses to drive traffic and new business to the shopping center, which, in turn, will fuel retail traffic and sales.

“It’s still in the early phases, but we think it’s a concept that could work; so, we’re speaking with the movers and shakers in the medical real estate industry to see if this makes sense for us.”

Beyond future plans, Doran stresses the mall’s priority these days is still safety above all else. The Fashion Outlets recently undertook a rigorous Bureau Veritas SafeGuard certification to help ensure its safety procedures were top notch. The company reviewed everything from chemical products being used to the cleaning staff’s routines and protocols.

“Pretty soon, shoppers will be seeing decals and stickers on our doors saying that we are certified and have the comfort of knowing our protocols and disinfection processes have been validated by an independent expert,” Doran says. “Business is business, but your health is very important to us. We want to provide a healthy, safe environment for our shoppers and retailers. To those that maybe haven’t shopped here since the pandemic began, we say come on in and try it out. We want people to do what they feel is comfortable, but we feel, once they see what we have in place, they’ll be comfortable coming back.”



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