



03/30/2007

Shoppes at Montage open to big crowds, good reviews

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STAFF WRITER



The crowded parking lot is evidence Thursday of shoppers' interest in the new Shoppes at Montage. Thursday was the first full day of business at the \$50 million retail center. MICHAEL J. MULLEN / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Anderson Real Estate Inc., didn't immediately know how many parking spaces the plaza has, though she acknowledged that patrons will probably find it relatively easy to secure a parking spot most days, "outside of the grand opening and Christmas."

Convenience wasn't the only attraction Thursday, as evidenced by how many people were willing to cruise around seeking those coveted parking spots.

Billed not as a shopping plaza but a "lifestyle center," the Shoppes, with many stores not found elsewhere in the region, seemed to attract a well-heeled crowd, strolling under a dazzling spring sun in designer duds.

But the larger question for the region may be what effect the new shopping center will have on locals' shopping habits and, by extension, on other area malls.

"I usually go to Steamtown," said West Scranton resident Kim Sanders. "But I come up here a lot to go to the movies ... I think I'll probably come here often."

Dallas residents Jack and Carol Donlin admired the scene, overhearing, with amusement, how one shopper compared the panoramic view to Colorado. "They must not be from around here," the pair laughed.

In fairness, though, Sno Mountain — formerly Montage Ski Area — loomed majestic and snow-covered over the plaza on one side, while the valley's endless hills framed the other.

Taking the scenery in stride, Mrs. Donlin said she was attracted by stores like Coldwater Creek, a women's clothing boutique, and she and her husband would definitely return to the Shoppes.

Still, will they forsake their hometown shopping centers? By no means.

"We love Boscovs," Mr. Donlin said of the regional department store chain, which has locations in downtown Wilkes-Barre and downtown Scranton.

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MOOSIC — Thursday at noon may hardly seem prime shopping time, but practically every parking spot was filled and the sidewalks were crowded.

And it isn't even Christmas.

Kevin Cook braved the crowds just to have lunch at the Shoppes at Montage, the \$50 million, 300,000-square-foot complex's official opening day. Sitting on a bench savoring a slice of pizza, he declared the venture a success.

"It's convenient," said Mr. Cook, a Wilkes-Barre resident who works in Moosic. "I'd rather come here and have a five- or 10-minute drive than have to drive 20 minutes."

Tracy Nemenz, spokeswoman for the developer, Cincinnati-based Jeffrey R. Anderson Real Estate Inc., didn't immediately know how many parking spaces the plaza has, though she acknowledged that patrons will probably find it relatively easy to secure a parking spot most days, "outside of the grand opening and Christmas."

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