

Downtown Silver Spring becomes a shopping draw

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SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

As Silver Spring continues with its commercial renewal, stores in the downtown area lured customers with Black Friday sales and promotions.

"We are trying to keep up with the revitalization of Silver Spring," said Aurelia Martin, marketing director for City Place Mall said. "The community wants more."

The mall ran a promotion in which \$50 purchases anywhere in the mall got a free blanket, and City Place featured other promotions, including gift-wrapping, coupons and Christmas carolers.

However, Joseph Herrera, store manager of KB Toys in City Place, noted that the mall lacked a "real anchor to bring people in." He hoped that sales would increase as the weeks progressed.

But Ayana Barker, a Marshall's employee, pointed out bargains on front table items and seemed optimistic about the revitalization bringing in more customers.

"We had good sales, and it's more popular here," she said, calling downtown Silver Spring a "hot spot."

City Place could use more variety, one shopper said. "I don't think there's enough stores but it's all right," said Pvt. Roxanne Flores, formerly of Texas but stationed nearby in the Army. "I bought mostly clothes and shoes. I'll probably go to a different mall now."

Martin said, "City Place hasn't realized full benefits of potential, but with revitalization we're trying to expand and add things." Though presently housing 67 stores and resting on 30,000 square feet, City Place is hoping to add an eight-story office tower.

"It will be so good for City Place,

and an opportunity to expand stores," she said.

Outside of the mall along Ellsworth Drive, Michael S. Rudolph, general manager of Borders, said sales were busy as expected, adding the good weather was a boon.

Rudolph is also optimistic about Silver Spring revitalization efforts, especially as new restaurants and stores move into the area. "I definitely think it's great every week there's new business; that can't hurt ever," he said.

Stephanie Jones, team leader and manager of DSW Shoes, was confident about holiday sales.

"We're DSW and people love shoes," she said, adding that people were waiting at the door when the shop opened early at 6 a.m. Friday. DSW was offering coupons with purchases.

As for downtown Silver Spring, "the atmosphere changed," Jones said. "It's a really a beautiful place to shop, go for a walk and browse."

Ludovic Ndocky, an assistant manager at Bombay Company, noted price cuts on furniture, holiday décor and gifts.

"Most customers come out with one of the things," he said.

Reginald Jackson, Men's Warehouse manager, is looking forward to the annual Christmas sale, which will start soon. Selected items were on sale for Black Friday.

"I have to say, I've only been at the store four months, but I look at previous numbers and they definitely show great impact," Jackson said of the impact of downtown development.

**40 MILLION
DRIVERS**