



Bloomingdales is part of the expansion at Honolulu's Ala Moana Center. Upscale shopping will highlight the new Buckhead Atlanta development.

Retail Revelry Swings Into High Gear

Brand new shopping malls, plus major expansions of existing favorites, offer fresh options for travel groups

By Carolyn J. Feimster, CMD, CRX

Shopping center developers across the country are competing fiercely for the visitor dollar and coming up with some pretty creative experiences to lure groups. No longer can they offer just shops and restaurants with a coupon book and expect you to include their centers in your itineraries. Here we explore what the shopping center industry is doing to attract the visitor and how tour companies can turn the shopping experience into a profitable venture.

Visitors to a destination are going to shop—that fact has long been established. So the challenge for the shopping destination is to not only get the visitor to stay longer and spend more money, but to find creative ways to encourage tour operators to not just “recommend” shopping but to include it in their packages and itineraries.

The Outlets Rule

Today's consumer, in this age of overload and overindulgence, is confronted with many choices, so to get his or her attention the key is to make things simple.

Jennifer Devermann, tourism director of the recently opened **Fashion Outlets of Chicago**, said, “The way we simplify the buying process for our customer is to offer information and services on what we know they want. For example, it is well known that the least

desirable part of today's travel is dealing with TSA. Fashion Outlets of Chicago has come to the rescue and formed a partnership with TSA-certified BAGS Inc. for a special concierge program that enables our customers to print boarding passes and check their shopping bags and luggage directly to their final destination.” Savvy tour operators are promoting this program to their clients with high remarks.

Having to drive an hour outside a major city to shop the outlets takes an entire day away from the destination, but **The Outlets at Assembly Row** will deliver the experience in a location just eight minutes from downtown Boston. Andrea Simpson, director, marketing & tourism/corporate communications, explains, “The Outlets at Assembly Row will house your favorite outlet stores, but it is so much more than shopping. Besides stellar dining options and entertainment, our guests will have options that they do not normally have when shopping at the traditional outlet centers. For example, the only LEGOLAND Discovery Center in New England is here. Visitors have the option of kicking back from shopping and toasting to a great vacation in one of our waterfront restaurants or in our outdoor living room, or catch a movie, or bike along the river. It truly is going to become the 'not to miss' attraction of the Boston area.”

Free motorcoach parking, easy drop-off and group-friendly programs with VIP welcome packets will make Assembly Row an attractive choice for tour operators packaging the Boston area.

Hybrids are Born

What do you call a center that is anchored by entertainment and also includes retail? **American Dream**, located in Bergen County, N.J. (at the Meadowlands) and strategically located just minutes from midtown Manhattan, is a hybrid. Construction has resumed on the 3-million-square-foot center and within 18 to 24 months a new destination will be born. Anchors will include a DreamWorks theme park, indoor ski slope, water park, performing arts center, observation wheel with views of New York City, multi-screen theater, NHL-sized ice rink, aquarium and even a miniature golf course. Add in at least 400 retailers, restaurants and services, and visitors to the NYC



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NAME OF SHOPPING CENTER	LOCATION	# OF STORES AND RESTAURANTS	OPENING DATE	CONTACT INFO FOR TOURISM PROGRAMS
<i>Ala Moana Center</i>	Honolulu, Hawaii	Presently over 290 shops and restaurants, becoming 370 by the end of 2015.	Originally opened in 1959; expansion will be completed by the end of 2015.	480-588-5507 kathy@retailtourism.com alamoanacenter.com
<i>American Dream</i>	Bergen County, NJ at the Meadowlands, minutes from midtown Manhattan	Many entertainment venues	18-24 months following the start of construction	201-340-2919 debbie.patire@americandream.com americandream.com
<i>Buckhead Atlanta</i>	Buckhead, Atlanta	50 stores and restaurants upon completion	Phased opening beginning summer of 2014	678-704-0902 rviniard@olivermcmillan.com buckhead-atl.com
<i>Fashion Outlets of Chicago</i>	Rosemont, IL, just minutes from O'Hare International Airport	130 designer outlets and two sit-down restaurants	Aug. 1, 2013	847-928-7514 jdevermann@fashionoutlets.com fashionoutletsofchicago.com
<i>Mall of America</i>	Bloomington, MN, minutes from Minneapolis and St. Paul	520 stores and restaurants	Aug. 11, 1992, with completion of next expansion phase set for 2015	952-883-8843 millie.philipp@moa.net mallofamerica.com
<i>Palm Beach Outlets</i>	West Palm Beach, FL	500,000 square feet mixed retail and restaurants	February 2014	561-635-8939 lrojas@nedevelopment.com
<i>South Street Seaport</i>	New York City – Lower Manhattan	TBD	Original opening date was 1981 – redevelopment scheduled to open 2016	732-249-6080 carolyn@historicshoppinganddining.com southstreetseaport.com
<i>The Outlets at Assembly Row</i>	Somerville, MA, eight minutes from downtown Boston	Mixed-use neighborhood with 35 stores and restaurants	Last weekend of May, 2014	732-249-6080 carolyn@cjfmarketinginternational.com assemblyrow.com
<i>The Outlets at Tejon Ranch</i>	Tejon, CA, between Los Angeles and Bakersfield	More than 70 stores	August 2014	rswiggum@tejonranch.com tejonranch.com
<i>World Trade Center</i>	New York City – Lower Manhattan	TBD	2015	480-588-5507 kathy@retailtourism.com wtc.westfield.com

area will have to plan at least one day at American Dream.

