

Center has uncommon success in Geneva

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After having been open for a little more than a year and heading into its second holiday shopping season, Geneva Commons has been an unqualified success, said Jeffrey R. Anderson Real Estate Inc., the company that built and runs the center.

Geneva Commons, a 420,000-square-foot lifestyle center on Randall Road, is 99 percent full, has had no tenant turnover and recorded sales of \$450 per square foot over the past year, said Mark Fallon, director of leasing for Anderson Real Estate.

Restaurants at the center have said their sales have been nearly twice as high as those at freestanding locations, Fallon said.

Now the blueprint of upscale stores in an outdoor environment, which served Geneva Commons so well in the past year, will be re-created in Algonquin, just 20 miles north of Geneva. Anderson Real Estate has started construction on Algonquin Commons there.

That \$70 million, 420,000-square-foot center, which could employ as many as 2,000 people, is slated to open on Oct. 1 with much the same tenant mix as Geneva Commons, Fallon said.

Geneva Commons was Jeffrey R. Anderson Real Estate's first project in the Chicago market and it served as a sort of test case for Algonquin, an area the company has had its eye on for a while, Fallon said.

Geneva Commons will draw shoppers from Interstate 90 south, while Algonquin Commons will draw people north of that line, Fallon said, calling the distance between the two centers an "optimal distance."

Parts of Elgin will be within the targeted area of both malls, but there is enough population and potential for population growth that a little bit of overlap won't be a problem, Fallon said.

The lifestyle centers build by Anderson Real Estate feature parking close to individual shops and landscaping and walkways that promote lingering at the center and shopping at a leisurely pace, Fallon said.

The design of the center makes it a better fit in a rapidly growing community than a 1- or 2-million-square-foot super-regional mall would. Those super-regional malls are less attractive to live near than the lifestyle centers, Fallon said.

Building at Geneva Commons isn't quite done yet. A Claddagh Irish Pub is under construction there now and should open by Thanksgiving. Crate & Barrel will start construction on a two-story, 34,000-square-foot store in March that will open about a year after construction starts, said Jim Pratt, senior property manager for Geneva Commons.

Since the mall has been open for 14 months, its become a household name in much of the Fox Valley, so recent marketing efforts have focused westward on the DeKalb-Sycamore area and especially on the Northern Illinois University community, since most of the stores in Geneva Commons are not represented out there, Pratt said.

Geneva Commons will also feature a slew of holiday events to entertain shoppers in late November and December. On Saturdays and Sundays in December, there will be horse-drawn trolley rides around the center. There will be carolers on most weekends. And the center will feature Christmas trees decorated by Girl Scouts, Pratt said.

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