

## Macy's in talks about possible new store at Lakeside Shopping Center

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6:15 p.m., Monday

Macy's Inc. is in discussions with Lakeside Shopping Center about building a new store at the retail complex, the mall's owner said Monday. But the future of the closed Macy's store at the Esplanade Mall and the potential development of other Macy's locations in St. Tammany remain unclear.

Jeffrey Feil of the Feil Organization, which owns Lakeside, said Monday that Macy's may develop a free-standing store on the Veterans Memorial Boulevard side of the mall. A parking garage is already under construction in the same vicinity.

"Our discussion with Macy's is terrific news for the parish as a whole," Feil said.

Macy's has not had a presence in the local market since Hurricane Katrina. Before the storm, Macy's operated at the Esplanade Mall in Kenner and the still-closed New Orleans Centre at 1450 Poydras St..

"We have no plans to reopen" the New Orleans Centre site, said Ellen Fruchtman, spokeswoman for Macy's south division.

Fruchtman said she could not confirm that the retailer is in talks with Lakeside. However, she said Macy's is looking carefully at the metro area market as a whole and is considering reopening its Esplanade location as well as developing new stores, she said.

"We are looking strategically and reviewing all of our options for new locations or reopening" existing stores, she said.

"We're hoping to provide more details (soon). We know we have a loyal following in the New Orleans area," Fruchtman said. "We are in a very active process looking at New Orleans, but unfortunately I don't have any details."

Many retail chains try to establish at least three stores in a given market in order to make the most of their advertising dollars and distribution channels. Though it currently has no stores operating in the local market, Macy's has two in the Baton Rouge area.

Macy's name has come up in connection with at least one St. Tammany project.

Stirling Properties, which owns the Premiere Center in Mandeville, has been in talks with Macy's, said Stirling CEO Jimmy Moran.

"Macy's folks are being very patient in what they are trying to do in New Orleans, Moran said.

He pointed out that the chain last year was bought by Federated Department Stores and that the new chain -- with 800 stores -- has been dealing with national issues such as re-branding stores to Macy's name.

"With the re-branding of Federated to Macy's they've made very few new store decisions. They're still focused on the boxes they needed and didn't need post merger," Moran said.

"For Macy's, in New Orleans, unfortunately, there's not been much happening as to getting the Esplanade back and running. I think they're still deciding if in New Orleans the glass is half empty or half full," Moran said. But the potential to go into Lakeside (is strong), Moran said, because revenue-wise it is "one of the top (retail) centers in the South."

Alisha La Roche, general manager of the Esplanade, did not return calls Monday. Neither did Glen Wilson, Lakeside's manager.