



Thriving shopping centers welcome new/renovated shops

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With the first half of 2008 presenting a unique set of challenges to retailers and shoppers alike, I spend much time traveling across the country and advising companies. My work takes me from the Main Sts. of Downtown to shopping centers everywhere-from coast to coast and abroad.

From the luxury corridors of Beverly Hills, Bal Harbour and Highland Park to the lifestyle centers of Mass. and Atlanta to the entertainment venues of N.J., Las Vegas and Colorado, nothing rivals America's shopping centers. As these retail hubs continue to undergo renovations and expansions, new entries are opening every day. National and international retailers have more options than ever before when considering a U.S. store rollout.

Shopping centers ensure not only versatile retail space, but also exposure to a wide array of shoppers. As director of all the Prudential retail offices nationwide, I am intimately involved in pinpointing the perfect blend of shops and services for retail locations across the country and the world.

I have envisioned store rollouts from various brands within shopping centers across the nation. The latest launch comes from the highly successful Who.A.U, whose collegiate and surfer apparel is targeted to 19 to 22 year olds. The company has plans to open 450 stores nationwide over the next ten years, becoming one of the first Korean brands to enter the U.S. market so aggressively.

Following a trend set by Europe's Zara, Mango, H &M, and Top Shop, the company has already opened two locations. Who.A.U-pronounced "who are you"-is a clothing brand owned by an Asian conglomerate comprised of 45 apparel and home furnishing divisions.

Its first U.S. location is in the Stamford Town Center, one of the country's largest retailing centers. The Stamford Town Center boasts more than 130 shops and plenty of foot traffic. The brand's cutting edge store garnered a loyal clientele for its modern designs, relaxed atmosphere and reasonable prices.

Soon after Who.A.U's successful Stamford debut, the Asian conglomerate leased a second location at the Garden State Plaza. Who.A.U's neighbors include more than 375 shops, including Abercrombie & Fitch, Coach, Ruehl, Apple, Kenneth Cole and Neiman Marcus, not to mention a huge population of devoted shoppers.

A deal was just inked for a location within New Jersey's Palisades Center. Their soon-to-open surfer-friendly venue will be adjacent to Hollister, nearby Abercrombie & Fitch, Banana Republic, Bebe Sport, and United Colors of Benneton, not to mention a slew of entertainment attractions and food purveyors.

As major brands announce national store rollouts, shopping centers will continue play a major role in their strategy. Retailers like Ports 1961 and Carat, not to mention youth retailers such as Hollister and Who.A.U will continue to introduce themselves to shoppers across the nation. At the same time, the country's shopping centers will continue to evolve-next up, hotel shopping center projects.

From a company's first store in New York City to its expansion into multiple metropolitan areas, I take pride in helping retailers realize their potential and establish themselves throughout the U.S. Locating a shopping center that will appeal to a brand's target demographic can be a challenge, but serves to not only maximize a retailer's potential but also prepare a brand for a national store rollout. Excited shoppers will continue to explore retail centers, and will be thrilled to see so many new entries and renovations.

Happy Shopping!

Faith Hope Consolo is the chairman of Prudential Douglas Elliman's Retail Leasing and Sales Division, New York, N.Y.

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