

SHOPPING TRENDS

Mervyns change 1 of Citadel's many

By JIM BAINBRIDGE THE GAZETTE

Everybody has sales during the holiday season, yet clearly there is something different going on at the area's two Mervyns stores. It starts with the signs at the entrance that announce the stores are offering not just gift items for sale, but also its fixtures, furniture and equipment.

This is a going-out-of-business sale for the stores at Chapel Hills Mall and The Citadel — they close for good with the new year — and the customary holiday decorations are overwhelmed by the signs that trumpet "Nothing Held Back," "Everything Must Go" and "All Sales Final."

It has the feel of big-time mall retail meets garage sale. Cash and credit cards only.

The stores took their last shipments of stock on Nov. 22, and store manager Shane Dougherty conceded that "things might get pretty thin as Christmas approaches." If the stores sell out or come close to doing so, they have the option to close anytime after Dec. 15, Dougherty said.

In September, the company announced it will close 25 percent of its stores nationwide.

Mervyns' departure is merely the most high-profile example of a rapidly changing Colorado Springs retail scene, with shifts that can be seen in microcosm all around both malls.

While Mervyns is checking out, The Citadel has just added two major retailers in time for the holidays, Steve & Barry's University Sportswear in the old Mervyns wing and the freestanding Sportsman's Warehouse store at the southwest corner of the complex.

Panda Express and Hibachi San are both new to The Citadel's food court, replacing Koya and Tao Tao, and Journey's shoe store and the Abercrombie & Fitch junior apparel store Hollister have opened in time for the holidays.

Foley's is fully decorated and looking like its customary self, but it is about to shift marquees next fall and carry the Macy's nameplate. The Federated Department Stores Inc. merger with May Department Store Co. in July will bring 330 such name changes nationwide during the next year.

According to Realco executive Steve Smith, his company has had discussions with Dick's Sporting Goods, among others, about the Mervyns space at Chapel Hills, and store owners in the mall say they also have heard that Dick's might move into the mall-owned ice arena space.

In recent months, Chapel Hills has added a couple of new gift shops, Mount Tejon on the upper level near Center Court, and IBAM! on the upper level near JCPenney.

It remains to be seen what effect the Kmart merger with Sears will have at Chapel Hills, where currently there are Kmart and Sears stores at opposite ends of the complex.

The new Sears Holding Co. is converting up to 400 Kmart stores to Sears' new midsize store, Sears Essentials, during the next three years, but so far no change has been announced.

Wal-Mart is opening stores in Monument, Woodland Park and southeast Colorado Springs in the upcoming year, to bring its total in the Pikes Peak region to nine. A

10th Wal-Mart is scheduled to open in Falcon by the end of 2007.

American Furniture Warehouse is planning to open a 530,000-square-foot megastore at Powers and Woodmen in late 2006, and the long-awaited entry of Costco into the Springs market is targeted for the summer of 2007.

CONTACT THE WRITER: 636-0126 or
jim.bainbridge@gazette.com



JERILEE BENNETT, THE GAZETTE - In the most high-profile sign that the Colorado Springs retail scene is changing, the city's two Mervyns locations will close by January. Josie Salazar, above, shopped Monday with granddaughter Victoria at the Mervyns at The Citadel mall.