



Consumer comebacks and Florida fun with ICSC

August 11, 2010 - Shopping Centers

I've always said New York is the hottest city in the world-but I didn't mean it literally! This summer has seen extraordinary heat-and extraordinary excitement as consumers begin to reallocate their shopping dollars, new retailers continue to make their debuts and announce new plans for the market, and the ICSC Women's Special Interest Group initiative literally head south.

Much has been made of the "slowdown" in retail sales reported in June, but most are missing the store beneath the statistics. While the government reported a 0.5 decline in June sales compared with May, that decline largely came from lower gasoline sales and drops in auto sales now that all stimulus plans have expired. Now shoppers are cautiously spending on appliances and electronics (up 1.3%), apparel (up 0.6%) and general merchandise (up 0.2%). Shoppers are paying cash, which is great for retailers as bad debt drops. In addition, these gains all are improvement over June 2009 numbers. So retail continues its comeback.

So does leasing in Manhattan. Harlem remains even hotter than the sidewalks-H&M's West 125th store has reopened after major remodeling, and Target has finally opened on the East side of the neighborhood. Petco has taken a 20,000 s/f space on West 99th St. near Central Park. On the opposite end of the island, Duane Reade's new unit on Lafayette and Spring is more reminiscent of a luxury department store than your local pharmacy. (A similarly posh branch has opened at Union Sq. next to Nordstrom Rack.) Coach's Soho branch is now Coach Poppy, focusing on its more affordable items.

In between, the Upper East Side is bubbling over with the new. Milly will bring its vintage inspired women's clothing to 900 Madison Ave., its first store in the U.S. Lanvin has opened its home-like boutique at 815 Madison. Space NK reportedly is opening an Upper East Side store by Christmas. Other European imports are Ted Baker, the British fashion house, which has taken space at 32-36 Little West 12th St., and ToyWatch, the affordable Italian watchmaker, at 509 Madison.

Fall will see the debut of Ruia, an English shoe designer at 65 Mercer St. The Tower Records space on West 4th St., originally to be called Equinox, now will be Blink Fitness, a value-oriented Equinox offshoot. Farther in the future, I'm looking forward to the renovated Christian Dior at 21 East 57th St., scheduled to reopen before the holidays. Meanwhile, I'll use the huge Lady Dior handbag built to disguise the construction as a landmark for visitors! Not far away at 600 Madison, UGG's flagship will make its warm footwear available in November. Adding to the neighborhood excitement will be Breitling, which will offer its fine Swiss timepieces at 5 East 57th. Guess is taking a monster flagship at 47th St. and Fifth Ave. in December.

After a successful regional launch in Boston, the ICSC Special Interest Group for women is heading for fun in the sun, with our latest session to take place on Sunday, August 22 from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Gaylord Palms Hotel and Convention Center in Kissimmee, Fla., as part of ICSC's Florida Conference. The meeting is one of the association's largest, so we're looking forward to a

great gathering.

We already have a great group of roundtable leaders, with a combination of returning speakers and newcomers. I again will chair the group and discuss "New Retailers and Globalization." Susan Lucas, senior vice president of asset management for The Wilder Cos., who joined our group in Boston at the New England Idea Exchange, will discuss "To Rents and Beyond: Current Budgeting Issues in Property Management." Barbara Champoux, partner at Crowell & Moring and a debut SIG roundtable leader at RECon in Las Vegas, will offer "Successful Negotiation Strategies." Ivy Greaner, owner of Ram Realty Services, will discuss "Emerging Development and Redevelopment Trends in Today's Market," while Kane Morris-Webster, retail and land specialist for Colliers International, will lead attendees through a talk on networking. Lori Schneider, senior vice president of investments for Marcus & Millichap will discuss "Dealmaking with Difficult People."

Attendance is included in the Idea Exchange registration fee - though preregistration prior to the session is an absolute must. Those not attending the full conference may sit in on the SIG for a \$25 fee. To register for the full conference, visit www.icsc.org/2010FL. To register for the SIG, email sigs@icsc.org. To attend the SIG only, register at www.icsc.org/2010SIG2.

So growth continues, whether it's sales, leases or a career path. That means the heat will be on even as we head into autumn.

Faith Hope Consolo is the chairman of Prudential Douglas Elliman's Retail Group, New York, N.Y.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540