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## Old Navy to move for Forever 21 downtown

By Amy Martinez  
Seattle Times business reporter

Downtown Seattle, rattled by recent store closures, is getting a large, new fashion retailer for the first time since the economy went into free-fall more than a year ago.

Forever 21, a fast-growing, moderately priced clothing chain, plans to open a large store this fall in the space now occupied by Old Navy at Sixth Avenue and Pine Street. Old Navy, in turn, will move a block westward along Pine to be under the same roof as sister retailer Gap.

Forever 21 will occupy about 38,000 square feet over three floors, said Maria Royer, who negotiated the deal on behalf of San Francisco-based Gap.

Royer, a principal at Real Retail in Seattle, said Forever 21 will expand the retail core's "fashion-forward merchandise mix. They're going to bring new vitality and a new customer downtown."

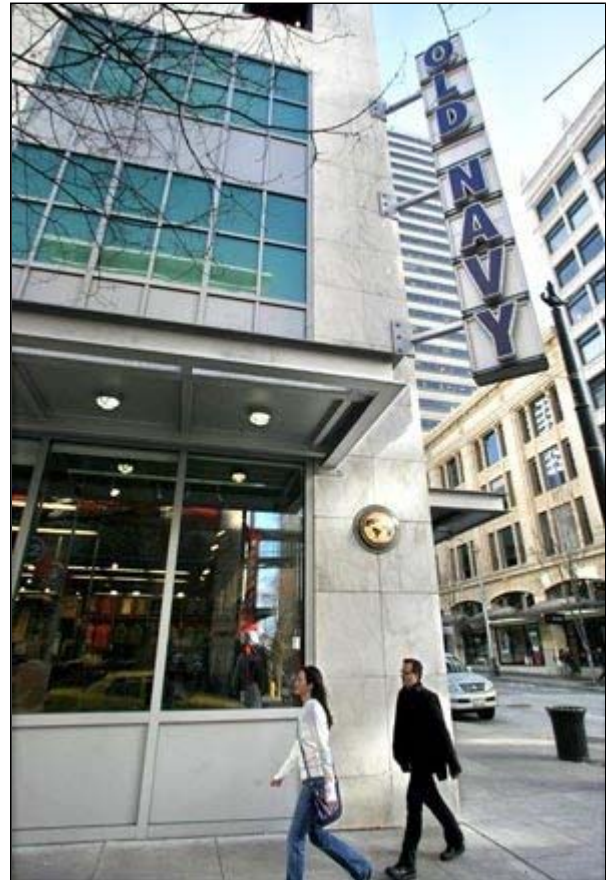
Undeterred by the recession, Forever 21 plans to add more than 80 new locations to its base of about 460 stores worldwide. Its local presence includes Westfield Southcenter in Tukwila, Seattle's Northgate Mall, Alderwood mall in Lynnwood and Kitsap Mall in Silverdale.

Originally called Fashion 21, the Los Angeles-based company was founded in 1984 by South Korean immigrants. It's known for replenishing merchandise quickly to keep up with changing fashion trends.

Among its rivals is European retailer H&M, which opened a 16,000-square-foot store downtown in fall 2008, becoming the retail core's last major fashion addition, Royer said.

Forever 21's arrival contrasts with the recent nearby closure of women's clothier Coldwater Creek and the departure of high-end jeweler Cartier from downtown's Pacific Place mall.

Old Navy, which Gap owns, plans to remain in its current location until its new space a block away is ready in June, said Ken Norcross, the chain's Seattle district manager.



JIM BATES / THE SEATTLE TIMES

This Old Navy store at Sixth Avenue and Pine Street will move into part of the Gap store a block away, making way for Forever 21 to open this fall. It will be the first big new fashion retailer downtown in more than a year.

Old Navy will take over the Gap's basement and a portion of its street-level space. Each will retain separate entrances and employees. No layoffs are planned, and customers will see the same merchandise assortments as before, Norcross said.

Standing outside H&M downtown, Simone Woolery, 28, of Seattle, said she looks forward to Forever 21's opening across from Pacific Place and the Nordstrom flagship.

An event planner, Woolery bought a black blazer and purple cocktail dress at H&M for an upcoming trip to Las Vegas.

"Pacific Place is more upscale, and Nordstrom is upscale, of course," she said. "Forever 21 will open up the market to younger shoppers with less disposable income."

*Times business reporter Eric Pryne contributed to this story.*

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