"Nowhere in this country can someone find so many different activities all in one easily walkable location, not even in the entire city of New York," says Alan C. Marcus, president & CEO of The Marcus Group, Inc. "Think of how many of the 54 million people who are already visiting New York City annually will now include a trip to American Dream during their stay."

Remaining competitive in New York City is always a challenge, especially if you are located in a district where it is important to maintain the historical integrity in any new shopping center development. Howard Hughes, Inc., owner of **South Street Seaport**, is accomplishing this with its redevelopment program that proposes not only a new Pier 17 building but also a new marina, restoration of the historic Tin Building and a mixed-use tower, as well as a plan to ensure the long-term future of the Seaport Museum and its tall ships.

"The re-envisioned Seaport District will be a vibrant, highly-engaging area while providing a critical catalyst for the revitalization of Lower Manhattan," said David R. Weinreb, CEO of the Howard Hughes Corp. "We are creating a one-of-a-kind experience incor-

porating the best that New York has to offer in entertainment, culture, shopping and dining in a development that is economically viable while effectively meeting the needs of the neighborhood and showcasing the Seaport as a treasured part of New York City's past and future."

Additionally, a new tenant is moving into the Fulton Market Building, formerly home to *Bodies...The Exhibition* and Gap. iPic Entertainment has signed an agreement for an eight-screen, 505-seat luxury movie theater to open in the second quarter of 2015. This in-theater dining concept is a first for NYC and will complement the entertainment planned for the Pier 17 building, which will include shopping, a rooftop Amphitheatre, world-class restaurants and outdoor bars. All of this will elevate the Seaport from a favorite place for groups to enjoy lunch and shop to a "must-see" destination for any visitor to Manhattan.

Luxury is King

The **World Trade Center**, just a short walk on Fulton Street to the West Side, rounds out Lower Manhattan's retail development with



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the 2015 opening of Westfield Group's 350,000-square-foot, world-class shopping, culinary, and entertainment component of the giant office complex. Part of this new development includes The Oculus, a passageway between the World Trade Center and another retail development that will have 150-foot-high ceilings and vertical windows ribbed by white columns—all leased to fashion tenants.

Buckhead Atlanta will soon rival Madison Avenue and Rodeo Drive as a new six-block neighborhood is redeveloped. Offering over 800,000 square feet of customizable space, including luxury retail, restaurants and cafes, office space and two high-rise residential towers, Buckhead Atlanta conveys the ultimate street-scene dynamic. Rocell Viniard, regional marketing director for OliverMcMillan, explains, "Our company has been traveling the world seeking international brands that will make their Atlanta debut at Buckhead Atlanta. And because our customers will expect amenities not found anywhere in the area, our full-service concierge will accommodate them including offering a full-time Personal Shopper."

Looking for the largest open-air shopping center in the world? Honolulu's **Ala Moana Center** with its 370 stores and restaurants will claim that position when its latest redevelopment is completed by the end of 2015. Scott Creel, senior marketing manager, said, "Ala Moana Center is continually evolving to maintain its position as a world-class international shopping destination. With Bloomingdales already announced as one of two major anchor retailers, the expansion will feature a mix of exciting stores, dining and entertain-



American Dream will become a visitor magnet in metropolitan New York.

ment that will attract international and North American visitors as well as Hawaii's local residents."

Technology Rules

Minnesota's **Mall of America** is a great example of using technology to make shopping easier. MOA's recent introduction of an Enhanced Service Portal (ESP) improves the digital and physical shopping experience of its 42 million annual guests. It integrates all the communication channels through which consumers contact Mall of America into a unified service.

According to Doug Killian, senior director, international tourism for Mall of America, "ESP, with its state-of-art technology, brings together our website, social media channels, telephone, text and dispatch teams, guest services and security into a newly designed high-tech space that allows the ESP staff to actively listen to consumers and retailers and promptly respond to them. Consumers can check in on Four Square and begin interacting with the ESP team before arriving to get driving directions and information about parking or events. ESP also helps consumers with anything from basic requests, such as bag checks and information about specific retailers, to more personalized needs, such as dining and shopping recommendations."

Tour operators will hear firsthand about this new service when they meet with Mall of America reps at upcoming trade shows. They also will learn about the next part of the mall's ambitious expansion plans, which will include a second hotel, an office tower, grand event space and 150,000 square feet of retail space.

With new mega, outlet and upscale centers opening across the country, and existing centers stepping up their game, shopping promises to become a larger component of the group travel mix for the generation to come. **LGT**



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