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Mall to morph into shopping center / After 45 years, Northline will get new name, life as open-air venue

Northline Mall, which opened nearly 45 years ago, is being converted into an open-air shopping center and renamed Northline Commons.

Northline Commons, 4400 North Freeway, will provide northwest and Inner-Loop residents a new shopping destination.

Houstonians will be able to eat, shop, bank and even get their hair cut, all at Northline's open-air center.

"Most customers today want to park right in front of a store, go in and buy what they came for, check that off their to-do list, and immediately move onto the next thing," said Rebecca Victor, Northline Mall's general manager. "We're responding to this desire for convenience, for shopping smart."

Popular stores such as Ross and Marshall's will join veteran tenants such as Palais Royal, Payless Shoe Source and Footlocker at Northline.

Specialty stores such as Conn's and Office Depot will move in, while other existing occupants, including Pappa's BBQ, Washington Mutual, and longtime tenant Northline Barber Shop, will remain open.

"We've been here 20 years, and we're so excited about the renovation," said Adam Morales, owner of Northline Barber Shop.

City Councilman Adrian Garcia also has a long history with Northline Mall.

"Growing up in the area, I have many wonderful memories of Northline, and I'm excited that it's getting a new start," Garcia said.

"I have worked closely with Northline officials and have found them to be sincerely interested in serving the needs of the community. I'm excited that Northline continues to be a central economic engine of our community."

The mall's renovation is well under way at its site just north of downtown. The retail center remains open for shoppers, but will be completely transformed into the new Northline Commons center for the fall of 2008.

Bright lights for the parking lot, bricked walkways, and landscaping already are being added to the center.

"We hope to provide an inviting and safe environment to shop, dine, stock up or just relax all right here," Victor said.

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