



## Now in White Plains: Designer dresses at pig-in-blanket prices

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In recent weeks we've heard a lot about community organizers and lipstick. There have been more than a few disparaging remarks made about both, such as: How valuable is community organizing experience for those seeking the highest office in the world? And would anyone really confuse a lipstick-wearing pit bull or pig with a former beauty queen turned VP candidate?

Let's focus on the more important issues, like one particular candidate's apparent lack of access to good retail clothing destinations. Having biked through Alaska, I will cut her some slack because I can attest to the fact that a shopping mecca it's not. Google "Anchorage shopping" and you'll come up with a list of salmon stores, fur exchanges, and thrift stores. But that's about it. Google "shopping" in the state capital of Juneau and one of the top shopping destinations that pops up is "The Urban Eskimo." Based upon the store's description, it's safe to assume that this is not a wilderness outpost for Urban Outfitter.

So, if a certain candidate does a swing through Westchester, which is not likely, she may want to take a side trip to the new Nordstrom Rack in White Plains, just in case she needs a wardrobe to make her look a bit more presidential and less "thrifty." It could offer a perfect balance for the "thanks but no thanks" master of fishing for salmon in a pork barrel: Nordstrom's classic styles at off-prices.

Value-conscious shoppers in Westchester are sure to welcome the addition of the new Nordstrom Rack to the White Plains City Center. Although rumor has it that its announced arrival so annoyed Retail Ventures Inc., a division of Columbus-based Schottenstein Stores, Inc., owners of the now departed City Center-located Filene's Basement/DSW combo store, that it packed its off-price luggage and left town. A spokeswoman for Filene's, Pat Boudreau, said the company's policy is not to discuss details of any leases beyond announcing the opening of new stores. Calls to DSW, Retail Ventures Inc., and Schottenstein all went unanswered.

That's OK. I was more interested in knowing what makes Nordstrom's tick when it comes to choosing locations for its off-price division. "We always like to be in shopping centers with the best competition," said company spokesperson Michael Boyd. He said that he was unaware of the Filene's/DSW departure and he seemed a bit perplexed.

How easy is access to the center, including parking? The long-term economic health of the region is a factor and we always want to be where our customers want us. It has to be a great spot. Boyd said that the company was also attracted to City Center because of its proximity to its full-line Nordstrom store, a few miles away at The Westchester.

But if you're not a White Plains you may have a hard time making an argument for why Nordstrom's Rack should move into your community, even if your demographics smack of off-price incomes and shopping patterns. I believe that cities like New Rochelle, Yonkers, Port Chester and Mt. Vernon

would not disappoint higher-end off-price stores, as evidenced by the success of discounters Marshall's, Targets and T.J. Maxx, all of which are or will soon be located in these communities. (Memo to Filene's Basement and DSW: Looking for a new place to call home in Westchester? Give me a call!)

According to Boyd, what distinguishes Nordstrom's Rack from these stores is that "We have merchandise just from Nordstrom's, as well as special purchase items from great national brands. We also try to be a great shopping experience. Positive, easy to navigate, and a quick check out for the customer."

Now a lot of Nordstrom Rack's location criterion is pretty malleable, in my opinion. But as VP Dick Cheney said on the campaign stomp in 2004, "As we like to say in Wyoming, you can put all the lipstick you want on a pig, but at the end of the day it's still a pig." Alas, the distinguished senator from the state of Illinois was not the first to put this pig's hoof in his mouth.

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