

Dollar Tree coming to Rochester

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Article Date: Monday, August 11, 2008

ROCHESTER — Dollar Tree is coming to the Lilac Mall, made possible by ongoing renovations that will give the store its own entrance.

Part of a major nationwide expansion strategy, the store is on target to open Oct. 31, said Joe Lampassi, the company's New England real estate manager. The Chesapeake, Va.-based company is poised to open 375 new stores this year and 400 next year, with 20 percent of them being relocations or expansions, he said.

"We're full steam ahead," he said.

Setting up at the Route 125 mall — where Fashion Bug was located before moving to the Rochester Crossing shopping plaza — appears to have been an obvious choice for the company.

"We like the market," Lampassi said. "It's got a great population base. It's a great town with a great road network. It gets a lot of summer traffic heading up the mountains ... it's got a regional draw. It draws from the north, east and west. You can't really lose."

Dollar Tree stores tend to land in proximity to the type of stores and amenities already featured at the mall, including Kmart and the Hannaford Supermarket.

The closest Dollar Tree stores to the one planned for Rochester are in Somersworth — where business is described as brisk — and in North Conway. There are also plans to open stores in Seabrook and North Hampton, Lampassi said.

The 11,250-square-foot Rochester store, which is under construction, was made possible by the mall owners, The Kempner Corporation, making exterior renovations that will give the Dollar Tree its own entrance facing the parking lot.

Dollar Tree considers the Rochester location a "strip store" because it will feature an open air concept versus an enclosed environment. The store will feature the company's arch design with columns.

"Dollar Tree does not do mall stores anymore," Lampassi said. Not only do mall setups prevent expansion, he said, but "a lot of malls don't want us. They're going upscale. They don't want a dollar store in their malls."



EJ Hersom/Staff Photographer Renovation work continued at the Lilac Mall on Wednesday. The new space will become a Dollar Tree store.

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Courtesy photo A typical Dollar Tree store's front.

Karen Pollard, the city's economic development manager, said that's not the message coming from The Kempner Corporation, based out of White Plains, N.Y. "They are a very successful national chain and will do very well during this economy with people striving to save money every way they can," she said.

The city's Planning Development has signed off on the mall alterations.

Peter Kempner, who co-owns the real estate investment company, was unavailable for comment Wednesday.

Dollar Tree Inc. is investing about \$350,000 in products and \$180,000 in development to get the new store up and running, Lampassi said.

Dollar Tree stores bill themselves as "bright, clean, fun and well organized, stocked with a wide variety of gift bags, party supplies, housewares, seasonal decor, candy and food, toys, health and beauty care, gifts, stationary, books" and more, according to the company's website.

Everything — yes, everything — is priced at just \$1.

Dollar Tree Inc. has been enjoying strong sales this year despite the economic slowdown, with same-store sales 3 to 5 percent above last year, Lampassi said.

The company's common stock is traded on the Nasdaq under the ticker symbol DLTR.