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Fall Preview: Southern New Hampshire retail market's momentum will continue

October 30, 2014 - Spotlights

There is always a lot of concern what the next 6 months will bring as winters in N.H. are not typically glorious days for retail deal making.

Summer seems to have been good for the most part but selective in some markets-not across the board. July's ICSC in Boston was upbeat and optimistic. Plenty of property out there and some new projects. Like last year-Boston & surrounding suburbs like Burlington enjoying tremendous new high end development, and attracting great tenants and restaurants. New Hampshire-not so much!

Though all the indicators point to an economy that is slowly gaining momentum and consumer confidence, I am still hesitant to declare it has reached N.H. and that the recession is over. Highlighted by this weeks (Oct. 15) stock market tumble it is clear we are so vulnerable to outside influences and circumstance. Throw in global concerns on ISIS, Ebola, world politics, and Lord knows what's next so it's hard to forecast with any accuracy.

The good news is there has been a respectable amount of retail activity, and several significant new developments in Southern N.H. that have been tremendously successful with several others being planned such as Waterstone Development's 145,000 s/f Seabrook Crossing (Hobby Lobby & Bobs Discount Furniture), and DDR's 380,000 s/f Seabrook Commons (Super Wal Mart, Dicks, Pet Smart and Michaels).

Linear Retail has completed construction on Daniel Webster Highway (DWH) south with a modern high end 12,000 s/f retail strip and b.goode & Noodles both have opened their first NH units. Waterstone recently announced "Granite Ridge" another significant ground up project on Rte. 11 in Rochester.

The supermarket and restaurant sector is still the driver in N.H. retail.

The big news of course was the Market Basket saga which fortunately has ended and it appears it's business as usual as if nothing ever happened, though it may slow new store development for awhile.

N.H.'s first Whole Foods supermarket is open on Amherst St in Nashua. Aldi's is under construction across the street at Saxon's redevelopment, and just opened another location in Plaistow.

Whole Foods will break ground soon in Bedford on the old Wayfarer Inn site on So. River Rd. anchoring a mixed use re-development next to Macy's and The Bedford Mall. Another prime development site across the street on Kilton Rd. is under agreement and at the planning board for a retail building, fitness center and restaurant pad.

New deals are emerging at former Stop 'n Shop supermarkets namely: Goodwill Industries has leased the Stop 'n Shop in Hudson, Michaels will be taking over the Stop 'n Shop on So. Willow St. in Manchester, and Hannaford's at Kilton Rd. in Bedford and Exeter. I haven't heard of any new deals yet on any of the closed Shaw's locations. There are sizable opportunities to bring new

tenants to the former Building #19 in Nashua and Manchester, and the former Shaw's Plaza, DWH in Merrimack and would expect to see these vacancies leased very soon.

Bass Pro Shop has opened it's first N.H. store at Exit 10 in Hooksett in the former Lowes. No word out as to who will occupy their Manchester site next to the Mall of N.H. Recently several family entertainment users have emerged as candidates for parts of these buildings in the 25,000 s/f range.

Other sizable deals that have opened include Ocean State Job Lot at the Main St. Marketplace (Shaw's) in Nashua, and Monkey Sport next to OSJL in Derry where Aldi's will open next year.

There have been numerous retail store openings including: Hand & Stone, and Weight Watchers at the Bedford Mall, Music & Art relocated from Elm St. to TJ Max Plaza on So. Willow St. in Manchester, Autozone in Goffstown, Goin Postal at North Broadway Crossing (McKinnon's) and Colonial Bicycle in Salem. Tara Commons in Nashua is now fully leased with Elizabeth Grady, Craft Beer Cellar, Orange Leaf and others.

New specialty butchers, Wicked Good Butcha in Bedford, and Choice Cuts in Merrimack and new management at several Meat Houses by Whining Butcher of Meredith, and Rte. 102 N.H.'s Finest Marketplace in Hudson.

Other major categories that thrive in N.H. are fitness, coffee, specialty restaurants, banks & credit unions, gas stations/convenience stores, and liquor. New fitness ventures include a 45,000 s/f facility (LA Fitness?) at the old Market Basket at Somerset Plaza in Nashua, Orange Fitness down the street at Green Falls Marketplace, and Zoo Fitness took over the WOC space at Derry Meadows.

The newest N.H. Liquor & Wine Outlet opened on Elm St., in Manchester. Dunkin Donuts opened at Exit 3 in Windham, and relocated the Main St., Manchester store onto Granite St. to get a drive thru. The biggest news is the total renovation and upgrade to the I-93 rest stops on both sides of the highway in Hooksett featuring expanded State of N.H. Liquor & Wine Outlets and Visitor Centers, and for the first time gas and food being provided by Irving Oil, and Alex Ray's N.H. based restaurants instead of a national fast food chain.

Several new banks and credit unions have opened including Norway in Concord, No. East Credit Union in Merrimack, Optima Bank at the Bedford Mall, a free standing bank pad just approved for the plaza on Rte. 101 and Wallace Rd., and Citizens Bank at City Plaza, and Camden National Bank opening a branch in Manchester.

Many new restaurants have opened in the Manchester area including: CQ Roaster, City Caf  , J Dubs is now A&E Roasters, Bensons Bakery & Caf   in Hudson, Campo Enotecca on Elm St., Clam King is now New Ipswich Clam Bake, Greggs Place is now Terrasini Grill, Bugaboo Steak House in Bedford being renovated to Canoe Restaurant, Red Robin at the Mall of N.H., Subway will open next to CVS in Salem, and the states first stand alone Chic-fil-A under construction on Amherst St., Nashua. Cumberland Farms has opened two new state of the art proto type stores in Nashua on DWH, and Epping on Rte. 125

Some restaurants and stores have closed such as Swan Chocolates in Merrimack, Mill Stores in Nashua and Statham, Bee Bee Shoe in Manchester, CK's Grill, Estabrook Grill, and USA Chicken in Derry.

In summary I think the Fall Forecast will continue the momentum of this past years growth with new developments, tenants into the New Year!

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