

News Clips Report

New tenants join growing list at Hammond Square Hammond Daily Star

08/08/2009

Two clothing stores, Hibbett Sports and a Merle Norman cosmetics franchise filed permits with the city in July for buildouts at **Hammond Square**.

Meanwhile, book retailer Books-A-Million is counting the days until a soft opening some time in late September, and The Foot Locker has finished construction on its new store and is waiting on the paving of Palace Drive to relocate.

Former tenant Hibbett Sports, currently located at 1905 W. Thomas St. in Seville Plaza, will return to Hammond Square with a location at 300 Palace Drive, said Store Manager Alexis Norton. The company is deliberating whether to maintain two locations in the city.

At least at first, we may keep both stores open, Norton said. We'll watch how it goes.

The new store is a \$225,000 buildout of 6,469 square feet, a bit larger than the former mall store, Norton said. Merchandise should start arriving in October with a grand opening scheduled for Oct. 29. The store has six employees in the Seville Plaza location and will need a new staff if both locations remain open.

Norton will manage the smaller store and Cole Causey, manager of the Covington store, will come to Hammond Square.

The store will conduct hiring in mid-September and will probably need six people.

Norton said she is glad for the spacious new store.

Were packed in here like sardines, she said of the present location.

Hibbett Sports, headquartered in Birmingham, Ala., has 20 stores in South Louisiana and 1,000 from New Mexico to Florida and north to North Carolina, Norton said. The store has sporting goods, including some equipment, tennis shoes, workout apparel, hats, jerseys and bags. The store specializes in sports team apparel and plans to add Southeastern Louisiana University's Lions to the list of teams.

The store is open seven days a week.

The Foot Locker, 1712 S.W. Railroad Ave., is a former tenant of Hammond Square that will close its current store when it moves.

General Manager Ryan Richards said the new 4,050-square-foot store at 306 Palace Drive is finished and the sign is up. The new store will be larger than the previous and the current store, which employs six people. The store offers sporting goods and apparel with tennis shoes, boots and team jerseys and hats for fans.

Richards said while he's counting the days, the current location in Crossroads Center has a good selection of all the popular brands.

Book retailer Books-A-Million will leave its temporary location in the Hobby Lobby mall for a 15,500-square-foot store location at 331 Palace Drive in mid-September with a grand opening the first weekend in October, said Assistant Manager Alana Atkins.

The store lost its lease at Town & Country Plaza in January and moved into the former True Value Hardware location, a building smaller than the previous location, so the store lost its trademark Joe Muggs coffee shop.

The store has four managers and 13 sales associates, Atkins said.

The new store will have the coffee shop, so two or three new employees will be hired, and one associate will be promoted to coffee shop manager.

News Clips Report

The store will follow the new store concept, very similar to the newest store recently opened in Baton Rouge in the Towne Center at the junction of Corporate Boulevard and Jefferson Highway. Peggy Dunaway is the general manager in Hammond.

Amy Duplessis of Prairieville will open her third Merle Norman Cosmetics franchise at 458 Palace Drive, a \$65,000 buildout and 1,000 square feet of space. Construction has started, and her grand opening is tentatively set for Oct. 1.

The store is independently owned, she said. The company, approaching its 80th year, is headquartered in Los Angeles, Calif. Stores offer a complete line of skin care and makeup products.

'Our philosophy is try before you buy,' she said.

The store will offer complimentary makeup lessons and steam facials, she said.

Duplessis will be hiring four more employees to staff the store.

Clothing retailers Rue 21 Inc. and maurices are new to Hammond.

Rue 21 Inc., formerly Pennsylvania Fashions Inc., is a retailer of casual apparel for teen girls and guys. According to the Rue 21 Web site, the company will open a 4,340-square-foot buildout at 312 Palace Drive at a construction price of \$65,000. Headquartered in Warrendale, Pa., the retailer celebrated the opening of its 500th store in Harlingen, Texas, in July and plans to open an additional 500 stores in the next five years.

Maurices, a retail clothing chain based in Duluth, Minn., will build a 5,000-square-foot store at 321 Palace Drive at a buildout construction price of \$ 60,000.

Stirling Project Manager Dick Cyr said construction of all the building shells is complete, and some have been painted. New exterior entrances are under way for Sears and finished for Dillard's, and a coordinated grand opening will happen before the holidays.

Other stores which have already announced and received building permits in July include Coach House Gifts/Hallmark, Great American Cookie Co., East of Italy and Phil's Grill.