

NEWS

Once-bustling shopping center at a crossroads

By **MATTHEW WILSON** | Bay Area News Group

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The Cupertino Crossroads, one of the city's most prominent shopping centers, is at a crossroads itself.

Owners of the center at Stevens Creek and De Anza boulevards are hoping a big renovation and the addition of two anchor tenants will bring new life to the shops on the city's busiest intersection.

The Crossroads is getting ready to welcome T.J. Maxx and HomeGoods to the shopping center. The anchor stores will tentatively open on April 26 and May 5, respectively, according to Alex Byer, president of Byer Properties.

Both stores will both occupy the former Mervyn's building, which has been vacant since December 2008 after the clothing chain closed all locations.

Fortunes for the Crossroads changed after Mervyn's closed. Since the closure, the center saw PetSmart, Dress Barn and Marie Calendar's close their doors.

Byer partly described the post-Mervyn's shopping center as "death" in a recent interview with the Courier.



The shopping center's odd quirk is that it is owned by two separate entities. Byer Properties controls the property from Vista Eye Center to Fontana's Italian Restaurant, while the Mardesich Co. owns everything east to S. De Anza Boulevard, including the vacant PetSmart building.

There is hope that the new anchor stores and other new retail will keep visitors on site and shopping at the smaller shops.

A multimillion-dollar project will see the construction of two buildings and an increase in the shopping center's net square footage by 8,292. To date, the center has been more of a place where people simply drive up to a shop, buy their merchandise and drive out. The renovation is aiming to change that mentality, Byer said.

"You need some reason for people to want to shop and stay here for a bit," he said.

David Taxin, who handles retail leasing for the property, remembers when the area was bustling with activity on the backs of Mervyn's and a nearby Service Merchandise.

"This was the [Main Street] for 30-something years. Mervyn's was a very viable retailer for a long time," Taxin said. "This for many, many years was the epicenter of town and its No. 1 intersection. If I took [someone] there during that time, you would have thought you were in the booming part of the town, but it's been a five-year struggle because of the situation with Mervyn's whittling away."

Byer and his group are planning for more activity closer to the street. The new-look Crossroads will see public sidewalk, landscaping and furniture improvements along the street, which will be similar to outdoor patio seating.

The shopping center will also have a more walkable theme, with the addition of a new pedestrian plaza between a new building and the existing Pizza Hut building near what was once Marie Callender's and soon to be Islands Fine Burgers & Drinks.

By the end of 2012, residents should see two new retail building pads and new tenants such as Party City, Freebirds World Burrito, Philz Coffee and Boudin Bakery, a San Francisco institution famous for its sourdough bread.

