

Redmond shopping center losing 7 retailers

By Amy Martinez
Seattle Times business reporter

A retail shake-up is under way at Redmond Town Center. Seven retailers including Limited Too, Nine West and Abercrombie & Fitch plan to be out by mid-February, and more departures are likely.

The stores opened along with the shopping center in late 1997 and have 10-year leases that are expiring, said Christina Henning, senior marketing manager.

Macerich, the center's Santa Monica, Calif.-based owner, is taking the opportunity to "re-merchandise" based on what it believes today's shoppers want, Henning said.

Others leaving are trendy clothing retailer Express; children's apparel store Brat Pack; Goldworks jewelry shop; and stamp maker Rubber Soul.

Henning said she expects additional departures in the coming months, though most are occurring in the next few weeks.

So far, one replacement has been announced: See's Candies will take over for Nine West. Otherwise, Macerich continues to negotiate with possible replacements, Henning said.

The center's plan is that all will be in place by the start of the holiday-sales season in November.

"It's not so much a matter of whether or not they were doing well. It's really whether or not they were a good fit," Henning said of the seven departing stores.

"In some cases, we didn't renew their leases, and some left on their own."

Susie Detmer, a Seattle-based real-estate broker for Cushman & Wakefield, speculated that the stores' sales weren't enough to keep them there. She suggested that new retail developments elsewhere in Redmond are luring shoppers away.

As examples, she cited Kohl's, which opened in November at the former Mervyns site near the end of Highway 520, and the 16-month-old Whole Foods center on Redmond Way.

Elizabeth Best, a broker at Seattle Pacific Realty, also pointed to recent additions at Lincoln Square and Bellevue Square, making "downtown Bellevue the shopping destination for the Eastside," she said. "Redmond has become more of a convenient community shopping experience. It's for those people who don't want to go to the mall."

Dan Weldon, who owns the Goldworks shop at Redmond Town Center, said he's leaving rather than face a 25 percent increase in rental rates. "It's not that they're kicking me out or anything. I just couldn't make the numbers work," he said. "I'm already paying top-of-the-market" rates.

Retail reshuffling

Shoppers will be seeing a different mix of stores this year at Redmond Town Center as stores such as Nine West will be replaced by See's Candies.



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Weldon said he'll reopen somewhere on the Eastside, probably in a free-standing location.

Winmar, a one-time Safeco subsidiary, designed Redmond Town Center in the 1990s to have an urban feel, with stores opening onto streets that flowed into the older downtown area.

Macerich, one of the nation's largest owners of shopping centers, bought it in 1999 and subsequently added Macy's, as well as a Marriott hotel and Residence Inn. Also, AT&T Wireless, Microsoft and the Lake Washington School District employ more than 3,000 on site.

Detmer noted that restaurants at Redmond Town Center do "really well," largely because of those workers.

"They do a solid lunch business, and then they have an affluent residential base with a lot of disposable income for eating out," Detmer said.

Indeed, two of the center's restaurants, Matts' Rotisserie and Spazzo Italian Grill, are expanding, Henning said.

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