

NEWS

Mall stores come and go, remodel and relocate

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The Oaks Mall has undergone more than a half dozen store relocations, openings and closings in the last few months.

Some of the most recent changes are store additions.

Jos. A. Bank Clothiers Inc. (Nasdaq: JOSB), a men's fine-clothing store, opened May 22 and features suits, sports jackets, business-casual wear and other merchandise.

"We didn't have a store like that to meet men's needs," said Becky Bumgarner, marketing director for The Oaks Mall.

Jos. A. Bank, which is based in Hampstead, Md., is located across from Ruby Tuesday, which enclosed its porch around March for more table space.

Another store under construction is Giti, a young women's clothing store, which is scheduled to open in the second week of July.

Miami-based Giti is new to the market and will be comparable to other teen fashion stores like The Body Shop and Wet Seal stores, Bumgarner said.

Another store, Finish Line Inc. (Nasdaq: FINL) will be taking the old location of Kids Foot Locker near the main entrance to the mall. Kids Foot Locker relocated between the main entrance and Dillard's department store inside the mall.

Finish Line will feature athletic and casual footwear, apparel and accessories.

"We feel there is a customer base and an opportunity in Gainesville," said Elise Hasbrook, a Finish Line spokeswoman based in Indianapolis.

Hasbrook said Finish Line is expanding all over the country and is close to opening its 500th store.

Bumgarner said store closings will make room for new stores and that the "coming soon" to replace them may be announced in a few months.

Lerner Shops, a women's clothing store, will be closing this week and that will bring a larger size store to the location, Bumgarner said. She added that three to four specialty stores may be announced soon.

"We're always striving to bring the best and most fresh stores," Bumgarner said.

There have also been other relocations and renovations at the mall.

5-7-9, a young women's clothing store, relocated in May, but it didn't move too far - just a little closer to Sears.

Claire's, an accessories, jewelry and cosmetics store, plans to relocate in October to the former site of the recently closed A Florist, which is near the the entrance to the mall.

GNC (General Nutrition Center) recently remodeled, and Marks & Morgan jewelers is remodeling now.

As far as the Food Court, Subway is under construction now and will open in early July, Bumgarner said.

