



TOWN CENTER AT LEVIS COMMONS



BLADE PHOTOS/LUKE BLACK

Mark and Linda Powles say business at their shop has been good but they hoped it would be better.

In its 1st year, 'lifestyle center' has been a success, owners say

By JON CHAVEZ
BLADE BUSINESS WRITER

A year ago, it was a complex full of question marks.

But the \$55 million Town Center at Levis Commons in Perrysburg, which marks its first anniversary tomorrow, has produced positive results, its owners say.

The 319,000-square-foot center, a generally upscale collection of shops and office space in a town-square-like setting, has met nearly all of its projections, said Robert Spratt, Jr., president of Hill Partners Inc., one of the developers.

Still, Mark and Linda Powles, owners of the Schokolad Chocolate Factory store there, said that although business has been good they hoped it would be better.

"We knew it would take a little while," said Mr. Powles, whose store specializes in fine chocolates and beverages. "I think it's taken a little time for people to realize what the center is."

The area's first "lifestyle center,"



For Christy Burgei, who drives to the center from Napoleon, the variety of retailers is the attraction.

a combination of shopping, dining, and entertainment, is along State Rte. 25 next to the interchange of I-475/U.S. 23. It was developed by Hill Partners, of Charlotte, N.C., and Perrysburg developer Larry Dillin, of Dillin Corp.

Ottawa Hills resident Cathy Appleby, who works in Perrysburg and visits Levis Commons regularly on her lunch hours, said the combination makes the center a great place

to shop a little, meet for lunch, or just browse. "I could see where this would be a great place to bring a date," she said.

Christy Burgei, of Napoleon, said the variety of retailers is what brings her there. "It's different. I love the food, but I like the outdoors aspect. It's great here on a nice day." The location, she added, is convenient

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for her, as otherwise she'd head to Columbus or Indiana.

Some of the retail space and half the office space remains vacant. Mr. Spratt, of Hill Partners, said he hopes to have the remaining 10 percent of the store space occupied by early next year. The developers have been choosy about who occupies that remaining 32,000 square feet, he said. "It's all about selecting the right tenant now."

One of the newest tenants is **Bistro Wasabi**, a Chicago restaurant chain that offers "fusion cooking" (mixing two distinct cuisines), a sushi bar, and a sake lounge.

Michael Song, an executive of the restaurant chain, said he chose the site for his first non-Illinois store after visiting last year.

"Perrysburg feels like a developing area. I think that's the best time to come in," he said.

Levis Commons has surveyed customers and found they want the remaining space to have stores specializing in men's apparel and accessories, teen apparel and accessories, and home furnishings, Mr. Spratt said.

Negotiations are under way for tenants for the roughly 34,000 feet of office space that remain empty, he said.

The developers thought the offices would be desired by small tenants, such as law firms or financial planners, but larger tenants have wanted it, he added.

The developers are finalizing plans for a second phase of retailing, even as related housing is under construction next door.

Dave Long, a commercial real estate agent with CB Richard Ellis/Reichle Klein in Maumee, said retailers at Levis Commons say their sales have exceeded expectations.

Stores in the center, Mr. Spratt said, have averaged sales of more than \$300 per square foot, and most are about \$400. That is comparable to retailers at Westfield Franklin Park, according to area commercial real estate agents.

Mr. Dillin, the other developer of the center, could not be reached for comment.

Contact Jon Chavez at:
jchavez@theblade.com
or 419-724-6128.