

StarTribune.com MINNEAPOLIS - ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

Retail matron Har Mar Mall is headed for a makeover

Owners' plans for the Roseville center include finding tenants for space once used by theaters.

By **Susan Feyder**, Star Tribune

Last update: July 27, 2007 – 9:25 PM

Work is set to begin next week on an ambitious plan by the new owners of the Har Mar Mall to redevelop and find new tenants for the Roseville retail center.

Richard Coles, a vice president for Emmes & Co., said this week that his New York-based real estate investment firm believes Har Mar is "an underperforming asset." Emmes acquired Har Mar in February from Centro Properties Group, an Australian firm.

"It's a shopping institution in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, and we think it has a lot of potential," Coles said.

Har Mar was built in the early 1960s, deriving its name from the original owners, Harold and Marie Slawik.

It has been expanded and renovated but still retains the look of an enclosed strip mall. In the last several years it has attracted some new major tenants, including Barnes & Noble and Buffalo Wild Wings.

The first phase of the renovation involves replacing the exterior facade on the west side of the mall, which faces Snelling Avenue, Coles said.

The recent closings of the T. J. Maxx and Northwestern Bookstore are part of Emmes' plan to redevelop the south end of the mall, including the building that housed two theaters that closed late last year. Plans call for renovating the former theater complex into space for two retail tenants, Coles said.

An optical store between the T. J. Maxx and Northwestern Bookstore is still operating, but Coles said his firm plans to talk to the owners about moving elsewhere in the mall. The store's lease expires in October, according to John Anderson, manager of real estate services for National Vision Inc. of Atlanta.

The three tenants together have occupied about 40,000 square feet, which Emmes wants to redevelop into space for a single user.

The redeveloped space in the mall and the former theater is expected to be ready for occupancy by the middle of next year. Coles said discussions with potential tenants already have taken place and he expects to have agreements with new occupants by the end of this year.

Emmes also has plans for two outlying buildings on the Har Mar site, Coles said. The

now-closed Backyard Bar & Grill, originally a Ground Round restaurant, will be demolished and rebuilt for a national full-service family restaurant, he said.

A Firestone outlet will be converted into space for several small shops and service retail, he said.

The renovation at Har Mar comes less than a year after a major redevelopment less than a mile away at Rosedale Center.

That \$50 million project included a two-story addition on a site once occupied by a Mervyn's department store. The addition was designed as a so-called lifestyle center, the hottest trend in retail development. The project included a 14-screen AMC Theatre that replaced the complex at Har Mar.

Har Mar should be able to hold its own, given its prime location on Snelling Avenue, said Mike Sims, vice president of retail at United Properties, which oversees leasing for Har Mar.

"The Roseville trade area is very strong. There are a number of national retailers that want to have a presence in that location," Sims said.

Susan Feyder • 612-673-1723 • sfeyder@startribune.com

© 2007 Star Tribune. All rights reserved.