



Steve and Barry's, mall agree to Southside deal

By Jake Palmateer
Staff Writer

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ONEONTA _ Low-cost clothing retailer Steve & Barry's has signed a lease with the Southside Mall for an 82,000-square-foot store.

A grand opening is expected in mid-November.

The store will carry clothing, footwear and accessories for men, women and children that sell for less than \$20, according to Steve & Barry's spokeswoman Colleen McCarthy.

"The lease was just fully executed yesterday," McCarthy said Thursday morning.

The company started in 1985 as a business catering to college students but eventually broadened its range of merchandise. In recent years, Steve and Barry's has added celebrity lines of clothing and sneakers.

The closest of Steve & Barry's more than 200 stores are in Syracuse, Utica and Albany.

The Oneonta store is part of a rapid expansion of the company that has more than doubled the number of stores, McCarthy said.

In 2006, the company teamed with NBA star Stephon Marbury to introduce a line of clothing and footwear. A similar deal was made with actress Sarah Jessica Parker this year for her line of sportswear for women.

A line of apparel from tennis star Venus Williams will hit shelves in November, McCarthy said.

Actress Amanda Bynes, NBA star Ben Wallace and golf pro Bubba Wallace are also among the company's celebrity partners.

Most Steve & Barry stores are between 50,000 and 100,000 square feet.

The company keeps prices low by cost-saving measures such as leasing space in middle-market malls with rising vacancies and relying on word-of-mouth advertising, according to a 2006 article in Business Week magazine.

With Steve & Barry's and Bed, Bath & Beyond expected to open before Black Friday, there will be a range of new shopping opportunities at Southside Mall for the holiday season, said mall general manager Jessica Dombrowski.

Bed, Bath & Beyond appeals to the high-end market, while Steve & Barry's appeals to college students, Dombrowski said.

Both stores are expected to increase foot traffic in the mall.

"The whole goal is to have a complete package to offer the community," Dombrowski said.

Parking is being increased at the mall with 166 new spaces and a resurfacing and re-configuration of part of the current parking lot from diagonally-striped spaces to horizontally striped spaces, Dombrowski said.

She said she has been told to expect a mid-November opening for Steve & Barry's.

"They have a very aggressive time schedule," Dombrowski said. "I have a soft opening date of Nov. 16 right now."

The Oneonta Steve & Barry's will be the largest store at Southside Mall and will occupy nearly all of the space formerly used by Kmart, Dombrowski said.

Kmart, an original anchor store at Southside Mall, closed in 2003.

The company has signed a 10-year lease, Dombrowski said. She declined to release the annual lease amount.

McCarthy also declined to release the amount of the lease but confirmed the mid-November target date.

The company is advertising on its website, www.steveandbarrys.com, for store managers and directors.

Information on the number of employees to be hired at the Oneonta store was unavailable Thursday, but officials at the Utica store said there are about 30 people employed there.

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Photos



The inside of the former Kmart at the Southside Mall in Oneonta is seen Thursday. Steve and Barry-s is set to occupy much of this space.